

8. ENVIRONMENT

Summary Highlights

The 2001-02 Environment budget highlights the Government's continued commitment to best practice in environment protection, environmental management, heritage and cultural environment and nature conservation. In a variety of areas, the ACT continues to take a leadership role in protecting and enhancing environmental values.

The *Greenhouse Strategy* moves into its third year of implementation in 2001-02. The Government is committed to assessing the initial success of the Strategy in meeting its objectives. Major initiatives that will be priorities for 2001-02 include:

- Commercial Sector Energy Efficiency Improvement;
- Community Awareness Program of Greenhouse Issues; and
- Calvary Hospital Energy Conservation Measures.

This financial year sees the final phase in a comprehensive program of legislation review and development, undertaken to meet requirements of the National Competition Policy Review Program. The Government is also committed to ensuring that the ACT's environmental legislation is amongst the best in Australia and the world.

Environmental management continues to be a major focus of the Government as the *Environment Protection Act 1997* enters its fourth year of operation. 2001-02 sees the continuing commitment to national approaches through the National Environment Protection Council and the development of ACT instruments to give effect to the National Environment Protection Measures. Waste issues will also continue to be addressed, primarily through the *No Waste by 2010 Strategy*.

The Government continues to protect the outstanding environmental values in the ACT through its natural conservation framework and land management processes. Major advances that will be made in 2001-02 include:

- implementation of the ACT Trees Policy;
- continued programs to eradicate pest weeds;
- finalisation of the Vertebrate Pest Management Strategy;
- off-reserve conservation including the development of land management agreements and the continuation of the Rural Conservation Fund; and
- establishment of the Sustainable Catchment Capital Works Program.

Significant progress will be made in the development of a joint management agreement with the local indigenous community for the management of Namadgi National Park. Once the agreement has been signed, the Government will work with the native title claimants to establish a Namadgi National Park Joint Management Board, which will be charged with the development of a Plan of Management and participation in the management of the park.

The ACT leads the way in protecting animal welfare. 2001-02 is the first year of implementation of the *Domestic Animal Act 2000*. Amendments of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* also continue, including a ban on cosmetic tail docking. The welfare of layer hens continues to be a significant issue for the ACT and in 2001-02 the Government will implement agreements of the Agricultural and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand.

The Government will continue its efforts in the protection of water resources in the ACT and surrounding region and will implement, in 2001-02, the recommendations of the first review of operations of the *Water Resources Act 1998*. It will also implement the ACT's Integrated Catchment Management Framework and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

Environment ACT has a continuing relationship with the ACT community. In the International Year for Volunteers, the Government will recognise the important contribution made by members of the community through participation in activities such as Parkcare, Landcare, and Waterwatch programs. Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve continues to be a major focus for education activities with the opening of the Education Centre and the further development of the Tidbinbilla Regional Visitor Centre.

The Government will implement the *Nature Based Tourism Strategy* during 2001-02 through which world class nature based tourism facilities and resources will be developed. Initiatives will include completion of development of Tuggeranong Homestead, refurbishment of the Namadgi Visitor Centre and enhancement of facilities at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

The Government will also continue to focus on cultural aspects of the environment, particularly our cultural heritage. During 2001-02, the Government will introduce a new legislative framework for heritage management of the ACT and the outcomes of the Precinct Review will also be implemented. During 2001-02, the Government will explore further opportunities to build on the successes of the Heritage in Schools Program as a way to involve young people in the celebration of our heritage.

Greenhouse Issues

The implementation of the *ACT Greenhouse Strategy* continues to be a major commitment of the Government and the ACT continues to lead Australia in its efforts to reduce the production of greenhouse gases.

The Greenhouse Strategy is now in its third year of implementation. A formal review in 2001-02 will assess the impact of the Strategy, and the effectiveness of particular activities. Priority activities during 2001-02 include:

