

## 10. THE ENVIRONMENT

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### Summary Highlights

The 2006-07 Budget continues the Government's strong commitment to our natural and cultural heritage and the protection and enhancement of Canberra's environment.

The initiatives in this Budget will advance the Government's goal of achieving a sustainable, high quality environment for the Canberra community, building on the directions established in *The Canberra Plan* and the ACT sustainability policy *People Place Prosperity*.

Substantial Government resources continue to be directed toward repair and reconstruction of assets damaged in the 2003 fires. The Government is continuing the extensive revegetation, stabilisation and reinstatement work which began immediately after the fires. Heritage and ecological surveys have been conducted to help assess damage and guide future management priorities. Planning and construction of destroyed community facilities in the non-urban area will ensure opportunities are explored for innovation and change to ensure a safer and more secure future. A Strategic Plan to guide the long-term management of the Lower Cotter Catchment has been developed and is being implemented.

Areas of particular environmental focus include:

- setting a direction for water resource management through addressing the challenges of future water supply, environmental flows, water quality, and the cost-effective implementation of integrated catchment management strategies. The Water Resources Strategy, *Think water, act water* provides the blueprint for engaging the community in efficiently managing our water resources;
- delivery of regional natural resource management programs through the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Water Quality and Salinity, and targeted grants;
- development and implementation of multi-species conservation strategies and the protection of significant grasslands and woodlands;
- support for Indigenous engagement in the management of natural and cultural heritage;
- support for the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment;
- continued investment in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through implementing a new climate change strategy and energy policy in 2006-07;
- continued membership of intergovernmental forums such as the Murray Darling Basin Commission, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, the Environment Protection and Heritage Council and the Primary Industries Ministerial Council;
- promotion, protection and conservation of the ACT's diverse and significant cultural heritage through new heritage legislation;
- continued management of fire and fuel; and
- continued support for visitor services and community engagement in natural and cultural heritage management.

## **New Budget Initiatives for 2006-07**

### *Bushfire Fuel Reduction*

This initiative provides for ongoing fire fuel reduction and other fire management works required to comply with the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan standards as identified in the Bushfire Operations Plan.

### *Threatened Species*

This initiative allows for the maintenance of specialised facilities relating to the breeding of threatened species, the corroboree frog and brush-tailed rock wallaby. An additional \$100,000 has been provided for the construction of a predator-proof enclosure at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

## **New Works for 2006-07**

During 2006-07, a number of specific construction projects will be undertaken:

- Development and upgrading of firetrails in Namadgi National Park to implement the requirements of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan;
- Construction of a predator proof sanctuary at Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve;
- Development and enhancement of facilities at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve for threatened species, especially the brush-tailed rock wallaby and corroboree frog.

## Environment Priorities for 2006-07

### Water Resources Management

#### *Water Resources Strategy*

The ACT Water Resources Strategy sets out a comprehensive approach to the management of the ACT's water resources. Implementation of the strategy commenced in 2004-05, and continues through 2006-07.

The Government is providing financial support for a range of incentive programs for households and the commercial sector to reduce water consumption, as well as an education and awareness campaign to engage the wider community in the protection of this valuable resource.

The strategy addresses water quality and quantity, as well as promoting the use of the water cycle as a basis for integrating stormwater, water supply and wastewater elements in the management of catchments.

#### *Water Fee*

The increase in the Water Abstraction Charge (WAC) to incorporate a water fee is to better reflect the value of water to the Territory. Water is a valuable resource, and prices need to encourage a more efficient use of this scarce resource. This initiative continues the Government's commitment to the *Think water, act water strategy*, which has a focus on reducing per capita consumption of mains water in the short term.

