

# Wildlife Injuries

## Talking points

- The ACT Government, through the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), delivers an Urban Wildlife Program which operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- The Urban Wildlife Program supports Rangers to attend to wildlife welfare issues, predominately injured kangaroos.
- Reports of injured wildlife are generally received through Access Canberra 24 hours a day. ACT Wildlife, ACT Policing, members of the public and other agencies occasionally report incidents directly to PCS.
- Once a report has been received, Access Canberra contacts the Urban Wildlife Ranger and provides details of the report including location, situation and the contact details of the person who reported it.
- Rangers will proceed to the reported incident site as soon as possible once a report has been received.
- At times, animal and location details provided by members of the public are inaccurate and wildlife rangers can be delayed in locating the injured animal, or may not find the animal at all, particularly at night time.
- In these cases, rangers will attempt to verify further details, including contacting the person who made the report, but this may not be possible if contact details are inaccurate or have not been provided.
- Wildlife rangers are highly trained and experienced in dealing with distressed and unpredictable wildlife, particularly on roadsides. The work they do to relieve an animal in distress may be confronting to some members of the Canberra community.
- Further information about collisions with wildlife is available on the Transport Canberra and City Services website.

### Virtual fencing petition and Media Report

- The government remains interested in technology to reduce the impact of collisions between native animals and road traffic.
- Virtual fences are small roadside devices installed on posts along the roadside that emit sound and light when the headlights of approaching vehicles are detected. These devices are designed to deter animals from crossing the road when a vehicle is approaching.
- The government notes recent media reporting on the claims of effectiveness of these devices and the call to undertake a trial on Erindale Drive.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 19/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 78628  
Contact Officer name: Charles Stephenson  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

- As there is a petition before the Assembly about the use of virtual fences, the Government will continue its research and due diligence about these devices and look to provide further advice in due course.
- The Government is also preparing a new Eastern Grey Kangaroo Controlled Native Species Management Plan that is considering improved ways to reduce the risk of collisions between kangaroos and road traffic.

## Key information

- The Urban Wildlife team consists of four wildlife rangers who work ten (10) days on and then take four (4) days off every fortnight. There is usually at least one ranger on shift each day for both north and south Canberra working out of the Mitchell and Athlon depots, each with a specialist vehicle.
- They are supported by urban wildlife experienced PCS staff who work across multiple depots to ensure there is always someone on call during periods of staff illness or leave.
- Staff are licensed to discharge firearms and are required to do so on animal welfare grounds where euthanasia is required. The specific situations where this is required are complex and decisions are made dynamically to weigh up both risk and animal welfare needs.
- ACT Wildlife is a volunteer supported organisation that provides wildlife advice, caring and rehabilitation services.
- PCS officers and ACT Wildlife volunteers assess the welfare of wildlife at each individual incident and consider options including taking the animal to a veterinarian or carer, assessing the injury as minor and releasing the animal into the wild or if necessary, humanely euthanising the animal.

## Background information

- The Urban Wildlife Program is a 24/7 operation that provides an on-call wildlife ranger to respond to reports of trapped or injured native wildlife. The vast majority of reports relate to Eastern Grey Kangaroos unfortunately hit by cars within urban Canberra.
- The program has been running in some form for approximately 30 years and has been refined over this period to focus almost solely on kangaroos and magpies.
- PCS attends between 2,000 and 5,000 wildlife based call-outs each year.

# State of Environment Report 2023

Note: The Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water is the lead Minister for State of the Environment Report matters

## Talking points


### General

- The former Government tabled its response to the State of the Environment Report 2023 in June 2024.
- This Government maintains that many recommendations in the report represent business as usual or work already underway.
- Areas of focus for this government that fall under aspects of the State of Environment Report 2023 include:
  - Progressing the review of the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*, and refreshing the ACT's Nature Conservation Strategy.
  - Considering options for a review of the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993*.
  - Advocating, where appropriate, for ongoing investment in national studies on the impacts of bushfire smoke.
  - Reviewing the *Urban Forest Act 2023*.
  - Responding to and investigating reports of alleged breaches of Construction Environment Management Plans.
  - Delivering prescribed burns in a manner that protects, and where possible enhances, sensitive ecological values.

### Minister for City and Government Services

- As the Minister with responsibility for the Parks and Conservation Service I am aware of the impact that prescribed burns can have on the natural environment if not well managed.
- I note recommendation 29 seeks to ensure hazard reduction burns do not adversely impact on the environment.
- I am aware that hazard reduction burns, which represent a core part of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate's Bushfire Operations Plan, are carefully

Cleared as complete and accurate: 12/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: Bren Burkevics Ext: 78628  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment



planned and delivered in conjunction with input and approvals from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.