- *Commercial Sector Energy Efficiency Improvement:* Assistance will be provided to small to medium sized commercial enterprises to undertake energy audits as a precursor to implementing energy efficiency improvement programs, leading to lower greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation and gas consumption.
- *Macarthur House Energy Efficiency Lighting Project:* An energy efficient lighting project for Macarthur House will be used as an innovative pilot and demonstration project for other government and commercial buildings.
- *Community Awareness of Greenhouse Issues:* A local community awareness campaign will be conducted which aims to raise the level of understanding of greenhouse issues in the community and to provide information on actions that individuals and households can take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.
- *Greenfleet:* Greenfleet is a program to which motorists can contribute \$30 a year towards the local planting of trees, and the promotion of fuel efficient technology.
- *Energy Advisory Service (EAS):* The Government continues to fund the operation of an Energy Advisory Service. The EAS offers the ACT community access to free information about how to increase energy efficiency within ACT residential areas.
- *Public Housing Refit:* The program to refit public houses to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse emissions will continue in 2001-02.
- *ActewAGL:* The Government recognises the ongoing contributions of ActewAGL to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through the proposed construction of a further two mini-hydro plants in the ACT, the purchase of electricity from the methane extraction system at ACT landfill sites and the *GreenChoice* scheme for domestic and small business customers.
- *Calvary Hospital:* Calvary Public Hospital will introduce a number of energy conservation measures including lighting, air-conditioning, building management, water management and power factor correction. Funding of \$0.792m has been allocated for this project.

Environmental Legislation

Over the past five years, there has been a significant program of developing new environmental legislation, and reviewing existing legislation. This has been in response to both the National Competition Policy Review Program, and a commitment to creating a best practice legislative base for environmental activity in the ACT.

Review of the Environment Protection Act 1997

A review of operations of the *Environment Protection Act 1997* was undertaken in 2000-01 in response to a statutory requirement. Legislation is currently under development to implement the review's recommendations and will be finalised during 2001-02.

Pest Plant and Animal Legislation

During 2000-01 a discussion paper was released canvassing views on proposed changes to current pest plant and animal legislation. It is expected that revised legislation will be introduced to improve current arrangements during 2001-02.

Plant and Animal Health Legislation

Environment ACT will develop a proposal for new legislation to replace the *Plant Diseases Act 1936* and the *Animal Diseases Act 1993* during 2001-02.

The *Plant Diseases Amendment Bill* will make changes to the *Plant Diseases Act 1936* arising from the National Competition Policy Review.

Stock Act 1991 and Pounds Act 1923

Environment ACT will develop a proposal to amend the *Stock Act 1991* and the *Pounds Act 1923* in accordance with the recommendations arising from the National Competition Policy Review.

The National Agreements regarding a coordinated response to the threat of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE - the human form of 'mad cow disease') will be implemented in the ACT in 2001-02. This will include legislative changes to the *Stock Act 1991*.

National Competition Policy reviews and implementation

There are a number of ACT Acts which have been reviewed under the National Competition Policy program. These reviews have identified issues which require further developmental work. Legislation which Environment ACT intends to review include:

- *Nature Conservation Act 1980*;
- *Animal Welfare Act 1993*; and
- *Lakes Act 1976*.

Environmental Management

National Environment Protection Measures (NEPMs)

The National Environment Protection Council (NEPC) comprises one minister from each participating jurisdiction (the Commonwealth, States and Territories). Complementary legislation in each jurisdiction establishes NEPC and gives it the power to make National Environment Protection Measures (NEPMs).

NEPMs are designed to provide equivalent protection from pollution to all Australians and to ensure that decisions by businesses are not distorted and markets are not fragmented by variations in environmental standards between jurisdictions.

Ambient Air

Under the Ambient Air Quality NEPM all jurisdictions must establish monitoring procedures and commence assessment and reporting by 30 June 2001.

Agreement has now been reached nationally on how to collect, validate and report data for NEPM purposes. Environment ACT has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Health, Housing and Community Care, which runs the Government's monitoring program.

In 2001-02, Environment ACT will implement its Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Plan and submit its first formal air quality report to the National Environment Protection Council. This report, along with those of other jurisdictions, will be produced to an agreed standard.

The National Environment Protection Council has established a Review Team which includes the ACT, to review the particles standard to determine the need for a standard for particles of less than 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) and agree on a standard measurement methodology.

National Environment Protection (Air Toxics) Measure

The Air Toxics NEPM is viewed as a necessary extension of the Ambient Air Quality NEPM. Air toxics are gaseous, aerosol or particulate pollutants (other than the six criteria pollutants) which are present in the air in low concentrations with characteristics such as toxicity or persistence so as to be a hazard to human, plant or animal life.

The National Environment Protection Council has been working to develop agreed national standards, goals and guidelines for air toxics. The ACT will continue to actively participate in these national processes and to consult with local stakeholders.

Movement of Controlled Waste

This NEPM covers the movement of controlled waste into and out of the ACT. During 2001-02, Environment ACT will continue to implement the NEPM through licensing of waste transports under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*. The ACT will provide an annual report to the NEPC to report on the implementation and effectiveness of the measure.

National Pollutant Inventory (NPI)

In 2000-01 the ACT reported twenty one facilities and estimates for diffuse emissions from non-industrial sources such as transport and wood fires. In the reporting year 2001-02, data supplied to the NPI national database from the ACT will only cover industrial facilities. This project is fully funded by the Commonwealth Government.