#### *Catchment Management*

The January 2003 bushfires, together with persistent drought conditions, have had a significant impact on the ACT's water supply and highlighted the need for better governance arrangements and more focussed catchment management strategies. The Government is committed to providing secure integrated outcomes for water supply and catchment management with a view to securing a long term, reliable and high quality water supply for the ACT and the region. Integral to this commitment are specialist vegetation management, forest recovery and management of catchments, and riparian vegetation. A new plan of management for the Googong Foreshores is being developed to help ensure a quality water supply.

A particular focus will be on ensuring the restoration of the Lower Cotter catchment. The Lower Cotter Catchment Draft Strategic Management Plan (released 30 May 2006) sets out policies and actions for protecting and managing the water resources of the catchment. The plan will be finalised early in 2006-07 following a two-month public comment period. Implementation of the plan will occur over several years with high priority actions addressed in the initial 1-2 years.

The Government supports community involvement in nature conservation and natural resource management arrangements. Support for catchment groups will continue in recognition of the important planning role they play in coordinating community engagement.

Catchment management activities will benefit from investment strategies that support delivery of the Natural Heritage Trust, the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, and the National Water Initiative, which includes the National Water Fund.

### *Intergovernmental Arrangements*

#### 1. Murray-Darling Basin Initiative

The ACT Government will continue its commitment in 2006-07 to the activities and programs of the Murray Darling Basin Commission, where relevant to the ACT. The ACT Government is developing its proposal for a cap on water extractions, with the intention of progressing its position with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission in 2006. The ACT is also developing a Salinity Management Strategy in concert with the Commission. The ACT is also a signatory to the COAG agreement on the Living Murray where it is committed to providing an extra 2 gegalitres of water from the ACT by 2009 to restore environmental water flows in the Murray.

#### 2. Cross Border Agreements

The Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) between the ACT and NSW on cross border water resources and settlement pattern are being finalised. The Commonwealth is also a signatory to the MoU on water resources. Conditions of supply form the basis of the MoU for cross border water resources. Arising from the MoU on cross border water resources is the development of a regional land management framework for the Googong Dam catchment. This framework is being developed on a cooperative basis between NSW, ACT and Commonwealth officials.

#### 3. National Water Initiative

The ACT is a signatory to the 2004 National Water Initiative (NWI). The NWI covers such aspects as increasing the security of water access entitlements; encouraging the expansion of water markets; establishing best practice water pricing; ensuring ecosystem health and protecting environmental assets; improved measuring, monitoring and information; and encouraging water conservation in urban areas. The National Water Commission (NWC) activities in these areas are expected to intensify during 2006-07 through such collaborative programs as the baseline assessment of Australian water resources, and establishment of frameworks for water accounting, water service benchmarking and water performance indicators.

The ACT has participated in various activities and sub-committees including the NWI Committee being coordinated by the National Water Commission (NWC) for the implementation of the NWI. The ACT has prepared a NWI Implementation Plan and during 2006-07 will be subject to a general baseline assessment by the NWC.

On a related matter, during 2005-06 the ACT's water reform progress was assessed by the NWC. This was the final stage of the water reform review under the National Competition

Policy arrangements. The ACT was assessed as satisfactorily meeting the NWC's water reform requirements.

### *Catchment Remediation and Monitoring*

The Government has developed management plans for remediation of urban and non-urban catchments, including the Lower Cotter water supply catchment. Remedial activities will continue throughout 2006-07 and will include ongoing water monitoring, incorporating community-based monitoring programs.

Remedial works include erosion control, the removal of fire debris from streams, repair of creek crossings and the rehabilitation of sphagnum bogs that are vital to the water supply and the survival of the endangered Northern Corroboree Frog.

Monitoring of stormwater both before and after rain events within bushfire affected areas, combined with the implementation of stormwater sediment controls, will continue throughout the year.

## **Fire Management**

### *Fire Fuel Management and Fuel Reduction*

In accordance with the *Emergencies Act 2004*, land management agencies have prepared Bushfire Operations Plans. These plans detail the activities to be undertaken to meet the fire management standards specified in the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan. These activities relate to fuel management, access improvement, fire infrastructure, training and equipment and aim to protect assets and increase the capacity of agencies to respond to and manage fires.

