

8. ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

The 2000-01 Environment Budget highlights the Government's continued commitment to the conservation and enhancement of the Territory's natural and cultural environment. This Budget secures the ACT as a leader in greenhouse initiatives, and best practice environmental management and environment protection.

The Government is building on the ACT's already established environmental initiatives and outcomes from previous years, and forging a path towards best practice environmental management.

The ACT Greenhouse Strategy is at the forefront of environmental protection in Australia. We are the first state or territory in Australia to set greenhouse gas targets and develop a funded strategy to achieve them. The ACT is the first jurisdiction in Australia to complete Milestones 3 and 4 in the Cities for Climate Protection program in recognition of the initiatives outlined in the Strategy. The 2000-01 Budget confirms the Government's commitment to leadership in environment protection measures.

Implementation of stages 1 and 2 of the ACT Greenhouse Strategy forms the groundwork for best practice greenhouse gas reduction measures in Australia.

Stages 1 and 2 initiatives include:

- a pilot Water Tune-Up Incentive Program;
- a pilot retrofit program to improve the energy efficiency of ACT public housing;
- ACT Government agencies to audit energy usage in government buildings and facilities, and develop an implementation plan to achieve reduced energy usage targets;
- progressive extension and upgrading of the Territory's cyclepath network;
- recovery and use of landfill methane gas to generate electricity;
- purchase of landfill methane electricity for street lighting and schools; and
- revegetation programs which provide increased carbon sequestration.

The Government continues its commitment to reducing environmental threats through feral animal and pest plant control, and scientific plans for the conservation of threatened and endangered species. Off-reserve conservation provides measures for the management of unreserved rural lands, through such initiatives as the Rural Conservation Fund. The Fund provides financial assistance for the conservation of biodiversity in off-reserve land.

The Natural Heritage Trust, ACT Environment Grants and ACT Heritage Grants will again support community-based natural and cultural environment projects. With just under \$1m of

Natural Heritage Trust funding being secured for 1999-2000, a similar figure is expected for 2000-01. \$468,000 is available through the ACT Environment Grants, and \$239,000 through the ACT Heritage Grants.

Environment industries in the ACT are supported by targeted initiatives of the Business Development area of the Chief Minister's Department, and through the ACT Science and Technology Council, which enhances the demonstrated excellence in environmental management exhibited by the ACT.

The 2000-01 Environment budget highlights the following initiatives:

- Passage of new domestic animal control legislation;
- Implementation of stages 1 and 2 of the ACT Greenhouse Strategy;
- Implementation of the Integrated Catchment Management Framework;
- Development of an asset management strategy for designated heritage assets;
- Commencement of a review of the *Environment Protection Act 1997*;
- Commencement of Stage 4 of the rehabilitation of Boboyan Pines;
- Introduction of new fisheries legislation; and
- Introduction of a new Heritage Advisory Service.

Greenhouse Issues

The Government released the ACT Greenhouse Strategy in January 2000. The Strategy includes specific measures to assist the government, community and business to reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by 700,000 tonnes by 2008, stabilising emissions at 1990 levels. The ACT is the first State or Territory to set a greenhouse gas target.

Four elements of the Greenhouse Strategy targeted at residential properties are of particular note.

Energy Advisory Service (EAS)

The Energy Advisory Service (EAS) was established in early 1999 to provide free, independent advice to home owners on ways to make houses more energy efficient. Operated by the Master Builders Association under contract, the service allows face to face meetings with building and energy use modification experts.

Water Tune-up Incentive Program

The EAS was expanded in late 1999 to include the Government's Water Tune-up Incentive Program, which subsidises the purchase and installation of energy efficient showerheads, water flow restrictors and thermostat adjustments.

Photovoltaic Rebate Program

Environment ACT has contracted the EAS to provide ACT residents with information about the Commonwealth funded Photovoltaic Rebate Program. Cash rebates are available to householders to install grid-connected or stand alone photovoltaic systems.