Used Packaging

ACT's obligations with regard to the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure will be implemented by way of an Industry Waste Reduction Plan (IWRP) under the proposed *Waste Minimisation Act 2001*. This IWRP will require brand owners of used packaging materials to undertake or assure the systematic recovery, reuse and recycling or energy recovery of consumer packaging, in which the brand owners products are sold, and to report to the Environment Management Authority on an annual basis the rates of recovery and types of material recovered.

National Environment Protection (Diesel Vehicle Emissions) Measure

The National Environment Protection Council has been working with the National Roads Transport Commission to develop a set of standards for in-service diesel vehicle emissions and a range of strategies for governments to introduce to meet those standards. The ACT will continue to actively participate in these national processes and to consult with local stakeholders.

Environment Protection Policies

In 2001-02, the ACT will continue to implement a number of Environment Protection Policies (EPPs), developed under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*. These include:

- Motor Sport Noise;
- Outdoor Entertainment;
- Contaminated Sites; and
- Hazardous Materials.

In addition, a strategy regarding Civic Noise will be developed.

Firewood Licensing / Firewood Strategy

The ACT Firewood Code of Practice now forms the basis of a mandatory licensing scheme which has been implemented by amendments to *Environment Protection Act 1997*. To sell or supply firewood in the ACT it is now necessary to obtain an environmental authorisation. This requirement will be implemented during the winter of 2001.

Environment ACT will continue to promote the ACT Firewood Strategy and its compliance program, targeting smoky chimneys throughout the ACT.

State of the Environment Report

The ACT Commissioner for the Environment completed his 2000 Australian Capital Region State of the Environment Report in April 2001 and the Government plans to respond to his recommendations in relation to the ACT in May 2001. During 2001-02, the Government will work to implement the agreed recommendations from the report which aim to achieve a better alignment of data collected about the quality of our environment.

Cooperative Research Centre Partnerships

The Government is working closely with the Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs), contributing to further research in the areas of freshwater ecology, pest animal control and marsupial biology and impacts.

Recently, the CRC for Freshwater Ecology has commenced a major project on the Cotter River to assess the effectiveness of environmental flows. Much of the ACT in-kind contribution to the CRC will be focused on this project.

Management of Bushfire Fuels

The ACT *Bushfire Act* requires that every two years a Bushfire Fuel Management Plan is prepared for all government managed land. The most recent plan was completed in mid 2000 and the draft of the 2002 version will be prepared for public consultation by the end of 2001. This updated plan will refine fire hazard models, improve monitoring processes and identify priority areas for fuel treatments. The plan will also include an implementation schedule to enable agency performance to be measured.

The primary objective of the plan is to outline actions undertaken by land managers in order to reduce the risk of damage occurring to life and property in the ACT from bushfires. Environment ACT must also, however, consider the protection of biodiversity values when determining the most appropriate fire hazard reduction technique to be selected for each given area of land.

Waste Management

Load-Based Discharge Licensing

Environmental authorisations have been issued to the majority of industries required to be licensed under the load-based licensing scheme which was introduced on 20 July 2000 to encourage activity managers to reduce pollutant emissions to our air, water and soil.

The fees required target industries that emit significant levels of pollutants and include a component that varies according to the amount of pollutants actually emitted.

To encourage better environmental outcomes and facilitate reduced costs to business, industries affected by the load based licensing scheme are being asked to submit environment management plans which will form the basis for future authorisation conditions and environmental improvements.

Totalcare

Subject to the appropriate government approvals, Totalcare will establish an Electro-Thermal Deactivation (ETD) clinical waste treatment facility at Mitchell during 2001-02. The new facility uses low frequency radio waves to treat the waste and has advantages over incineration as it does not generate any liquid effluent or regulated air emissions. In conjunction with the new proposal the incinerator will also be replaced with a new state of the art facility.