Implementation of the Environment ACT Bushfire Operations Plan commenced following its approval by the Commissioner of the Emergency Services Authority in late 2004. This work will continue and includes prescribed burning, slashing, grazing for the purpose of fuel reduction, physical fuel removal, fire trail upgrades, and staff fire training.

The planning for the construction of new fire trails in parks and reserves will continue.

## **Sustainability**

The Government's sustainability agenda will continue to influence environment matters on a whole-of-government basis in pursuit of an integrated approach to a sustainable Canberra community. The Government remains committed to preserving and building on Canberra's strengths as a diverse and tolerant community, with a unique natural environment and a developing economic base – providing for people, protecting our place and creating prosperity.

## Whole of Government Coordination

### *Environmental Advice*

The Government continues its commitment to seeking community and expert advice on environmental matters. The benefits of these partnerships have been improved through the more strategic involvement of various advisory committee functions.

### *State of the Environment Report*

The Government will continue to support the work of the ACT Commissioner for the Environment in monitoring, investigating and reporting upon environmental issues through the production of the 2007 State of the Environment Report.

### *Participation in National Environment Forums and Initiatives*

In 2006-07, the Government will continue to support and be actively involved in a range of intergovernmental forums. These include:

- Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council;
- Environment Protection and Heritage Council;
- Primary Industries Ministerial Council;
- Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council;
- COAG Climate Change Group;
- The Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program; and
- Heads of Agencies Parks Forum.

### *Environmental Legislation*

The Government has a strong environmental legislation program to support policy implementation. Particular activities to be pursued include:

- Review of the *Water Resources Act 1998*;
- Review of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*;
- Amendments to:
  - *Animal Welfare Act 1992*;
  - *Fisheries Act 2000*; and
- Implementation of the new *Tree Protection Act 2005*.

## Environmental Protection

The Government remains committed to environment protection in the ACT. The ACT's membership of the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC) through the Ministerial Environment Protection and Heritage Council has led to the development of complementary legislation in each jurisdiction for agreed National Environment Protection Measures (NEPMs). This legislation provides for standards and a monitoring program for environment protection matters of national concern. The Government is committed to providing Jurisdictional and Implementation Working Group representatives for administration and review of the Air Quality, Air Toxic, National Pollutant Inventory, Contaminated Sites and Controlled Waste National Environment Protection Policies.

The Government will continue to focus its ambient air quality monitoring program around particulate matter, in particular fine particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter. This will include collection and analysis of data from new air monitoring equipment that will provide a more detailed understanding of particulate pollution across Canberra. The ACT continues its participation in the National Pollutant Inventory (NPI), an Australia-wide program designed to provide the community, industry and government with information on the types and amounts of polluting substances being emitted to the environment.

The Government is responsible for activities related to water resources, environment protection, contaminated land, nature conservation, fisheries, tree protection, and veterinary services. These responsibilities are fulfilled through the provision of education and information, complaint resolution and formal regulation. To ensure the ACT Government continues to implement best practice in environment management it has committed to a program of environment protection policy development and review under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*. For 2006-07, the Government will develop a Dragway Motor Sport Environment Protection Policy and review the General, Water and Noise Environment Protection Policies.

### *Solid Fuel Heaters*

The ACT Government has implemented a wood heater subsidy scheme over the last three financial years to replace wood heaters with cleaner forms of heating. In 2005-06 the scheme was industry funded, Environment ACT will continue to pursue industry funding on a more permanent basis. Since the scheme commenced in January 2004 over 500 heaters have been removed from service.

The Government will also continue its public awareness campaign to promote best practice in the use and maintenance of solid fuel heaters. Information will be distributed to the public via displays and the Environment ACT website. Environment ACT will also continue to receive and investigate complaints regarding wood heaters and its regulation concerning the sale and supply of firewood. Firewood merchants must hold an environmental authorisation and comply with standard conditions that include a requirement to sell by weight. The Government will continue to monitor and audit merchant compliance.