Housing Initiatives

The ACT Housing retrofit program will be expanded in 2000-01 to provide better insulation and draught prevention for 1000 houses. This program commenced in 1998-99 to improve the energy efficiency and comfort of public housing.

Highlights for other housing include:

- a mandatory four star energy efficiency rating for all new houses;
- mandatory installation of insulation in new extensions to existing dwellings; and
- mandatory disclosure of house energy efficiency ratings to prospective purchasers and tenants.

In addition to initiatives outlined in the previous summary, the Government will lead by example through the following initiatives introduced to assist in the delivery of emission reductions in the ACT:

- set targets to reduce energy consumption of ACT Government buildings by 25% by 2008;
- reduce the emissions of the Government vehicle fleet by 15% by the year 2008; and
- purchase accredited green power for a proportion of ACT Government electricity needs.

Furthermore, minimum energy performance standards will be introduced into the commercial sector through the Building Code of Australia. The Government will establish an ACT Region Managing Energy for Profits Program to assist businesses to reduce their energy consumption.

The Government recognises the contributions of ACTEW to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, through:

- *GreenChoice* scheme for domestic and small business customers;
- innovative energy efficiency measures for housing;

- construction of a mini-hydro plant at Mt Stromlo; and
- the purchase of electricity from the methane extraction system at ACT landfill.

Environmental Management

Review of the Environment Protection Act

The ACT *Environment Protection Act 1997* was developed to amalgamate major ACT environmental legislation into one Act, and came into effect in June 1998. To fulfil legislative obligations, a review of the operations of the Act will commence in 2000-01.

Strategic Companion Animal Management Package

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. The Government tabled an exposure draft of SCAMP in October 1999. SCAMP was advertised for public consultation and submissions on the content of the package closed on 29 February 2000.

The revised SCAMP documentation is likely to be debated in the Legislative Assembly in the first quarter of 2000-01, with the *Domestic Animals Bill 1999* (the Bill), scheduled to commence on 1 January 2001. The enactment of the Bill will also see the revision of three existing Codes of Practice under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*:

- *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.*

The first Code of Practice will replace the existing *Code of Practice for the Sale of Animals at Pet Shops in the ACT* and the other two Codes of Practice will align current standards with the requirements of the new legislation.

Pending the passage of the *Domestic Animals Bill 1999* through the Legislative Assembly, Domestic Animal Services will be market tested in 2000-01.

Fisheries Legislation

The Government introduced new fisheries legislation aimed at conserving the ACT's native fish population. The objectives of the legislation are:

- to conserve native fish species and their habitats;

- to manage, sustainably, the fisheries of the Territory by applying the principles of ecologically sustainable development;
- to provide high quality and viable recreational fishing;
- to cooperate with other Australian jurisdictions in sustaining fisheries and protecting native fish species; and
- \$8,000 will be spent on the restocking of native fish species into ACT waterways, double the amount spent in 1999-2000.

National Environment Protection Measures (NEPMs)

Ambient Air

Implementation of the Ambient Air Quality NEPM has been under way since 1998. Discussions between Environment ACT and the Department of Health and Community Care, which collects Canberra's air quality data, have resulted in agreement about how the NEPM data will be collected and reported.

In 2000-01, implementation will continue as state and territory monitoring plans are completed and the first reporting year for ambient air quality commences on 1 January 2001. By June 2002 all Australian states and territories will be producing ambient air quality reports to a common standard so that air quality across Australia can be compared.

National Pollutant Inventory (NPI)

In the first NPI reporting year of 1999-2000 the ACT reported twelve facilities. In the reporting year of 2000-01, data supplied to the NPI national database from the ACT will cover an expanded list of industrial facilities as well as estimations of diffuse emissions from non-industrial sources such as cars. This will mean data on estimated emissions from private sources and small industry will be on the national database for the first time. This project is fully funded by the Commonwealth Government. Funds of \$132,000 were provided in 1999-2000, and the level of funding for 2000-01 is anticipated to be at a similar level.