No Waste by 2010

The Government will continue to implement the *No Waste by 2010 Strategy* through 2001-02. Implementation of the *Next Step in the No Waste Strategy* will continue with the following priorities for 2001-02:

- continue to identify and address factors inhibiting the reuse and recycling of the priority waste streams as identified in the *Next Step*;

- augment education and community programs to better inform, encourage and engender community commitment to achieving the goal of No Waste. A range of strategies will be implemented to encourage commercial businesses to minimise the waste they produce;
- implement best practice waste management throughout all Government agencies and initiate a whole of government approach to the Strategy and to better articulate the social benefits of it to the wider community;
- develop a waste pricing strategy that sets disposal charges at levels that provide incentives to reuse and recycle;
- through contract arrangements with Thiess, establish and operate the Mitchell Resource Management Centre and small vehicle transfer station at Mugga Lane, and establish a No Waste Education Centre to further enhance recovery and educational opportunities in the ACT;
- develop markets for recycled materials to provide waste generators with alternatives to landfill disposal and to recover the true value of resources. Encourage full use of the Australian Reusable Resources Network, which enables generators of wastes to find organisations wanting their materials and thereby assists with the development of alternate markets;
- initiate trials to collect organic wastes from commercial sources;
- evaluate the expressions of interest for the collection and processing of household waste and the processing of commercial waste and in conjunction with the evaluation of the household organic collection trial, determine appropriate new collection and processing systems for the ACT;
- target building and demolition waste through the Development Control Code for Best Practise Waste Management in the ACT and the establish a mixed builder's waste recovery centre;
- participate in the National Packaging Covenant and assess the requirements for waste management regulations; and
- monitor emerging waste reduction techniques and identify the application of future waste management technologies in the ACT.

Nature Conservation

Conservation of Biodiversity

Environment ACT will continue to work closely with organisations which manage remnant grasslands and grassy woodlands on rural land. Initiatives such as the development of a national recovery plan for temperate grasslands and a manual for land managers are strategies to ensure land managers are informed and supported.

As Action Plans for threatened species and ecological communities are now completed, the implementation of these by Environment ACT will continue to be monitored and reported on by the Flora and Fauna Committee. They will also provide assistance to identify potential threats.

Environment ACT is being assisted by several scientific research organisations in a study of the relationship between eastern grey kangaroo populations and their food supply. The organisations include the University of Canberra, the Marsupial Cooperative Research Center, CSIRO and NSW Agriculture. The expected outcome is better informed management of kangaroos by rural landholders and managers of nature conservation areas. Environment ACT is also cooperating with an Australian National University project addressing key recommendations from the 1997 Kangaroo Advisory Committee.

Off-reserve conservation

Off-reserve conservation is an important element of the Government's goal of ecologically sustainable development. Environment ACT will continue to work closely with other government agencies to ensure that the conservation requirements of significant natural assets, such as threatened species and ecological communities, are addressed through planning and development, and land management processes. Off-reserve conservation by land holders will be assisted through advice and information on best practice land management methods.

The Rural Conservation Fund

The Rural Conservation Fund is a financial assistance scheme directed at providing support for projects on leased rural land that contribute to the conservation needs of the biodiversity of the ACT. It commenced operations in May 2000. Greening Australia is a partner in the project, promotes the fund and assists in the application process. In-kind support for the project is also provided by the rural community.

Operation of the Fund is overseen by the Rural Conservation Fund Advisory Committee. The Committee advises the Minister on project proposals and recommends relevant funding.

The financial base for the Rural Conservation Fund is a combined contribution by the Government and the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT). By the end of the 2000-01 financial year, a total of \$0.197m in NHT funding had been received. The Rural Conservation Fund is proving to be a sound investment in conservation of off-reserve biodiversity assets in the ACT.

Feral animal management

Development of the draft ACT Vertebrate Pest Strategy was completed during 2000-01. The role of this strategy is to establish a framework for the refinement of existing practices for the planning and management of vertebrate issues.

Pest programs which the ACT will continue to be involved with during 2001-02 include:

- Namadgi program to monitor wild goat populations;
- the Joint NSW/ACT Wild Dog Control Program;
- the wild pig control program ; and
- rabbit control and monitoring programs.

The Environment ACT vertebrate pest control officer coordinated over 40 feral animal control programs in the previous year. These types of programs will continue during 2001-02.

The Government will continue to develop guidelines for safe and humane feral animal management in rural and reserve areas. These guidelines will be included in the Environment ACT Pest Management Manual covering both weeds and feral animal management.

Sustainable Catchment Capital Works Program

The Sustainable Catchment Capital Works Program will commence in 2001-02 continuing work addressing environmental degradation problems resulting from past land and rural management practices. Projects will be developed in consultation with land managers, landcare groups and representatives from rural communities. This program has been provided with \$0.1m in funding.

Weeds management

All land managers, both private and government, are responsible for weed control. This function is undertaken cooperatively between the Government and community in line with the ACT Weeds Strategy. Over \$0.325m of capital works funding was invested in the Environment ACT weeds program during the previous year in addition to agency contribution, external grants and volunteer effort. Operational expenditure and volunteer contributions to the value of approximately \$0.6m in 2001-02 will continue the implementation of the ACT Weeds Strategy. An additional \$0.150m has been identified in the capital works program for exotic weed control.