## *Climate Change*

Climate change is the end result of high quantities of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide and methane, being emitted into the atmosphere. These gases are produced mainly as the by-product of energy generation and use. Compared with other jurisdictions, the ACT is a small contributor to Australia's greenhouse gas emission profile. However, the Government has a strong commitment to reducing the emissions attributable to the ACT.

The Government will release a new climate change strategy and energy policy in 2006-07. The process for developing these documents commenced in March 2006, with the release of *Avoid Abate Adapt*, which is a discussion paper for the ACT climate change strategy, as well as *Reliable Responsible Renewable*, which is a discussion paper for the ACT energy policy. The release of these two papers was followed by a six-week consultation period that included public meetings in town centres. More than 40 submissions were received on the two papers.

The climate change strategy and energy policy will build upon existing work as well as take into account emerging ideas on climate science. The climate change strategy will also have a strong focus on adapting to the climate change that is already unavoidable. A draft strategy and policy will be released for further consultation before both documents are finalised.

In 2006-07, the Government has budgeted to continue the ACT Energy Wise program which provides home energy audits and rebates to encourage changes in energy use patterns and provide incentives for the retrofitting of approved energy efficiency measures in existing houses. The ACT Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme, which sets mandatory greenhouse gas benchmarks on ACT electricity retailers, will move into its third year of operation. The 2006 benchmark will be lowered in 2007 in line with the legislation governing the scheme.

## **Waste Management**

The ACT Government is continuing to implement the NOWaste Strategy and has achieved a 73 per cent resource recovery rate in 2004-05. The current Turning Waste Into Resources Action Plan 2004-07 initiatives are being progressed.

The primary focus remains on:

- pricing strategies;
- further resource recovery sector development;
- business waste reduction program;
- government leadership program;
- construction sector waste reduction;
- community engagement programs; and
- improved resource recovery and landfill operations at Mugga Lane (including expanded mixed waste separation/recovery and the development of a new landfill cell).

The programs are aimed at achieving a balance between infrastructure development in both the government and private sectors, providing waste pricing mechanisms to encourage waste



generators to divert materials to recovery and recycling alternatives and direct community engagement to empower waste generators to reduce waste generation and divert materials from landfill.

It is anticipated that these initiatives will further increase resource recovery rates and reduce waste to landfill in the ACT.

## **Nature Conservation and Natural Resource Management**

The Government continues to undertake programs to conserve, monitor and improve the quality of the ACT's natural environment. Programs for threatened species and ecological communities are a high priority. The ACT Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee and the Flora and Fauna Committee provide expert advice to the Government on the delivery of programs for nature conservation and natural resource management.

### *Integrated Nature Conservation Plan*

The Government launched its Integrated Nature Conservation Plan (INCP) as part of World Environment Day celebrations in 2004. It provides, for the first time, on-line public access to natural resource information through the Internet, enabling users to search statistics and view maps of threatened species distribution through the integrated geographic information system. Management plans and strategies related to our reserves and threatened species are also available to the community through the website.

The system is also used by the Government to assist the planning and management of the ACT's nature conservation estate. The INCP is now at an operational level and its use and enhancement will be a continuing priority.

### *Forest Ecology and Recovery*

Monitoring of the post-fire recovery of the forest ecosystems is continuing, building on the initial findings published in the report *Wildfires in the ACT 2003: Report on initial impacts on natural ecosystems* released in July 2003. Autumn monitoring programs of the forest ecosystems are undertaken and fauna and flora programs are being integrated to provide overall site assessment of plant and animal recovery. This program has provided information on the extent to which the forest ecosystem is regenerating and will assist in planning future fire management priorities.

### *Woodlands Conservation Strategy*

The Government is implementing the Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy, an Action Plan prepared pursuant to the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*. Implementation of the strategy commenced in 2003-04, with a program that continues in 2006-07.

