

8. THE ENVIRONMENT

Highlights

The 2008-09 Budget supports the Government's environmental agenda, maintaining the gains made to date, while recognising that new and significant challenges are emerging that compete for available resources.

Enhanced integration of environmental policy and service delivery is being achieved through better alignment of functional responsibilities within government agencies. This, combined with developments in intergovernmental collaborative arrangements, are expected to achieve higher efficiencies in investment programs, designed to support national environmental goals at a regional scale.

Areas of particular focus in 2008-09 include:

- seeking efficiencies in programs that raise the awareness of environmental issues in the community, generating commitment to a partnership approach to setting and achieving common goals, and providing support for targeted projects and objectives;
- taking the lead amongst Australian jurisdictions in seeking multilateral support for phasing out battery egg production and changing the egg-buying patterns of ACT consumers;
- maintaining a concerted whole-of-government approach to the threats posed by climate change, through reducing greenhouse gas emissions and developing adaptive responses to potential impacts, in accordance with the ACT Climate Change Strategy;
- enhancing the management of trees in parks and reserves;
- working with the Commonwealth Government on the development of new 'Caring for our Country' funding arrangements for national natural resource management;
- maintaining active participation in national environment forums and programs through relevant ministerial councils, steering and advisory committees;
- taking forward energy and water reform agendas at an ACT and national level;
- continuing the review of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*;
- undertaking a feasibility study of selected stormwater systems for modification to resemble natural ponds and wetlands in both form and function;
- undertaking an ecological survey of riparian areas to determine ecological conditions and conservation requirements;
- collaborating with research institutions in determining the conservation requirements of threatened species and ecological communities;
- commencing operations at the new Tidbinbilla Sanctuary; and
- expanding the Sustainable Schools program.

Budget Initiatives for 2008-09

Climate Change

Implementation of the Climate Change Strategy

During 2008-09, work will continue on 'action' initiatives detailed in the first *Weathering the Change* action plan for the period 2007-2011. Works include the protection of high conservation areas to adapt to the effects of climate change; the replacement and maintenance of Canberra's ageing and drought-affected urban forests; progressing the Government's commitment to plant one million trees over ten years to ensure tree planting continues to be a major part of addressing climate change in the ACT; and supporting intergovernmental arrangements for the administration, delivery and reporting of an ACT renewable energy target.

Climate Change Adaptation Research Centre Grant

The Government will provide a one off grant to establish, in conjunction with the Australian National University, a Climate Change Adaptation Research Centre. This centre will provide an opportunity to focus world class expertise on climate change issues facing the Territory.

Trees Initiatives

As part of the Government's *One Million Trees* initiative, and in support of *Weathering the Change*, the continued investment in the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens will see the planting of an additional ten forests, totalling some 10,000 trees per year.

Additional tree plantings will also take place across the ACT, focusing on Lake Ginninderra, Lake Tuggeranong, Lake Burley Griffin and Yerrabi Ponds, enhancing the amenity and the natural habitat of these areas. Work towards the urban tree planting program has commenced and will be aimed at maintaining the aesthetic and environmentally beneficial qualities of our urban forest.

Energy Efficient Street Lights

By replacing existing street lights with more efficient sodium and metal halide lights, the Government will achieve a significant decrease in energy consumption while providing better quality lighting of our roads and pathways. This reduction in energy use represents significant reductions in greenhouse gas emission levels associated with electricity production, equivalent to 3,000 tonnes of emissions per annum.

Where Will We Play - Outdoor Sports Facilities Water Reduction Strategies

Further work will be undertaken to reduce the consumption of potable water and to secure non-potable irrigation options for ovals and sports grounds. The goal of the initiative is to have no sports ground in the ACT reliant on potable water by 2013.

Transport Efficiency Improvements

Climate change will also be addressed by improving the efficiency of our transport system. This will include encouraging ACT commuters to use more sustainable transport by

constructing a new 'Park and Ride' and 'Bike and Ride' facility at Mawson. This includes 70 new car park spaces and a 15 bike storage facility.

The ACT's bus transport network will also be improved, making it more efficient through the redesign of Network 08; creating bus lanes and priority measures which aim to improve bus travel times on busier routes; and replacing 100 ACTION buses, over the next 4 years, with more efficient Euro 4 standard buses, in comparison to the current Euro 2 buses.

Major road works will also be undertaken at Tharwa Drive and the Airport Road, assisting to minimise vehicle travel times on an average trip by around 3 and 10 minutes respectively - while also assisting to further reduce emissions.