Rehabilitation of the Boboyan Pine Plantation continued in 2000-01 with an additional \$0.110m spent on removal of pines from this area of Namadgi National Park. This program will continue in 2001-02.

There are a number of weeds species which continue to be of particular concern in the ACT, with the following species being identified for priority action:

- The willow control program will continue in 2001-02 with all government land managers targeting areas of Woolshed Creek and the Molonglo River.
- Over \$0.085m of capital works funding will be directed towards woody weed species, particularly blackberry and sweet briar control in Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.
- Funding will again to be allocated to provide herbicides to rural lessees to supplement their efforts to control agricultural weeds such as serrated tussock, African lovegrass and Chilean needlegrass.

Fisheries Management

Fisheries Management will be guided by the new *Fisheries Act 2000*, which requires the development of a Fisheries Management Plan and aims to conserve the ACT's native fish population.

The Government has released the *Fish Stocking Plan for the ACT: 2001-2005*, which outlines the Government's stocking program for urban lakes and ponds. In 2001-02 Murray Cod will be stocked in Lake Tuggeranong and Yerrabi Pond, with Golden Perch to be stocked in Gungahlin Pond, and Googong Reservoir.

Land Management Agreements

Land Management Agreements (LMAs) establish a framework for ecologically sustainable management of leased rural land, and are negotiated with each rural lessee as they apply to renew their lease. They address issues such as landcare requirements, fire and drought protection, and natural resource management. Nature conservation issues identified in a LMA may lead to a proposal for funding by the Rural Conservation Fund.

LMAs are a collaborative effort between Government and landholders to achieve production, conservation and protection goals in an integrated and ecologically sustainable way.

Soil Conservation

Most soil erosion in the ACT is in the form of gully and stream bank erosion. Environment ACT commenced implementation of the soil conservation priority report commissioned in 1999-2000. The first of the identified major stream rehabilitation projects was completed in 2001 with the installation of an erosion control structure on Spring Station Creek. A second structure on this creek is planned for commencement in the coming year.

A Rapid Stream Assessment of the condition of ACT streams was finalised in 2001. The aim of this report was to identify degraded stretches of waterways for priority action. The information will be used to strategically allocate funding for restoration projects, and will be incorporated into LMAs between the Government and affected rural lessees. Resources provided through landcare extension and the ACT Riparian Restoration fund will assist both farmers and Environment ACT staff to develop and implement sustainable improvements in ACT river health.

Management Planning

Management Plans for Public Land are required under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*. During 2000-01 a management plan for the Lower Molonglo River Corridor was developed and it is anticipated the final plan will be released in 2001-02. A Wetlands Policy will be developed and finalised during 2001-02.

2001-02 will also see the development of a new management plan for Namadgi National Park. This will be significantly influenced by an agreement between the Government and the Native Title Claimants to enter into a joint management arrangement for the park. Once this agreement has been finalised, the Namadgi National Park Management Board will be established, to assist in the preparation of management plan, and in the management of the park.

Trees

The draft Trees Policy and a proposal for the establishment of a Significant Tree Register were released for public consultation in April 2001 following the establishment of legislation giving interim protection to trees likely to be found significant. This was in response to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Services report on tree management and protection released in May 2000. In order to protect trees that would be identified as significant under the new scheme, interim protection legislation was introduced in April 2001 which protected all trees of a certain height or circumference. Individuals wishing to conduct a 'tree damaging activity' are now required to apply for an approval from the Conservator. This scheme will be in place until the introduction of the Significant Tree Register.

The final Tree Management and Protection Policy (the 'Trees Policy') and Significant Tree Register will be released in July 2001.

Animal Welfare and Companion Pet Ownership

New Pet Laws

The Strategic Companion Animal Management Package (SCAMP) is the Government's comprehensive approach to issues associated with domestic animals.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) had significant input into issues included within the package. As a result of SCAMP, the *Domestic Animal Act 2000* was passed in December 2000 and will be implemented in 2001-02. It includes measures such as compulsory desexing of dogs and cats born after 21 June 2001 and compulsory registering of dogs by eight weeks of age. The *Animal Welfare Act 1992* was also amended and introduced best practice practices including a ban on cosmetic tail docking for dogs.

Codes of Practice

Codes of practice are made under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*. As part of the broad package of reforms introduced, the Code of Practice for the Sale of Animals in the ACT, the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats in the ACT and the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs in the ACT will also be implemented during 2001-02. In 2001-02, with assistance by the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, the five additional Codes of Practice will commence.