Movement of Controlled Waste

On 17 March 2000 the National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) for the Movement of Controlled Waste between States and Territories came into effect. The NEPM covers the movement of controlled waste to and from the ACT.

The movement of waste within the ACT is currently not covered by legislation. As a result, the Government will seek to extend the coverage of the *Environment Protection Act 1997* to include the licensing of waste transporters. This will provide for the regulation of waste transporters and generators through the issuing of environmental authorisations.

During 2000-01 the necessary regulations will be implemented to ensure that waste generators and transporters take full responsibility for any waste they produce or transport.

Cleaner Production Strategy

The national Cleaner Production Strategy, *Towards Sustainability – Achieving Cleaner Production in Australia*, was produced in December 1998, and endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC). Cleaner production covers a huge range of improved environmental practices from reduced globe wattage in lights to the re-use of water for irrigation. Some bodies are already applying cleaner production principles. Following the refurbishment and adoption of cleaner production principles at the ACT Legislative Assembly, energy use was reduced by 60%.

The ACT Cleaner Production Strategy will be developed during 2000-01, and will outline ways in which the Government will work with industry, the community and other government agencies to encourage businesses to take up the principles of cleaner production.

Firewood Strategy

The ACT Firewood Strategy is moving into the second season of operation with Environment ACT continuing the community public education campaign, targeting local shopping centres. Environment ACT's compliance program will target smoky chimneys throughout the ACT, with inspectors providing residents with information on correct operation of solid fuel stoves. The Government will continue to promote the ACT Firewood Code of Practice, seeking commitments from eligible wood merchants to follow the Code. Promotion of mixed fuel loads will continue into 2001, targeting the use of a diverse range of timbers, particularly pinewood. The Government has recently signed on four new merchants under the Code of Practice. The ACT will also seek a national approach to wood heater standards for the use of sustainable timber through AQNZECC and the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC).

State of the Environment Report

The Commissioner for the Environment has been working to improve the standard of State of Environment reporting across the Australian Capital Region. With funding from the Commonwealth's Local Government Development Program, the Commissioner released in May 2000 an electronic template for State of Environment reporting that can be used by any local government. In partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Futures, the Commissioner also developed an Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) assessment tool for use by local governments for analysing and reporting their ESD performance.

Work continued on preparation of the Year 2000 State of the Environment Report for the ACT and Region. This Report is scheduled for completion by November 2000.

Cooperative Research Centre Partnerships

The Government is working closely with the Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs), contributing to further research in the areas of sustainable tourism, freshwater ecology, pest

animal control and marsupial biology. The Government contributes \$350,000, and a further \$49,000 of in-kind contributions, to three ACT-based CRCs. Research of this calibre ensures the ACT has access to information on which to make informed decisions on environmental resource management.

Nature Conservation

In 1997, the Government adopted the *ACT Nature Conservation Strategy* as a policy framework for the coordinated and strategic approach to the protection of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological processes.

Conservation of threatened species and ecological communities

Action plans

The remaining 11 action plans for declared endangered or vulnerable species and ecological communities in the ACT were tabled in the Legislative Assembly in October 1999, completing all 22 – a first for any jurisdiction in Australia.

Implementation of the action plans is undertaken progressively by the responsible government agencies and coordinated by Environment ACT. The Flora and Fauna Committee, the ACT Government's expert advisory committee established to advise the Government on nature conservation matters, has commenced a program of annual reviews of progress in the implementation of the action plans.

The Government responded immediately to the Action Plan for Yellow Box, Red Gum and Grassy Woodlands by announcing that it intended to protect a total of approximately 100 ha of woodland at Mulligans Flat, Mt Majura, Conder and East O'Malley. The necessary changes to the Territory Plan are expected to be processed during 2000-01. These areas are adjacent to existing reserves and will contribute to the conservation of endangered woodland habitats.