Additional funding for Tidbinbilla Nature Discovery Centre

The newly created Tidbinbilla Sanctuary will boast upgraded interpretive programs, including an identified Indigenous Ranger position to undertake interpretation of culturally sensitive matters and assist with animal husbandry services.

New Nature Reserves

During 2008-09, the Government will bring together Kinleyside, Jerrabomberra East, Kama South and Jedbinbilla into one nature reserve system using best-practice conservation management to ensure the natural and cultural values of these sites are protected and preserved as assets of the ACT community.

Hazardous/dead tree removal and watering of young trees

This initiative provides for urgent tree maintenance works at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Namadgi National Park and the Murrumbidgee River Corridor and increasing watering of new and developing trees using non-potable water.

Waste Management Measures

Planning will commence into future infrastructure requirements, assessing a number of options for a new landfill site in the ACT to be ready by 2013. Work will be undertaken at the West Belconnen Landfill Site to provide for bio-remediation works on the sullage pits and to establish a dedicated clean-fill site. A study will also be undertaken to assess the feasibility of, and options for additional recycling drop-off facilities around the ACT.

Capital upgrades and improvements

Major works include the upgrade of Bunda Street in the City Centre and the Deakin Shopping Centre, and completion of the final stage of the Belconnen Foreshore Upgrade. Minor works include remedial urban landscape upgrades addressing ageing infrastructure, such as a shrub-bed refurbishment program in shopping precincts and along arterial roads; refurbishment of street furniture in parks and shopping centres; and a log barrier replacement program along arterial roads and parkland areas.

ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2008-09

An Integrated Approach to the Pursuit of Sustainability Goals

The Government is extending its commitment to embedding sustainability into the culture and systems of government and the community. Key sustainability initiatives include:

- continuing to implement action plans under the ACT Climate Change Strategy, *Weathering the Change*;
- expanding the role of the Commissioner for the Environment to encompass sustainability;
- working with industry to ensure goals under the National Packaging Covenant are reached to improve resource efficiency through the sustainable manufacture, use and recovery of packaging material;
- participating in significant programs of energy market reform as well as new initiatives in water management, in partnership with the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments;
- developing an overarching sustainability framework for ACT Government agencies;
- embedding programs in schools that include waste, energy and water minimisation projects; and
- integrating the approach to the delivery of community engagement and information programs to foster the principles of sustainability.

As a member of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and other high-level forums, the Government actively contributes to the development and implementation of policy that advances the national environment agenda. These activities are also an important mechanism for maintaining the currency of issues that have implications for the Territory, where there are benefits from a strategic national approach.

During 2008-09, the Government will continue its active membership of national intergovernmental forums, including:

- the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council;
- the Environment Protection and Heritage Council;
- the Primary Industries Ministerial Council;
- the National Packaging Covenant Council;
- the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council;
- the COAG Climate Change and Water Working Group; and
- the Australian Alps National Parks Cooperative Management Program.

Climate Change

In 2008-09, the Government will continue to implement the *ACT Energy Wise* program, which provides home energy audits and rebates to encourage consumers to change their energy use patterns. That program also provides incentives for retrofitting approved energy efficiency measures into existing houses.

The *ACT Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme*, which sets mandatory greenhouse gas benchmarks for ACT electricity retailers, will move into its fourth year of operation.

The planting of *One Million New Trees over Ten Years* is an initiative under the ACT Climate Change Strategy *Weathering the Change*. The initiative will include further plantings along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor and in the Lower Cotter Catchment, as well as additional plantings at Lake Ginninderra, Lake Tuggeranong, Lake Burley Griffin and Yerrabi Ponds. There will also be 10,000 trees planted in the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens.

The Government is further committed to the continued protection of areas of high conservation value across leased land in the ACT in order to maintain and improve productivity in conserving biodiversity and delivering other environmental outcomes.

Mapping of sub-alpine sphagnum bog systems has commenced in order to accurately map the bog systems across Namadgi National Park. The resultant spatial data will inform the baseline to assist with long-term monitoring. Accompanying the mapping program will be the preparation of a strategy that outlines any further restoration work that may be required.

In conjunction with the Australian National University, the Government will invest resources to establish a Climate Change Adaptation Research Centre which will encourage expert work on climate change to be focused on the issues important to the ACT region.

