



ACT Government

2003-2004 BUDGET

OVER \$1 MILLION FOR WEED CONTROL TO PRESERVE BUSH CAPITAL

Chief Minister and Minister for the Environment, Jon Stanhope said that his Government's Budget would ensure Canberra remained the Bush Capital, by injecting \$1.1 million over four years into combating a potential weed disaster following the January fires.

"Following the loss of 155,000 hectares of tree and grass coverage in recent fires, our fragile environment is now susceptible to weed growth," Mr Stanhope said. "However, my Government's 'Plan for a Sustainable Bush Capital in the New Millennium' gets the financial support it needs to ensure weed infestations are controlled and our unique environment is protected.

"This year's Budget injects \$300,000 a year for three years into controlling major weed infestations following the 2001 and 2003 fires. Weed suppression is required in areas of disturbed land, such as the 250km of fire trails and the land left exposed due to fire damage."

The funding provides for an important program to stop the significant threat to landscape recovery caused by post-fire weeds and the added impact of the drought. Exotic weeds will flourish and be an ongoing serious threat in the ACT until the landscape has regenerated to a sufficient level to compete with them.

Given the significant problems weeds impose, the Stanhope Government has also committed an additional \$200,000 for continuation of weed eradication in reserves, agistment lands and associated public areas.

The new funding will be largely coordinated by the ACT Weeds Working Group, which has links to Environment ACT, Canberra Urban Parks and Places, ACT Forests and the DUS Land Group.

"Extra trained and qualified staff will be contracted to work with ACT Parks and Conservation employees to combat weeds, in a manner that has proven successful in the past," Mr Stanhope said. "Our injection of funds will extend an existing weed suppression program to ensure the environment is protected.

"We have identified priority areas for weed control within the burnt areas, and have been thorough in our costings for the project by considering all factors including the cost of chemicals, time factors and administrative costs.

"The expert advice we have received on this matter says that our funding will provide the right program and resources to ensure the weed problem is fought and won.

"This is an important initiative that will deliver on my Government's promise to ensure that Canberra remains the Bush Capital. We will continue to rebuild our city, community and environment," Mr Stanhope concluded.

Statement ends.

Media Release