Dogs-on-Line

An initiative which aims to improve customer services includes a project called 'Dogs-on-Line'. 'Dogs-on-Line' comprises a powerful intranet database network used to manage dog registrations and legislative compliance with the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*. It also provides an internet site to improve access to domestic animal services.

Layer Hen Welfare

The ACT has participated in the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ). ARMCANZ has been developing a national approach to

improving the welfare of layer hens. Prior to this, the ACT led Australia in initiatives which included the labelling of eggs laid and sold in the ACT. During 2001-02, the ACT will implement the decision to increase the size of cages of layer hens.

Assistance to the RSPCA

The Government supports the ACT branch of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in their animal welfare activities, and funds the Society to fulfil the role of the Animal Welfare Inspectorate under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*. Each year, as part of the Environment Grants program, funding is provided for the inspectorate service, and assistance for the wildlife and shelter activities undertaken by the ACT RSPCA. In 2000-01, additional funding was provided for an equipment fit-out for the ACT RSPCA in-house veterinary surgery. Support for the ACT RSPCA will continue in 2001-02.

Water Resources Management

Implementation of Review of Water Resources Act 1998

During 2000-01 a review of the operations of the *Water Resources Act 1998* was conducted in response to statutory requirements. During 2001-02, Environment ACT will respond to the outcomes of this review.

Participation in the Murray Darling Basin Commission

ACT continues its involvement in the Murray-Darling Basin Commission which started in 1997. In 2001-02, the ACT will continue discussions with other jurisdictions to identify how a water cap will apply to the ACT. In addition, the ACT will be involved in implementing the Salinity Strategy and Integrated Catchment Management Policy Statement and the development of a Sustainable Rivers Audit to assess the health of the Basin's rivers.

Integrated Catchment Management Framework

The Integrated Catchment Management Framework provides the foundation on which secure long-term sustainable development can be planned and put in place. An implementation plan was completed in 2001. The Framework will be reviewed every two years to ensure that it continues to reflect community and government aspirations and results in more sustainable land and water management practices. Work on Catchment Group sub plans continues, with the employment of a Catchment Coordinator to assist groups to develop plans, along the lines of the work previously undertaken by the Ginninderra Creek and Sullivan's Creek Catchment Groups.

Salinity and Water Quality

The issues of salinity and water quality are emerging as major environmental issues for the ACT and Australia as a whole. The ACT has been working towards an inter-governmental agreement. 2001-02 will see the implementation of this Agreement, including the implementation of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. The ACT will be working closely with NSW in the Murrumbidgee Catchment to implement the Agreement.

Environmental Education and Community Awareness

The Government raises awareness of environmental and heritage issues with the ACT community through publications, a web site, the Environment Information Centre and Helpline (phone 620 79777). The Environment ACT telephone Helpline and Environment Information Centre, located at Macarthur House in Lyneham, offers advice and publications on a broad range of environmental issues.

The ACT continues an ongoing commitment to increasing the community's awareness of environmental issues. During 2001-02, the ACT will participate in a number of local events including the World Environment Day Festival, the Canberra Show and the Science Festival, and highlight environmental issues and achievements.

Community Participation

Waterwatch

Waterwatch is a community driven program that uses community water monitoring networks to further effective partnerships between community members, government and the private sector to understand and protect the natural environment. Within the ACT region Waterwatch operates in 10 catchments with about 100 participating groups. Waterwatch is also utilised as a monitoring and evaluation tool for on-ground projects and catchment health assessment by Landcare, Parkcare and Bushcare groups.

Parkcare

Key recommendations outlined in the ACT Volunteer Recruitment and Promotional Strategy developed in 1999 were implemented in 2000-01. The main initiatives of the strategy were to attract greater publicity and participation for the volunteer programs conducted in national park and nature reserves areas. A new promotional brochure was produced, feedback sought from participants and quarterly editions of the *Scribbly Gum* newsletter produced.

A comprehensive program of activities was developed during 2001 to coincide with the United Nations declared International Year of the Volunteer. In March 2001, there was a focus on recognising and rewarding the contribution of volunteers working for the environment. There are currently 15 active Parkcare groups. While the Parkcare Program has been very successful, the need to increase the participation of young people in the program has been identified. In 2000-01, activities were planned during Youth Week for the first time. During 2001-02, initiatives to increase youth participation will include the establishment of a university based Parkcare group.

Landcare

Environment ACT has received a further year of Natural Heritage Trust funding for Landcare support in the ACT. In 2001-02 the Government will continue to be involved in actively promoting landcare and supporting landcare groups. Currently there are seven active rural landcare groups and 17 active urban landcare groups including two catchment groups which employ their own (part-time) coordinators.