Water

Water Security Projects

Following from the work of the Water Security Taskforce and ACTEW, the Government announced a suite of water initiatives on 23 October 2007, which included:

- enlarging the Cotter Dam from 4 gegalitres to 78 gegalitres, with planning and design work to commence immediately. Construction work on this project is expected to be completed within three to five years;
- installation of infrastructure to increase the volume of water transferred from the Murrumbidgee River to the Googong Dam. This work will supplement and diversify the existing water supply by making better use of existing storage capacity while assisting with any future releases from Tantangara Dam and potentially securing an additional 10 to 20 gegalitres a year;

- pursuing the possibility of purchasing water from the Murray-Darling Basin for delivery via Tantangara Dam:
 - this approach is dependant upon successful negotiations with the Snowy Hydro Authority, the Commonwealth and NSW Governments and other related parties. However, nationwide deliberations currently taking place on water have produced a more conducive environment in which to engage in that process.
- designing a demonstration Water Purification Plant;
- providing an additional \$2 million for the development and promotion of demand reduction measures;
- investigating the extension of Permanent Water Conservation Measures;
- implementing a pilot Smart Metering program; and
- voluntarily off-setting the additional greenhouse gases generated by these projects.

Water Resources Act

Implementation of the *Water Resources Act 2007*, is a continuing priority. Developments include:

- the replacement of the previous water allocations with water access entitlements;
- licensing on the basis of efficient use criteria;
- determination of water available for use on the basis of new water management areas; and
- putting in place more effective compliance arrangements.

Water Resources Strategy

The Government will commence a range of incentive programs for households and the commercial sector to reduce water consumption, as well as delivering an education and awareness campaign to engage the wider community.

The *Water Efficiency (Incentives) Program* for 2008-09 comprises the following programs:

- *ToiletSmart* Residential Water Efficient Toilet Program (replacement of 11 litre single flush toilets with dual flush 4.5/3 litre toilets or less) - new program;
- Greywater Delivery Hose Giveaway incentive program for the residential sector - new program;
- Greywater Treatment System Rebates for the residential sector - new program;
- IrrigationSmart Program, providing an education/redesign initiative for residential automatic-irrigation systems - new program;
- Sustainable Schools Water Indoor and Outdoor Audit Programs - continuing programs;
- Rainwater Tank (Internal Connection) Rebate Program - continuing program;
- Building Retrofit Incentives Program - new program;

- GardenSmart Program (a service to provide advice on garden water efficiency and a \$50 rebate on water efficient products) - continuing program; and
- communication and education campaign (including displays, events and activities) - continuing program.

The TAMS Program for 2008-09 will include:

- drought proofing parks and open space by increasing the efficiency of existing irrigation systems;
- conversion to non-potable water source for Weston Park and Yerrabi Ponds District Park; and
- the installation of water tanks to TAMS' depots.

Catchment Management

Partnerships with ACTEW and community groups will continue to feature strongly. Catchment restoration objectives will be carefully considered in the planning and implementation of the enlarged Cotter Dam project, ensuring water supply and community use objectives are compatible.

A particular area of focus will be the ongoing restoration of the Lower Cotter catchment.

The Government, in conjunction with NSW Government agencies and ACTEW, is mapping the performance of the Googong Catchment, as part of the development of a catchment management plan, consistent with the undertakings in the Memorandum of Understanding on Cross Border Water Supply.

Murray-Darling Basin Reform

At the 26 March 2008 COAG meeting, all Basin States agreed to undertake a new water security approach for households, farmers and the long-term health of the Murray-Darling Basin, and that this be expressed through a Memorandum of Understanding. All Basin Governments have committed to sign an Intergovernmental Agreement at the July 2008 COAG meeting giving effect to the new Basin arrangements.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding, an independent Murray-Darling Basin Authority will be established as the single body responsible for the overarching management of the Basin, thereby replacing the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.

The ACT's endorsement of the Commonwealth's National Plan for water reform has been conditional on:

- resolving an appropriate cap for ACT urban water under the proposed Murrumbidgee catchment cap;
- progressing negotiations to resolve ownership arrangements for the Googong Dam, associated infrastructure and related land management; and
- the preparedness, to positively consider, for financing assistance the ACT's proposals for water security for the ACT and region.

The COAG sub group on water issues, which involves all States and Territories and the Commonwealth, is progressing the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin reform and other related reforms.

Murray-Darling Basin Initiative

As a party to the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, the ACT will continue its commitment to relevant programs. The ACT is developing a *Salinity Management Strategy* in cooperation with the Commission.