Information about threatened species and ecological communities will be made available to rural lessees when they prepare Land Management Agreements for farmed land. Protection of high value habitats will also be a priority for support from the Rural Conservation Fund operating in partnership with Greening Australia, as will the protection of riparian zones. Ensuring threatened species are protected in both reserves and in off-reserve land will be a continuing focus for the Government, and conservation management guidelines will continue to be developed to assist land managers.

Off-reserve conservation

Despite over 50% of the Territory being reserved for nature conservation purposes, not all ecosystems are adequately represented. Woodland and grassland ecosystems in particular

often occur as fragmented remnants that are unreserved and continue to be subject to threat from urban development or incompatible land use.

A range of off-reserve conservation measures are applied to these areas of concern:

- memorandums of understanding have been developed with Commonwealth agencies for the protective management of threatened species and communities and other nature conservation values on Commonwealth managed land in the ACT;
- the Rural Conservation Fund, which commenced this month, was established to provide financial assistance to rural lessees for special conservation works on their land. Land Management Agreements will specifically address nature conservation issues; and
- the principles of ecologically sustainable development are applied responsibly in greenfields and urban development planning.

Action plans have been developed for the conservation of all declared threatened species and communities. They identify off-reserve conservation measures to complement protection in nature reserves as the most appropriate strategy in many cases.

The Rural Conservation Fund

The Government has established the Rural Conservation Fund as a financial assistance scheme for the off-reserve conservation of biodiversity. It will support projects for leased rural land that is important to the conservation of the biodiversity of the ACT. Operation of the Fund is overseen by the Rural Conservation Fund Advisory Committee.

Greening Australia is a strategic partner with the Government in the Rural Conservation Fund. Greening Australia will undertake a preliminary assessment of projects, help with the development of project applications and advise on the implementation of projects. The 2000-01 ACT Environment Grants Program will provide \$48,000 for Greening Australia to provide this service for the first year of the scheme.

The base funding for the Rural Conservation Fund is \$225,000, consisting of contributions from the Government and the Natural Heritage Trust.

Feral animal management

The *ACT Nature Conservation Strategy* contains a commitment to develop a vertebrate pest management strategy for the ACT. A steering committee has been established comprising of members from Environment ACT, the Conservation Council of the ACT and SE NSW, the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee and CSIRO. Drafting of a vertebrate pest management strategy has commenced. Community consultation will occur, with a final document expected at the end of 2000.

Following on from the Vertebrate Pest Strategy, the Government will be developing guidelines for feral animal management in rural and reserve areas. The guidelines will be included in an

expanded Pest Management Manual covering both weeds and feral animal management. In addition, to further improve consistency and management standards for weed and feral animal control across the ACT, the manual will prescribe monitoring requirements to improve feedback on the effectiveness of the programs undertaken.

The ACT will continue to support the joint ACT-NSW wild dog control program. The current ACT wild dog control program will be reviewed to ensure recent best practice improvements in the effectiveness and animal welfare aspects of pest animal management are adopted.

The Government will continue to focus on containing rabbit impact within nature reserves to the present relatively low level, following extensive harbour destruction works undertaken over the past few years to capitalise on the introduction of the Rabbit Calicivirus Disease (RCD). Monitoring over the past year indicates that rabbit abundance in some areas of the ACT has been reduced by up to 75%.

Weed management

Funding of \$650,000 will be provided to continue the Government's support of the ACT Weeds Strategy, with an additional \$200,000 in the draft capital works program for exotic weed control. A further \$100,000 will be directed to continuing the rehabilitation of the Boboyan Pine plantation within Namadgi National Park, with most of the remaining pines expected to be removed this year. The balance of this allocation will be used to continue to implement Environment ACT's program for the control of weeds of national significance and weeds considered to be regional priorities.