- Prescribed burns conducted by the ACT Parks and Conservation service are monitored by a specialist values officer who maintains a focus on protecting environmental values.
- With Autumn now here Canberrans will see smoke and flames from prescribed burns. These burns reduce fuel loads in the landscape and close to assets, reduce future wildfire severity and can help to reduce biomass and promote new growth.
- Canberrans can feel confident that prescribed burns are being delivered by experienced officers from the Parks and Conservation Service.
- Further information on prescribed burns is available online. Please do not call emergency triple-zero unless you see unattended fire or smoke.

## Key information

- Long-term trends show that the ACT is getting warmer. 2019 is the hottest year on record for the Territory with 33 days over 35°C.
- The ACT achieved 100% renewable energy in 2020 and emissions are decreasing. However, scope 3 emissions account for the majority of the ACT's total emissions, accounting for 95 percent of the ACT's total carbon footprint in 2020.
- The ACT's ecological footprint is more than 9 times the size of the land area of the ACT showing that current resource use is unsustainable.
- The ACT continues to lose threatened ecological communities and many species are in decline.
- There is a continued high reliance on cars, while public and active transport use is much lower than previous decades despite population growth.
- PM2.5 is the ACT's most serious air quality issue. During the 2019-20 bushfire season the ACT experienced 56 days with air pollution levels that exceeded health standards, including 42 days above the hazardous to health rating.
- In non-bushfire years, wood heaters have the greatest impact on air quality in the ACT.
- The biggest threats to native vegetation are from weed spread, urban development, climate change, bushfires and the loss of mature trees.
- Native fish populations are under pressure with the Murrumbidgee River dominated by alien species and impacted by dams and bushfires.
- Urban development is degrading water quality and increasing impacts downstream of the ACT.

## Background information

- Pursuant to the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993* (the Act), the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment is required to provide the Minister for Environment, Parks and Land Management with a state of the environment report each reporting period, at maximum intervals of 4 years.

- 
- The ACT State of the Environment 2023 Report fulfills this statutory requirement, using data and information provided by many directorates and covering the reporting period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2023.
  - The ACT State of the Environment 2023 Report makes 30 recommendations to assist the ACT Government in making strategic management decisions to improve environmental outcomes in the Territory. Recommendations are grouped under seven environmental themes: climate change, human settlements, air, land, biodiversity, water, and fire. The Report also provides recommendations in two administrative themes; overarching, and environmental governance.

# Autumn Prescribed Burn Season Program

## Talking points

### Prescribed Burns

- The arrival of Winter has seen the prescribed burning window close.
- However, PCS will continue to undertake smaller hazard reduction and ecological burns across Canberra over the coming months.
- Prescribed burns help to reduce biomass, promote new growth, reduce bushfire risks and heal country. Smoke is a consequence of this work but is managed to minimise impact to the public to the greatest extent possible.
- PCS is also continuing to deliver normal hazard reduction activities including mowing, slashing and grazing, to reduce the risk of wildfire during the 2025-26 season.
- It is too early to predict the severity of the bushfire season ahead, however ~~I note that in Autumn the ACT experienced below average rainfall and significantly warmer than average temperatures, and that the long range outlook for Winter also predicts above average temperatures—potentially in the top 20% of the historical range—for both daytime and nighttime~~ note the Bureau of Meteorology predicts that August to October will see slightly above average rainfall coupled with warmer than average day and night temperatures for Canberra.
- ~~I am aware that t~~he deteriorating serious fire conditions in Canada ~~has~~have meant some Australian firefighters have are being been deployed to assist. The ACT provided 20 firefighters to Alberta including 15 from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service Small contingents of PCS firefighters may be deployed to assist during our Winter months on a cost-recovery basis. They are due to return in early August and are in high spirits. These deployments are a valuable opportunity for upskilling our firefighters in large and complex wildfires.
- ~~The ACT Government is engaging with the Ngunnawal Community to enable cultural burning on Ngunnawal Land.~~

### Namadgi National Park Fire Trail Access

- Maintaining vehicle access to Namadgi National Park and other parks and reserves for emergency, maintenance and public visitation is a key responsibility of PCS.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 14/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 78628  
Contact Officer name: Nicolas Daines Ext: [REDACTED]  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

- I am pleased to report that all areas of Namadgi National Park are accessible to fire fighting and maintenance vehicles.
- I encourage the public to visit the Parks website at parks.act.gov.au to check for local or temporary closures before setting out. Road conditions can quickly change due extremes of weather.