National Water Initiative

Addressing over allocation, improving environmental outcomes, water trading and urban water reform issues are expected to be major issues in 2008-09 along with the development of water accounting. The ACT continues to be positively engaged with the National Water Commission.

Energy

In 2008-09, the focus for energy policy will be the continued development of the national energy reforms; the interface of these reforms with ACT energy markets; and improving the security of the electricity supply for the ACT and region.

National Market Reforms

The national energy reform program will gain further momentum during 2008-09. Initiatives include:

- completion of the National Gas Law and Rules, and the development of the 2008 legislative package for national energy distribution and retail market frameworks, leading to the completion of the COAG National Energy Market Reform Agenda;
- establishment of the Australian Energy Market Operator to cover national electricity and natural gas markets;
- the national rollout of electricity smart meters; and
- commencement of the National Framework for Energy Efficiency Stage II program, which will provide leverage for the energy efficiency initiatives under the ACT Climate Change Strategy.

The ACT Government will continue to work closely with ActewAGL and TransGrid to put in place a second electricity supply line to the ACT and south-eastern NSW.

Environment Protection and Heritage

During 2008-09, the Government will continue to implement an enhanced air quality monitoring program, supporting its commitment to the National Environment Protection Measure for Ambient Air Quality. This data will provide Government with a more detailed understanding of particulate pollution across Canberra, in particular emissions from wood heaters.

The ACT will continue its participation in the National Pollutant Inventory, an Australia-wide program designed to provide the community, industry and governments with information on the types and amounts of polluting substances being emitted into the environment.

In 2008-09 the Environment Protection Authority will implement the licensing requirements for fuel storage (including service stations) to enhance the ACT's protection of our urban and natural environments.

As part of a program of development and review of environment protection policies under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*, the Government will commence a review of the Environmental Noise, Hazardous Materials and Contaminated Sites Environment Protection policies.

During 2008-09, the Heritage Council will focus its work on the ACT Heritage Register to ensure it better reflects the rich Aboriginal, natural and historic heritage of the ACT. The Heritage Unit is finalising the legislatively mandated guidelines for the effective and consistent management of both historic and Aboriginal heritage.

The Unit is also developing policies to encourage the greater use of solar energy (including passive, hot water and photovoltaic) in existing heritage listed dwellings and commercial buildings without compromising their core heritage values.

The *Heritage Act 2004* will be reviewed during 2008-09 to increase its operational effectiveness. The review will include examining ways in which heritage management can better integrate other government operations, including planning and land management.

Waste Management

The Waste Pricing Strategy will continue to be implemented with pricing being modified to reflect the true cost of waste to landfill. This cost will be based on whole-of-life costing and will be a significant driver in improving recycling.

It is anticipated that the land release process for the Hume Resource Recovery Estate will commence in early 2008-09. Several resource recovery businesses have expressed preliminary interest in establishing a broad range of activities in the Estate that would result in diverting waste currently going to landfill.

Batteries

The ACT has requested, through the EPHC, that the issue of recycling used batteries be assessed to determine if it warrants national consideration. The ACT will continue liaising with an industry group that is trying to establish battery recycling activities.

Other National Initiatives

During 2008-09 investigation will continue on a national co-regulation scheme for the recovery and recycling of used tyres, involving a voluntary tyre recycling industry scheme, supported by a National Environment Protection Measure.

The ACT will continue to collaborate with other jurisdictions to further develop national solutions for other problematic waste related matters, including compact fluorescent lamps, televisions and computers.

Programs

Integration of the Waste Wise Schools program into the school curriculum through the Sustainable Schools program continues to deliver significant efficiency benefits and a more comprehensive service delivery. During 2007-08, 50 per cent of ACT private and Government schools were implementing the program. The uptake rate for 2008-09 is expected to exceed 70 per cent.

2008-09 will see further development of the *BusinessSmart Program* in the commercial sector. The program began as a 'pilot' during 2007-08 to encourage commercial businesses across the ACT to reduce their impact on the environment by addressing climate change through their everyday business activities.

2008-09 will also see the continuing development of waste minimisation programs for ACT Government buildings and offices.