The ACT Landcare Coordinator will continue to organise a range of activities, including assistance to rural landcare projects, field days, workshops and participation in environmental

events. The ACT Landcare Awards event to reward and recognise volunteer achievement will be staged in September 2001.

A demonstration wetland project in the O'Connor sub-catchment of Sullivans Creek is due for completion in 2001. A contribution of \$0.165m for this project, which is located within the most populated catchment in the ACT, was provided by CIC Pendon and Community Housing Canberra, both active participants in the ACT land development industry.

Ten Olympic Landcare Projects were completed during 2000-01 and a number of Property Management Planning workshops were also completed.

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

The Government is committed to enhancing the ACT as a destination for school based tourism. Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve has recently opened its Education Centre with excellent bookings and positive feedback. The Education Centre will build on the well-established reputation of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve as the ACT's premier environmental tourism venue.

The Tidbinbilla Regional Visitor Information Centre is developing and evolving with the retail, cafe and interpretive areas being well received and utilised by the visitors. The Centre has become increasingly involved with the tourism industry through partnership arrangements such as the Tourist Drive Five and the National Capital Attractions Association.

Recent additions to the captive wildlife collection continue to attract new and existing visitors. Red Necked Pademelons, Bustards, Regent Honeyeaters, White Faced Herons, Bush Thick-knees, Long Nosed Potoroos and Little Pied Cormorants are becoming features of the collections. The release of two of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve's Brush Tailed Rock Wallabies into a protected area in NSW generated great media and visitor attention. This program is expected to expand in 2001-02 with an increase in numbers of this endangered species.

Natural Heritage Trust

The Government is a partner with the Commonwealth in providing grants to the community and government agencies in the ACT and region through the Natural Heritage Trust.

In 2000-01, \$1.010m was distributed in grants through the Bushcare, Endangered Species, Farm Forestry, Fisheries Action, Landcare, Murray-Darling 2001, Waterwatch and Wetlands programs. The Government administers the assessment, monitoring and acquittal of grants as well as the distribution of devolved grants for restoration of streambank vegetation and through the *Bushcare in the Bush Capital* Program. This Natural Heritage Trust funding is matched by Government and local community investment.

2001-02 is the final year of the current Natural Heritage Trust partnership agreement. Announcements about any replacement Commonwealth program are likely to be made in the context of the 2001 Federal election.

ACT Environment Grants

The 2000-01 ACT Environment Grants Program funded projects at a total cost of \$0.385m. The categories covered were Animal Welfare and Management Services, Environmental Advocacy and Promotion, Environmental Education, Research and Information, and On-ground Environmental. Successful projects are announced at the World Environment Day Fair.

Environment and Heritage Awareness Strategy

The Environment and Heritage Awareness Strategy is being progressively implemented during 2001-02. The strategy details initiatives to promote Environment ACT as a single point of contact for environment and heritage information and to enhance the cooperative arrangements with the community in protecting, preserving and promoting the natural and cultural environment.

Interpretation Strategies

The implementation of priority actions outlined in the Tidbinbilla and Namadgi Interpretation Strategies were undertaken in 2000-01. Actions included:

- publications review for Tidbinbilla;
- evaluation of guided activities at Namadgi and Tidbinbilla;
- redevelopment of the publication *A brief guide to Namadgi*;
- completion of interpretation displays for the Honeysuckle and Cotter precincts;
- development of materials for the Tidbinbilla Nature Education Centre, and
- evaluation and planning for the future direction of Namadgi Visitor Centre.

ACT Nature Based Tourism Strategy

The ACT Nature Based Tourism Strategy confirms the Government's commitment to sustainable nature based tourism development in the Territory. In implementing this strategy, the Government will:

- contribute to the conservation of the ACT's natural and heritage assets;
- increase the recognition of the ACT as a unique nature based tourism destination;
- provide quality nature based tourism products and experiences; and
- foster the development of an effective, efficient and profitable industry.

The strategies and actions outlined in the strategy are a combination of short, medium and long-term measures. There are 23 specific initiatives identified. These include:

- further development at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve including the completion of the Education Centre and the construction of new wildlife enclosures;
- the refurbishment of the Namadgi Visitor Centre; and
- the development of a new walking track strategy for the ACT.

One priority initiative will be the completion of development of Tuggeranong Homestead. Further restoration of existing buildings and the development of new facilities will be undertaken in 2001-02. The site will also be used for events such as markets and exhibitions.