Some key priorities for 2006-07 are:

- continuation of work on fencing, weed control and visitor access for new woodland reserves at Goorooyaroo, Mulligans Flat and Callum Brae;

- ranger guided woodland walks;
- ecological surveys in the new nature reserves adding to information about woodland flora and fauna; and
- protecting threatened woodland plants and animals through special management arrangements with land-holders at south Aranda and at the Hall Cemetery.

### *Grassland Conservation Strategy*

The Government has finalised its Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy following public consultation. The Strategy identifies priority tasks to improve conservation of lowland native grassland and component threatened species in the ACT. In 2005-06, the Government commenced implementation of the strategy, with the establishment of two new grassland nature reserves in the Jerrabomberra Valley. The protection of these areas will continue in 2006-07.

The Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy complements the National Recovery Plan for Natural Temperate Grassland in the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT). Environment ACT has received Natural Heritage Trust funding to implement this recovery plan in cooperation with NSW government agencies, particularly the Department of Environment and Conservation.

### *Action Plans*

- The action plan for the Spotted-tailed Quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*) was finalised in 2005 following public consultation.
- Action Plan No. 29 the Draft Aquatic Species and Riparian Zone Conservation Strategy will be finalised following public consultation in 2005-06.
- Action Plan No. 28, referred to above as the Grassland Conservation Strategy, was finalised in 2005-06.
- Action Plan No. 27, referred to above as Woodland Conservation Strategy, was finalised in 2003-2004.

### *Threatened Species Recovery*

In 2004-05, the Government provided support for a four-year program of research into the recovery and management of threatened species and ecological communities. As part of this program, work was undertaken with local universities to establish two research partnerships, which included support for post-graduate scholars and establishing field research programs.

Environment ACT and the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at the Australian National University are collaborating to establish a research program that will provide new insights into best practice strategies for management of endangered Yellow Box - Red Gum Grassy Woodlands. A successful application to the Australian Research Council for a Linkage Grant will supplement ACT Government funding and allow the scope of the research studies to be expanded to a level that will have national significance. The role of grazing, fire and fallen timber are three of the topics being studied, as these are considered to be major influences on the ecological condition of woodlands and their ability to sustain their characteristic flora and fauna.

Environment ACT has also supported post-graduate students from the University of Canberra in a research program designed to underpin planning and management of native grasslands in the ACT. This research is focused on grassland fauna, particularly the Grassland Earless Dragon, Striped Legless Lizard, Granite Worm Lizard, Wallabies and Frogs, and grassland invertebrate fauna.

Conservation of native grasslands and the suite of lizards and insects that are now threatened with extinction are important planning and management issues in the Majura and Jerrabomberra Valleys, which contain some of the best and largest areas of habitat left in the region.

This research work complements the Government's ongoing commitment to research projects into the recovery of threatened species such as the Northern Corroboree Frog and the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby.

The successful captive husbandry program for the Northern Corroboree Frog was significantly expanded in 2005-06 with the construction of a second husbandry facility. These two facilities are an added safeguard against extinction of the species, producing frogs for release back to the wild. Funding to continue this research in 2006-07 has been secured through National Heritage Trust funding.

The cross-fostering program for the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby was severely impacted by the 2003 bushfire when most of the captive colony at Tidbinbilla was killed. The program, reinstated in 2004-05, will continue to expand in 2006-07 as additional wallabies are added to the colony from other zoo institutions and breeding at Tidbinbilla.

### *Fisheries Management*

Following the January 2003 bushfires, aquatic survey work in ACT and regional streams revealed that fish populations had been severely affected. Surveys in 2004 and 2005 indicated that numbers of the Two-spined Blackfish have recovered strongly at some sites, with trout populations also recovering in 2005. In both 2003 and 2004 the endangered Macquarie Perch was also able to breed successfully in the Cotter River following the release of a modified environmental flow regime.