The Government will continue to implement the ACT African Lovegrass Strategy and commence long term and sustainable actions to control the impact and spread of this weed on both grazing leases and in nature reserves. A demonstration control site will be established to assist graziers within the region to reduce the impact of the weed on farm income.

Removal of seeding willows will continue to occur throughout the ACT in response to the ACT Willow Survey undertaken in 1999. It is anticipated that the entire stretches of the Gudgenby, Orroral, Naas and Tidbinbilla Rivers will be free of all seeding and problem willows by June 2001.

Scotch Broom, an escapee plant from domestic gardens, is invading the Australian Alps in Victoria and NSW at the rate of almost 100,000 ha per year. The ACT Government has completed mapping of all known broom plants within the ACT and will continue surveillance and control to ensure this weed does not spread. Monitoring of the effectiveness of biological control agents released in the previous year will also continue.

Monitoring of other biological control agents released in recent years to control weed species, and to reduce the use of chemicals, will continue. Some of the weed species for which recent insect releases have occurred include Pattersons Curse, St Johns Wort, Nodding Thistle, Spear

Thistle and Scotch Broom. All releases are undertaken with the approval and assistance of scientific institutions such as the CSIRO.

Land Management Agreements

In response to the 1997 Rural Policy Task Force Report, the Government agreed to review the Property Management Agreement process for rural leases.

The review was undertaken in 1998-99 by an independent consultant in consultation with rural lessees, government representatives and other interest groups. Land Management Agreements (LMAs) were recommended and trialed with a small group of rural lessees before being adopted.

LMAs establish a framework for ecologically sustainable management of leased rural land, and will be negotiated with each rural leasee 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 Land Management Agreement 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

Environment ACT commissioned a survey of soil erosion and conservation priorities in 1999-2000. The findings of this report highlight the need to prioritise soil conservation works in the ACT. Specific sites have been identified and prescriptions for works outlined. Funding committed to these priority areas will commence in 2000-01. This work will be supplemented through the review of existing soil conservation works and implementing changes as required.

Management Planning

Management plans for Public Land as required under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* have been produced for Canberra Nature Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. During 1999-2000 a management plan for the Ginini Flats Wetlands Ramsar Site was finalised and an Implementation Plan for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor completed.

In 2000-01 the Government will complete the management plan for the Lower Molonglo River Corridor. Preliminary work on revisions to the 1986 Management Plan for Namadgi National Park has commenced. A different approach may be required in developing this plan to take account of possible joint management arrangements with the Ngunnawal community.

Implementation Plans will be produced for Canberra Nature Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the Implementation Plan for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor will be revised to place it on a financial year basis.

Review of the Nature Conservation Act 1980

The National Competition Policy Review Report on the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* was completed in 1999-2000. The Government will give effect to the review by bringing forward the necessary amendments to the Act and subordinate instruments during 2000-01.

Water Resources Management

The *Water Resources Act 1998* came into full effect in December 1999. The Act provides the legislative framework for the water resources of the Territory to be used and managed sustainably and to meet the needs of future generations.

During 2000-01 the priorities will be to ensure that all water users are operating in accordance with the Act, to collect necessary water use information and groundwater data, and to prepare of a groundwater management plan. The performance of the environmental flow guidelines, introduced in November 1999, will also be monitored.

Integrated Catchment Management Framework

The Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Framework was released by the Government, in March 2000. The Framework draws together current practices in ICM, clarifies the relationships between them and identifies those areas that can be developed to further implement ICM. The Framework formally recognises the importance of an effective working relationship between community and government and supports the development of better community involvement arrangements. It also identifies sub-catchment planning by community groups and government working together, as an effective means of coordinating on ground natural resource management. The Sullivan's Creek and Ginninderra Creek Catchment Groups will launch their sub-catchment plans shortly.

The Framework provides the foundation on which secure long-term sustainable development can be planned and put in place. An implementation plan will be developed during 2000-01. 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.