Nature Conservation and Natural Resource Management

Conservation of Ecological Communities

Key priorities for 2008-09 include:

- upgrading management capacity of woodland reserves at Gorooyaroo, Mulligans Flat and Callum Brae;
- establishing a predator-proof sanctuary at Mulligans Flat woodland reserve, as part of a collaborative research program with Australian National University (ANU), examining management options for threatened species;
- continuing ecological surveys in the nature reserves, designed to provide further information on woodland flora and fauna, with a particular focus on woodland mammals and birds;
- protecting threatened woodland plants and animals through special management arrangements with land-holders at south Aranda, Hall and in the Naas Valley;
- initiating a research project in the Molonglo Valley, aimed at understanding how a variety of bird species are utilising the landscape and habitats; and
- undertaking a survey of priority riparian areas, to determine ecosystem characteristics and their conservation needs.

Threatened Species Research

TAMS is now entering the third year of a five year collaborative research project with the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University. The research is focused on ecological restoration of woodlands, particularly in relation to pest species, grazing, fire and fallen timber and associated impacts on maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem functions.

Research by the University of Canberra into the conservation requirement of grassland fauna in the Majura and Jerrabomberra Valleys will continue to be supported.

The successful captive husbandry program for the Northern Corroboree Frog at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve will continue in 2008-09. Action plans will be prepared for newly declared threatened species such as the Little Eagle.

Fisheries Management

Aquatic survey work in streams in and around the ACT will be continued with targeted monitoring programs for species of particular concern.

Investigation of aquatic biota in relation to the implications of environmental flow regime will also continue.

In order to support recreational fishing and improve the ecology of our lakes, regular surveying and fish stocking of Canberra's urban lakes will continue.

Management Planning for Parks and Reserves

Management Plans for Public Land are required under the *Planning and Development Act 2007*. They identify conservation and land use values and issues and set out how prescribed management objectives are to be achieved.

Final drafts of management plans are expected to be considered by the Government during 2008-09. These include Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve, Googong Foreshores, Glebe Park and Black Mountain Peninsula District Park. A revised program addressing both conservation reserves and urban open space planning is being prepared, which will provide a renewed focus on priority areas.

The *ACT Kangaroo Management Plan* is expected to be completed in early 2008-09.

Master plans will be prepared for the Black Mountain Peninsula District Park, the Black Mountain Summit, Weston Park and Eddison Park to guide short-to-medium term facility and landscape upgrades, as well as providing future development strategies for these areas.

Pest Plant and Animal Management 2008-2009

In 2008-09, priority actions will target follow-up control of Mexican feather grass, a recent incursion into the ACT; continued containment and eradication of alligator weed; and continued control efforts for weed species of particular concern including broom, gorse, tall African love grass, serrated tussock, blackberry, St John's wort and African boxthorn. Weed control will be focused in or adjacent to areas of high conservation value. Continued management of pest willows on the Molonglo River and follow-up control on Ginninderra and Jerrabomberra Creek will also be undertaken.

Pest animal priority actions in 2008-09 will continue to be focused toward feral pigs, wild dogs, wild rabbits and feral horses. The Vertebrate Pest Strategy will also be reviewed. The Government will continue its collaborative research work with the Invasive Species Cooperative Research Centre for new techniques for wild pig control, and with the University of Newcastle for fertility control methods for Eastern Grey Kangaroos. In addition to fertility control research, TAMS is undertaking research into the movement of urban kangaroos, to provide information to inform urban planning, population control and conservation management.

Maintaining the Urban Forest

Canberra's urban forest is expanding and ageing. Studies indicate that the exotic and deciduous urban trees planted between 1913 and 1928, and native species planted between 1968 and 1982 are expected to reach the end of their safe and useful life over the next 20 years. The continuing drought conditions have exacerbated this situation.

A program is being developed for the replacement of the urban forest. A report will be developed by December 2009 with implementation to commence in 2009-10.

Biosecurity

The increasing profile of biosecurity, both nationally and internationally, is recognised by the Government as a significant policy and management challenge.

Existing arrangements under the *Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed* and the *Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement* establish a national collaborative approach between industry and governments.

Fire Fuel Management and Fuel Reduction

In accordance with the *Emergencies Act 2004*, TAMS prepares the *Bushfire Operations Plan* (BOP). The 2006-07 BOP has been successfully implemented with prescribed burning, slashing and grazing for the purpose of fuel reduction, physical fuel removal, fire trail upgrades, and staff fire training.

In response to the January 2003 Bushfires, the Government undertook to develop *Sub Regional Fire Management Plans* (SRFMPs) that would complement the strategically focussed SBMP and the work plan oriented BOP. The plans will seek to incorporate land management, ecological and environmental issues and asset protection when looking at fire management on a regional scale. During 2007-08, a number of projects were undertaken to collate the necessary data to provide the basis for the SRFMPs and the plans are programmed to be produced in 2008-09.