Fisheries management is guided by the report *The Status of Fish in the Australian Capital Territory: A Review of Current Knowledge and Management Requirements* released in 2000.

### *Management Planning for Parks and Reserves*

Management Plans for Public Land are required under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*. During 2005-06, the Government released a draft management plan for Namadgi National Park for public consultation. The final Namadgi National Park Management Plan to be developed from this public consultation process will also take account of special management issues arising from the 2003 bushfire, including a heightened awareness of the need to provide for water supply and fire management. Other management plans being progressed include: Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve, Googong Foreshores and a variation to the Management Plan for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve to allow for controlled camping.

### *Pest Plant and Animal Management*

Management of the impact of pest plants and animals will remain a significant natural resource management commitment. In collaboration with all land managers, the Government will maintain an annual program of pest management, building on significant successes already being achieved.

The introduction of the *Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005* allows a more effective response to pest issues.

### *Tree Protection*

Approvals have been required for tree removal or significant works under the canopies of trees since the implementation of the *Tree Protection (Interim Scheme) Act 2001* in March 2001.

The *Tree Protection Act 2005* was passed in September 2005, aiming to deliver a more effective and efficient tree protection regime for urban Canberra that will achieve a more appropriate balance between protecting the cultural and natural heritage of Canberra without impinging unduly on the expectations and rights of property owners.

### *Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and the National Action Plan (NAP) for Salinity and Water Quality*

The Government has entered into arrangements with the Australian Government for joint delivery of a number of national natural resource management programs. Investment in these programs is guided by the ACT Natural Resource Management (NRM) Plan and Government priorities.

In 2003, the ACT and the Australian Governments negotiated a Bilateral Agreement for the delivery of NHT funding in the ACT. This partnership commits the ACT to match the Australian Government investment with equal or better in-kind or cash contributions. The Government, community and industry will work in partnership to support and implement natural resource management projects with the community.

In 2005-06, the ACT finalised negotiations with the Australian Government for the delivery of the NAP in the ACT. The ACT is also working with the NSW Government and the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority in recognition of the need to address many issues relating to salinity and water quality on a broader scale.

### *Living Environment Program*

In 2006-07, the ACT Government in partnership with Greening Australia will continue to expand existing programs to address priority issues relating to biodiversity, water quality, soil health, salinity and the capacity of communities to address these issues. The Government continues to promote strong community participation through the establishment of Riparian Green Teams to promote and coordinate community involvement in the renewal work. These partnerships build on work already undertaken for the rehabilitation of rivers, streams and drainage lines affected by the January 2003 bushfire.

## *Auditing and Monitoring Natural Areas and Heritage Places*

The Government will continue to monitor recovery of fire impacted ecological communities within Namadgi National Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and other affected areas outside the nature conservation estate. Surveys have revealed many hundreds of newly discovered Aboriginal sites in areas affected by the bushfire. Remediation work in fire affected wetlands in the Brindabella Ranges continues. The Government will continue to consult with and engage stakeholders in developing conservation measures for heritage places.

## **Animal Welfare and Companion Pet Ownership**

The Government in 2006-07, will continue to pursue an exemplary standard in the application of animal welfare principles through:

- incorporation of animal welfare principles in all relevant management practices;
- a progressive review of all gazetted Codes of Practice relating to animal welfare;
- implementing the *Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005*;
- amendments to the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*; and
- targeted community promotion of the importance of animal welfare.

The Government will progress its policy of cat containment for new suburbs in the Gungahlin area, to encourage responsible pet ownership and protect threatened species in adjacent nature reserves.

## **Environmental Education and Community Support**

### *Community Groups*

The Government will continue its commitment to community-based environmental activities supported by its agreement with the Australian Government for delivery of Natural Heritage Trust funding. This support ranges from in-kind support such as office accommodation to provision of facilitators and coordinators, project design and training, and financial contributions to operating expenses. Examples of community-based environmental activities include:

- waterwatch;
- parkcare; and
- landcare.