Waste Management

Used Packaging Materials

The Government is developing an action plan for meeting its obligations under the National Packaging Covenant. The Covenant deals with the management of used packaging materials. Legislation to give effect to the Used Packaging Materials National Environment Protection Measure will be introduced in 2000-01 and this will provide regulatory support to the voluntary Covenant.

Load-Based Discharge Licensing

Environmental Authorisations issued to some industries from 1 July 2000 will encourage activity managers to reduce pollutant emissions to our air, water and soil. The authorisation fees are based on equivalent NSW charges, except where ACT circumstances warrant a different fee.

The fees target industries that have the potential to emit pollutants and include a component that charges additional costs according to the amount of pollutants emitted. The new fees also include an administrative component, which better reflects the cost of regulating environment protection in each industry. To encourage better environmental outcomes, industries affected by the load-based licensing scheme can reduce their authorisation fees by improving their environmental performance.

No Waste by 2010

The Government will continue to implement the No Waste by 2010 strategy. Priorities in 2000-01 are to:

- Set targets for the reduction of specific waste streams and identify and address factors inhibiting the reuse and recycling of the priority waste streams;
- Augment education and community programs to better inform, encourage and engender community commitment to achieving the goal of no waste;
- Implement a program to encourage commercial businesses to minimise the waste they produce;
- Create an example of Best Practice Waste Management within Government to initiate a whole of government approach to the Strategy and to better articulate the social benefits of it to the wider community;
- Set waste pricing at levels that provide incentives to reuse and recycle;
- Consolidate the Infrastructure Action Plan and development of emerging technologies associated with the collection, separation and treatment of waste;

- Progress the establishment of a Resource Recovery and Waste Transfer Station at Mitchell through contract arrangements and progress the establishment of 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;
- Refine established waste and recycling collection systems and conduct trials to improve the collection of resources;
- Initiate trials to collect organic wastes from domestic sources as a step towards determining the future domestic collection system for Canberra;
- Target building and demolition waste through the implementation of the Development Control Code for Best Practice Waste Management in the ACT and the possible establishment of a mixed builders' waste recovery centre;
- Participate in the National Packaging Covenant and assess the requirements for waste management regulations; and
- Identify the application of future waste management technologies in the ACT and monitor emerging waste reduction techniques.

Environmental Education and Community Awareness

The ACT Government raises awareness of environmental and heritage issues with the ACT community through publications, a web site, the Environment Information Centre and Helpline (phone 6207 9777), and environmental events such as World Environment Day and Weed Busters Week. The Environment ACT telephone Helpline and Environment Information Centre, located at Macarthur House in Lyneham, offer advice and publications on a broad range of environmental issues. Telephone calls through the helpline have increased by 35% in the last 6 months, with 1262 calls being taken in March 2000.

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 over 80 participating groups.

The Waterwatch program will continue to operate on two levels, supporting projects to raise awareness of water based environmental issues and continuing to assist groups undertaking long term monitoring programs to produce high quality water quality data. Waterwatch is also utilised as a monitoring and evaluation tool for on-ground projects and catchment health assessment by Landcare, Parkcare and Bushcare groups.

Highlights of the 2000-01 program will be participation in National Water Week including the previously successful Aquafest along with participation in the new 'Murder under the Microscope' program. There will be an increased emphasis on urban storm water quality beginning in 2000-01. The program will continue to support education and training activities including an internet web page and workshops for teachers and community groups to assist them to better inform the broader community on water quality issues. Waterwatch will continue to be represented at major environment events in the ACT.

Parkcare

A Volunteer Recruitment and Promotional Strategy developed in 1999 will be implemented in 2000-01. The main aims of the strategy are to increase the number of people actively participating in Parkcare group activities and to promote the Park Care program and volunteering for the environment in general. One of the actions identified in the strategy includes the formation of a Scout Parkcare group.