Community Partnership Database

The Government has been developing a database to support the partnership between Government and the community in caring for the ACT environment. The database provides information on community organisations, activities, sites and resources relating to environment and heritage in the ACT and the region. During 2001-02 it is planned that this database will be incorporated into a website as part of *Canberra Connect*.

Our Cultural Environment

Heritage promotion and awareness

This program will contribute towards increasing public awareness in the interpretation of heritage and enhancing cultural heritage tourism. The celebration of heritage will be highlighted through the Heritage Discovery Program which will include heritage trails and signage and augment the annual Heritage Awards and Heritage Grant Programs.

ACT Heritage Festival

The 2001 *ACT Heritage Festival* was held from 31 March to 22 April, and hosted 127 events incorporating 60 community organisations. This annual Festival will be celebrated for the 21st consecutive year in 2001-02. International years and celebrations will be linked to the Heritage Festival in future years and new audiences will be targeted to ensure that the festival continues to be fresh and relevant to the ACT community. Young people will be encouraged to take a greater role in the Festival in future years.

Heritage Education in Schools

During 2000-01, funding was provided for an innovative and exciting project titled 'Heritage Education in Schools'. This was seen as a key initiative to encourage young people to become more involved with local heritage. The project encourages school children to develop an awareness and understanding of their local heritage and increase their involvement in the ACT Heritage Festival. The project will be continued and expanded during 2001-02 and will build on the successes of the initial project and provide opportunities for more young people to be involved in our local heritage.

Heritage Assets

Government continues to improve management of ACT heritage assets

The further development of Tuggeranong Homestead will be a major activity during 2001-02. This will be supported by the management agreement established with a private operator for the management of the Homestead over the next several years. Work has been continuing on restoration of the Homestead using a Centenary of Federation grant of \$0.675m. In 2001-02

further works will be undertaken on new facilities, including a new toilet block and car park and further restoration of buildings. New events are planned for the Homestead, including markets and exhibitions.

Management Plans for the Tuggeranong Schoolhouse, Yarralumla Woolshed, Albert Hall and Duntroon Woolshed were finalised during 2000-01, these will continue to be implemented in 2001-02.

The ACT also manages the Carousel Organ, which has been provided with funding of \$0.005m towards further restoration. A Heritage Grant of \$0.006m has also been provided to the Carousel Organ Restoration Group to create a new façade for the organ and to allow the organ to be operational for performances and displays.

Aboriginal Heritage

An Aboriginal Heritage Coordinator has been employed and an Aboriginal Heritage Registration Strategy is being developed in consultation with the local Aboriginal community. The suburban and district registrations of known Aboriginal heritage have begun, with 150 places being forwarded for entry onto an interim Heritage Places Register.

Educational and interpretation opportunities are also being developed through Aboriginal projects under the ACT Heritage Grants Program. The Aboriginal heritage interpretation officer assists in the development of educational programs at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, guided walks, visiting educational institutions and interpretative activities within the ACT. The officer has also provided considerable assistance in organising Indigenous components of the ACT Heritage festival, and has participated in surveys of sites of interest to local Aboriginal groups.

There is Aboriginal representation on the ACT Heritage Council, which is establishing a formal consultation mechanism with local indigenous communities.

The progress towards an agreement to establish joint management arrangements for Namadgi National Park with the Native Title Claimants will also provide greater opportunities to focus on Aboriginal heritage. The proposed agreement will ensure that the local indigenous communities will be involved in the management of the park, and will create employment opportunities.

Heritage Precinct Review

A review of development controls in the ACT's garden city planned heritage precincts commenced in 2000-01. The review was an outcome of the 1999 seminar, Managing Change in Heritage Precincts and is aimed at ensuring that the significant features of Canberra's garden city plan are better protected. The outcomes of the review will be implemented during 2001-02.

Heritage Advisory Service

The Heritage Advisory Service has provided professional heritage conservation and architectural advice on the restoration and sympathetic adaptation of heritage properties since

June 2000. The Service has been well patronised by the community and has improved the quality of Development Applications being submitted to Planning and Land Management for the Heritage Council's advice. Support for this service will continue in 2001-02.

Heritage Legislation Review

As a result of the ACT Heritage Function Review conducted in 1999, workshops addressing the effectiveness and appropriateness of the current heritage protection regime were conducted in November 2000. The workshops, attended by community, professional and government representatives, led to the preparation of a discussion paper on legislative reform. This has formed the basis of a community discussion paper prepared by Environment ACT which was released for comment in 2001. New legislation for heritage in the ACT will be developed through 2001-02.