The SRFMP development process is occurring in tandem with the development of the SBMP Version 2 to produce complementary documents delivering agreed outcomes.

National Natural Resource Management Programs

In March 2008, the Commonwealth Government announced that the *Caring for our Country* Program would integrate the delivery of the Commonwealth's existing natural resource management programs, the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the National Landcare Program, the Environmental Stewardship Program and the Working on Country Indigenous Land and Environmental Program.

During 2008-09, the Government, with the assistance of the ACT Natural Resource Management Council, will be giving priority to completing the range of projects that are supported by the NHT and National Action Plan funding, as well as delivering a new suite of co-funded projects to be delivered using ACT Government and *Caring for our Country* Program funding.

Animal Welfare and Domestic Animal Management

The Government will continue its comprehensive approach to animal welfare by supporting the development and application of the highest standards in meeting health and welfare requirements of animals. Key areas of activity will include:

- incorporating animal welfare principles into all relevant management practices;
- initiating a progressive review of the Codes of Practice for animal welfare under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*;
- amending the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* to accommodate policy initiatives that reflect changes in community expectations and standards, while aiming towards nationally harmonised legislation; and
- implementing initiatives which give effect to the National Animal Welfare Strategy.

The Government's domestic animal policies aim to promote responsible pet ownership, including ensuring that animal welfare and health standards are continuously met and that the impacts of stray and feral dogs and cats on native wildlife are minimised. The *Domestic Animals Act 2000* was reviewed in 2006-07 and amended in December 2007, with the amended Act commencing on 1 May 2008.

The ACT Government is committed to delivering a Communication Strategy in 2008-09 to explain the features of the amended *Domestic Animals Act 2000* to the Canberra community.

Community Engagement, Education and Support

Grants Programs

The ACT Environment Grants and the ACT Heritage Grants programs will continue to support worthwhile small projects, including:

- conservation planning;
- sustainable landscape development;
- environmental impact reduction;
- Canberra Centenary Celebration;
- community engagement, education and awareness-raising; and
- natural and cultural heritage conservation works.

The Commonwealth Government's *Caring for our Country* Program provides funding to the Territory that complements ACT Government programs in these areas.

Community Awareness Education and Information

Community information and engagement programs will be designed to improve coordination of the delivery of communications supporting the environment. Programs to be delivered include:

- conservation of natural and culture heritage;
- best practice use of solid fuel heaters;
- energy and water conservation; and
- integrating life style choices to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Following the success of the pilot program in 2006-07, the Government will continue to support and deliver the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative, which helps schools become more ecologically sustainable. In 2008-09 the program will:

- develop curriculum support material for teachers;
- support the existing 70 schools and engage more schools;
- provide professional development for teachers;
- produce a best practice guide for elements of the program including water, energy, biodiversity and curriculum development;
- develop an accreditation system for schools; and
- establish an ACT Sustainable Schools Award.

Delivery of the Sustainable Schools initiative will be coordinated with related programs that promote water, energy and waste management efficiencies.

Visitor Services

During 2008-09, visitor services will include the following:

- a new program called '*Healthy Parks: Healthy People*', which will highlight the health benefits from exposure and use of natural areas including parks, forest and open space;
- the Parks Conservation and Lands' component of the TAMS website, which will continue to be reviewed and updated to meet user satisfaction and outdoor recreation information needs;
- new signage, including park entrance signs and visitor information displays in Canberra Nature Park;
- the Sanctuary at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, which creates a unique nature-based recreation, education, research and tourism attraction. The Sanctuary is based around the pre-existing Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve wetlands, and provides a stimulating experience where visitors can observe wildlife in natural settings, supported by innovative information displays and education programs;
- the booking and reservation systems for the temporary use of Territory land, a 'one stop shop' for organisers of events and activities such as camping, orienteering and car rallies, whether on forest plantation, national park, urban parks or open space;
- an annual Customer Usage and Satisfaction Survey for urban parks which will subsequently be implemented and extended to all TAMS managed lands; and
- a large number of ongoing publications, community events, guided activities and volunteer activities.

Indigenous Engagement

Arrangements for participative management in Namadgi National Park will be reviewed following final approval of the Namadgi National Park Management Plan.

The Government will continue its successful Indigenous traineeship program, providing 'on the job' training and support as well as formal study opportunities.