There are currently 15 active Parkcare groups. Most groups meet on-site once each month, but several meet more often. Three groups submitted successful Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) grant applications and four groups are participating in Olympic Landcare Projects.

Landcare

Environment ACT has bid for a further 2 years of Natural Heritage Trust Funding for Landcare support in the ACT. In 2000-01 the ACT Government will continue to be involved in actively promoting landcare and supporting landcare groups. Currently there are 7 active rural landcare groups and 17 active urban landcare groups including 2 catchment groups who employ their own (part-time) coordinators. There are a number of identified field days and workshop opportunities, including the Murrumbateman Field Days, the Royal Canberra Show, ACT Alive, World Environment Day Fair and Landcare Week. Workshop opportunities include weed management workshops run in conjunction with the ACT Weeds Officer.

Co-ordination of the 10 Olympic Landcare Projects will continue into the 2000-01 financial year, culminating in September 2000.

Property Management Planning workshops which commenced in March 2000 will continue and it is hoped that more rural lessees, beyond the current 13, will have an opportunity to take part in the series of Property Management Planning Workshops.

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

The ACT Government is committed to enhancing the ACT as a destination for school based tourism. Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve is seen as an important opportunity to contribute to this goal and \$150,000 has been identified in the 2000-01 capital works program to provide appropriate facilities.

The old visitor centre will be utilised as a venue for education programs. A specialist education officer has been appointed and the building will be modified to accommodate a range of education and conference facilities. The capital works funds are supplemented by a grant of \$100,000 from Environment Australia for the production of education materials and school education kits. Building modifications and production of education materials should be substantially completed by January 2001.

The new Tidbinbilla Regional Visitor Information Centre was formally opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in March 2000. The building, of approximately 600m², cost \$1.8million, with more than \$600,000 provided through Federal Government grants and private sector sponsorship. The building:

- serves as a landmark building that encourages travellers to stop and visit Tidbinbilla;
- provides a range of new visitor services including a restaurant, shop, public toilets, face to face interaction with Tidbinbilla staff and interpretive displays; and
- acts as a destination in its own right because of the innovative building design that includes mud brick construction, solar heating and the Biological Aquatic Wastewater Treatment System.

The new exhibition will undergo evaluation during 2000-01. Tidbinbilla visitor numbers have increased by more than 10% over last year.

Natural Heritage Trust

The Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) program in the ACT continues to be administered within the Department of Urban Services by Environment ACT. The 1999-2000 program attracted \$941,326 of Trust moneys to the ACT to undertake 30 projects across a number of program areas including Landcare, Bushcare, Fisheries Action and Waterwatch.

The ACT provided assistance during the year to the Commonwealth's mid-term review of the Trust programs. This involved significant data collection and collation, although the Commonwealth's consideration of the Review recommendations is not likely to impact on the ACT until the final year (2001-02) of the current NHT program.

From 2000-01, the ACT can access Murray-Darling 2001 threshold funding guaranteeing at least \$165,000 (with matching ACT dollars) in funding for projects related to the management objectives for the Murray-Darling Basin. Successful 2000-01 funded projects will be announced in October 2000.

ACT Environment Grants

The 1999-2000 ACT Environment Grants Program funded projects at a total cost of \$0.468m. The categories covered were Animal Welfare and Management Services, Environmental Education, Advocacy and Promotion, Environmental Research and Information, and On-ground environmental projects.

As with previous years, an expert panel assessed applications for 2000-01, with successful projects to be announced at the World Environment Day Fair in June 2000. The Fair promises to be bigger than ever, as Australia is the international host of World Environment Day 2000.

Environmental Awareness campaign

An Environment Awareness Strategy is currently being prepared and will be implemented in 2000-01. This will involve initiatives to ensure ACT residents and visitors are aware of, appreciate and take responsibility for their natural and cultural environment. The strategy will include provision of information on the Territory's environmental legislation, protection of the natural and cultural environment and the recreation opportunities for nature tourism in the ACT. Implementing the Strategy will involve shopping centre displays, events such as World Environment Day, advertising and targeted marketing to ACT residents, business and industry.

