



ACT Government
2004-2005 BUDGET

MEDIA RELEASE

**RESTORING AND ENHANCING TIDBINBILLA NATURE RESERVE
AND THE COTTER PRECINCT**

The 2004-05 budget takes great strides forward in restoring and enhancing the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Cotter Reserve following the January 2003 bushfires, Chief Minister and Minister for the Environment, Jon Stanhope, said today.

The bushfires caused significant damage to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the Cotter Precinct. The severity of the fires destroyed wildlife and infrastructure, and affected the ecology and natural environment of the Reserve.

The Non-Urban Study team established by the Government to consider the way forward for non-urban areas of the ACT, including Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the Cotter Precinct, presented its report *Shaping Our Territory – Opportunities for Non-Urban ACT* in November 2003.

“The Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Cotter Reserve have long been treasured parts of the ACT’s cultural, environmental and social heritage. Many local families, including my own, grew up experiencing the delights of these nature reserves, which are so close at hand yet so much a part of our bush capital.

“*The Shaping our Territory* report made it clear we had an obligation to do more than simply restore the reserves – we needed to ensure the fires did not remove our capacity to innovate, grow and improve upon our assets.

“The 2004-05 Budget provides more than \$4.7 million for the design and preliminary works for the reconstruction of the Cotter Precinct and the restoration and enhancement of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. This is addition to the \$0.745 million allocated for these purposes in the Third Appropriation Bill, making a total of \$5.45 million.

“We are currently developing Master Plans for both places to determine the feasibility and potential for significantly enhanced commercial and recreational opportunities, including the potential for commercial partnerships.

“The ‘new’ Tidbinbilla will focus on creating and improving science, research, tourism, recreation and education on-site, and will develop strong and interactive links with the Birrigai Outdoor School and rural lessees in the area. It will also expand its links with ACT Forests, who will continue to manage an area of land adjoining Tidbinbilla, known as ‘Block 60’. This area was a pine plantation before the bushfires but will now be replanted with natives and its primary function will be for recreation.

“There are, however, many projects at both Tidbinbilla and the Cotter that are not dependent on completion of the Master Plans.



“Through a combination of funding provided in the 3rd Appropriation and from the 2004-05 Budget, my Government is funding many positive initiatives including the :

- Construction of the \$900,000 ‘Nature Discovery Playground’ where the habitats of Tidbinbilla wildlife will be interpreted through innovative, artistic and practical design solutions. Examples may include the creation of animal burrows (wombats), climbing opportunities (rock wallabies), flight simulators (birds), form and movement (emus and kangaroos), wetlands (platypus and water birds), nocturnal habitats (powerful owls, mammals) and display mounds (lyrebirds and bowerbirds).
- Preservation of Rock Valley Homestead as one of the ACT’s best examples of ‘pise’ or rammed earth construction that was used by the farming community at the turn of last century.
- Design development of a Northern Corroboree live frog display within the new Nature Discovery Centre that highlights the lifecycle, habitat and Tidbinbilla’s involvement with the research and recovery of this threatened species.
- Construction of a second Northern Corroboree Frog breeding facility to build on the success of the first breeding facility that has produced almost 300 adult frogs for release, display and breeding.
- Upgrade of Tidbinbilla picnic and barbeque areas to complement the new ‘Nature Discovery Playground’ with refurbished park furniture and BBQ facilities.
- Construction of a Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby observation area to provide an intimate viewing experience for visitors that will not impact on this threatened species. Tidbinbilla is actively involved in the captive breeding and research recovery program for the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby.
- Improvement of the Tidbinbilla Wetlands and Water Reticulation System to upgrade a 1970’s system to exceed accepted best practice whilst retaining this greatly prized visitor experience.
- Design and engineering works to stabilise fire damaged rock batters above the Cotter Dam that will once again present a view of the dam wall to visitors from a new elevated viewing platform.
- Construction of walking tracks in the Cotter Precinct that allows visitors to experience the Cotter and environs and to witness over time the recovery of the local area after the bushfires.
- Improvement of visitor facilities and amenity of the Cotter Campground and picnic areas within the Cotter Reserve – upgraded picnic areas with new furniture, and upgraded public toilets.
- First stage of the Tree Top Walk feasibility and design study. The elevated walkway is proposed to be within the Cotter precinct providing a popular visitor experience that will attract tourists and locals.

Statement Ends