### *Grants for Environmental Projects*

Grant funding for environmental projects continues to be provided in the categories of:

- on-ground projects;
- sustainable development and resource management;
- research and advocacy; and
- animal management and welfare services.

### *Environment and Heritage Awareness Education and Information*

An important mechanism for raising community awareness and commitment is the provision of information products and services. Environment ACT continues to develop material and deliver programs which aim to engage the community in gaining a greater understanding of their local environment, environmental issues and Aboriginal and European Heritage.

For the sixth year the Heritage Education in Schools program will be available to primary and lower secondary students in the ACT. Opportunities and support for the community to become involved in nature conservation will continue through education and information programs that promote awareness, knowledge and commitment to the environment. Existing and newly developed environment policies and strategies will continue to include provisions for education and community awareness.

### *Canberra's Significant Cultural Heritage*

Canberra's significant cultural heritage is recognised nationally and internationally. During 2006-07, the Heritage Council will continue its work to update the ACT Heritage Places Register to better reflect the rich Aboriginal, natural and historic heritage of the ACT. The Government has taken the opportunity to survey Aboriginal heritage sites exposed as a result of the January 2003 bushfire and through this has developed a closer working relationship with the (Ngunnawal) Aboriginal community. The Government will continue this work in 2006-07. The Government will use the new information gathered from the surveys to enhance community understanding and appreciation of our Aboriginal heritage.

### *Heritage Signage and Travel Routes*

In 2006-07 the Government will continue development of a number of heritage travel routes including the installation of on-ground directional and interpretative signage. These diverse heritage trails will encourage visitors and residents to explore the rich natural and cultural heritage of Canberra and the region. The heritage trails will take visitors to popular viewpoints such as Mount Ainslie, Red Hill, Black Mountain and Mount Pleasant, and provide links to themed itineraries as well as new and existing heritage attractions. An innovative online presentation of the trails will also be developed. This project will enhance the variety of tourism opportunities in the ACT and promote heritage awareness and protection.

## *Visitor Services*

A key priority for the Government, following the January 2003 bushfires, has been the ongoing clean up of public land to ensure it is safe for recreational use. The Government has also provided substantial resources to rebuild and maintain community assets damaged or destroyed by the bushfire. This has included a significant investment in ongoing monitoring, planning and rebuilding projects. The reinstatement of many assets is to enhance the visitor's experience of the natural environment. There will be an emphasis given to visitor services.

Within the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Cotter Precinct, many post-bushfire reinstatement and enhancement projects have been completed or are currently under way. These projects include the reconstruction of wildlife enclosure fences, the return of koalas at Tidbinbilla, the current construction of a 'Nature Discovery' Playground at Tidbinbilla and, the construction of a new walking trail and lookout system at the Cotter.

## **Indigenous Engagement**

### *Interim Namadgi Advisory Board*

The Government will continue its support for the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board in a collaborative approach for the development of a new plan of management for Namadgi National Park. Cooperative management arrangements for Namadgi National Park will continue to be developed.

### *Aboriginal Heritage Surveys*

The Government will continue to develop a close working relationship with the local Aboriginal community by inviting their participation in heritage surveys and encouraging input into the development of recommendations for the future management of Aboriginal heritage places. Environment ACT will provide induction training for sub-contractors on major development projects with regard to heritage issues, such as Aboriginal site recognition and the relevant ACT legislation.

### *Aboriginal Employment Opportunities*

The Government is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal people to develop skills in land management and natural resource management. Building on a successful pilot study in 2002, the Government will provide funding for two Aboriginal traineeships within Environment ACT in 2006-07. Each traineeship will be for two years and will include both formal study and 'on-the-job' training in rotations throughout the agency.

### *Cultural Awareness Training*

Each year a special cross-cultural awareness raising course is run for non-Aboriginal staff members who are engaged in natural and cultural heritage work. This successful and innovative program will continue.