Interpretation Strategies

The implementation of priority actions outlined in the Tidbinbilla and Namadgi Interpretation Strategies will be undertaken. Actions include:

- Publications review for Tidbinbilla;

- Evaluation of guided activities at Namadgi and Tidbinbilla;
- Redevelopment of the publication *A brief guide to Namadgi*;
- More information and promotion on the Environment ACT website for Tidbinbilla and Namadgi;
- Develop a concept plan and interpretation strategy for Honeysuckle precinct; and
- Evaluation and planning for the future direction of Namadgi Visitor Centre.

Our Cultural Environment

ACT Heritage Festival

The 2000 ACT Heritage Festival, held in April, included 90 events incorporating 50 community organisations. 'Our Sporting Heritage' was the theme of the Festival, with 25% of the events reflecting this theme. \$46,000 was approved from the ACT Heritage Grants Program for the purpose of coordinating the Festival. This annual Festival will be celebrated for the 20th consecutive year in April 2001, with the theme being 'Centenary of Federation'. Building on the success of the 2000 Festival, the community events will be coordinated and planned in advance with increased promotion of the program through a partnership approach.

Heritage promotion and awareness

A Heritage Celebration Strategy will be developed in conjunction with major community groups and other stakeholders to develop an increased partnership approach to heritage education and awareness. It will contribute towards increasing public awareness in the interpretation of heritage and enhancing cultural heritage tourism. The celebration of heritage will be progressed through the Heritage Discovery Program that will assist residents and visitors in finding our special places. Heritage trails and signage will be promoted through the program. This program will augment the annual Heritage Awards and Heritage Grant Programs. The Heritage Register list will be updated to provide improved information online.

Aboriginal Heritage

An increased focus on Aboriginal heritage issues will emerge through the establishment of an Aboriginal Heritage coordinator. A three year project will be developed which aims to ensure that Aboriginal heritage is appropriately acknowledged and identified prior to planning and development.

During 2000-01, database development, management requirements and thematic registration of groups of places will commence. Educational and interpretation opportunities are also being developed through Aboriginal projects under the ACT Heritage Grants Program. An

Aboriginal Advisory Group, of the ACT Heritage Council, will be established to create formal consultation mechanisms with Aboriginal communities.

Heritage Assets

The Government has improved management of ACT heritage assets. Key examples include the condition report and pending handover to Infrastructure and Asset Management of the Old Canberra Brickworks at Yarralumla for inclusion in a redevelopment program. The Civic merry-go-round has been restored and a medium term management agreement with a private operator has been established. Expressions of interest were advertised in April 2000 for the management of Tuggeranong Homestead. The Homestead is currently being extensively restored with a Centenary of Federation grant of \$675,000.

Management Plans for the Tuggeranong Schoolhouse, Yarralumla Woolshed, Albert Hall and Duntroon Woolshed are currently being developed and are expected to be finalised during 2000-01.

Heritage Precinct Review

A review of the methods to manage change in residential heritage precincts will commence in 2000-01, and is an outcome of the public ACT Heritage Council seminar in November 1999. The current heritage register statements of significance and specific requirements for residential precincts are being reviewed for clarity, consistency and effectiveness. Proposals will be subject to public consultation in late 2000, prior to being submitted to the Assembly as variations to the Territory Plan.

Heritage Advisory Service

The Heritage Advisory Service will provide professional heritage conservation advice on the restoration and sympathetic adaptation of heritage properties. A pilot service will commence in June 2000.

Heritage Legislation Review

As a result of the ACT Heritage Function Review, conducted in 1999, a review of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the current heritage protection regime is anticipated to commence in 2000-01.