Formatted: CS Talking Points, Indent: Left: 0 cm, Hanging: 1 cm, Tab stops: Not at 6.65 cm

#### **Tenth Assembly inquiry into the ACT environment's bushfire preparedness**

- The ACT Government supports the objectives of all recommendations made by the Standing Committee as demonstrated in its Response.
- It is particularly pleasing that the majority of the recommendations are either existing government policy, completed, agreed, or agreed in principle.
- Maintaining readiness for bushfires and other emergencies is a core responsibility and priority for the ACT Government. It is critical that the community has trust in the Government's bushfire preparedness for the ACT, including in our parks and reserves.
- The Namadgi National Park fire trails that were damaged by the Orroral Valley bushfire and subsequent high rainfall have been repaired with areas now fully accessible to fire vehicles.
- Please help keep the ACT's parks and reserves bushfire free by observing restrictions, and call triple-zero if you see an unattended fire.

#### **Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP) and resourcing**

- The Bushfire Operational Plan (BOP) is a requirement of the *Emergencies Act 2004*. The Plan details the specific annual bushfire mitigation activities undertaken by the Fire Management Unit (FMU) to reduce the risk of bushfire impacting on life, property and our critical environmental assets.
- The BOP includes a wide range of fuel load management strategies including prescribed burning, slashing, spraying, physical removal and the use of cattle grazing, along with fire trail network maintenance. The application and effectiveness of these methods are regularly reviewed and improved.
- Following the 2023-24 prescribed burn program, the residual risk to the community was reduced from 37% to 31% which is a an even stronger result than the target band of 47% - 33% outlined in the Regional Fire Management Plan 2019-2028. Residual risk modelling is currently being calculated based on the work conducted during 2024-25, but early indications are it will remain within or below the target band.
- ~~The 2024-25 BOP program is underway to maintain a reduced level of risk; modelling on residual risk has not been finalised but early reports indicate we remain comfortably within or below the target band~~
- I urge the Canberra community to continue to keep up to date with park closures and other notifications available on the parks.act.gov.au website and adopt the bushfire and storm-ready advice of the Emergency Services Agency (ESA).

# Thermal Assist Aerial Control Program

## Talking points

- The ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) have completed the annual Thermal Assisted Aerial Control (TAAC) program successfully removing vertebrate pest species from key conservation areas, water catchments and semi urban areas in the ACT.
- The program concluded on the 30th of May after 21 days of operations during which 79 hours of aerial operations were flown
- The TAAC program covered approximately 110,000 hectares removing vertebrate pest species from areas that are inaccessible for ground programs due to terrain, vegetation and /or remoteness.
- For the safety of visitors, contractors and staff, Namadgi National Park, areas within the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, Molonglo River Reserve, Tidbinbilla Nature reserve and Googong Foreshore were formally closed during operations.
- Extensive safety precautions were in place during the program, such as buffer zones, signage and sweeps prior to operations. Community members should not be alarmed by aircraft operating at the impacted areas.
- During the most recent program:

Year	Feral Deer	Feral Pigs	Feral Horses	Feral Goats	Wild dogs	Other	TOTAL
2025	528	247	0	69	0	5	849
2024	357	284	7	119			767

- 2025 numbers are slightly higher than 2024 numbers, which can be attributed to an increased focus on higher density sights such as Bullen Range Nature Reserve and Gigerline Nature Reserve during the 2025 program.

## Key information

- Aerial shooting is the most effective and humane method available to control large herbivores pest. In the ACT thermal imaging cameras are used to detect and target animals and this increases the effectiveness and animal welfare outcomes.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 15/07/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
 Contact Officer name: Luke Halls  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

Ext: 78628

Ext: [REDACTED]

- Feral hoofed animals cause environmental and agricultural impacts by damaging native vegetation and crops, damaging waterways, competing with native wildlife and stock and as potential carriers of exotic diseases.
- Feral pigs and feral deer are established in many areas of the ACT and ongoing control (both aerial and ground) is required to reduce pressure on natural values, protect water catchments, minimise potential spread into recreational and urban areas and to manage impacts on neighbouring properties. To achieve more effective control, some areas of private rural lease and forestry land are included in the control zones.

### **Conservation**

- The control program focusses on reducing the impact of vertebrate pest species on our natural environment.
- Across our parks and reserves, vertebrate pest species such as pigs and deer endanger threatened plant and animal species through grazing, antler rubbing, trampling, trail creation, ground disturbance and wallowing.

## **Background information**

- Since 2021, thermal assisted aerial control has been used to control the impacts of pest species across ACT parks, reserves and recreational areas. Ongoing control is required to manage the impacts of feral animals and to prevent semi-urban populations establishing.
- Management of invasive pest animals is guided by the [ACT Pest Animal Management Strategy 2012-2022](#), which details a strategic approach aimed at a reduction of impacts caused by pest animals.
- This program is funded through the ACT Government Better Biosecurity initiative
- A National Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for aerial shooting feral deer cover the conditions under which it could be considered appropriate, the appropriate calibre projectile weight and shot placement to ensure animal welfare standards are met - [National-SOP-aerial-shooting-feral-and-wild-deer-2023.pdf \(pestsmart.org.au\)](#)

### **Hunting**

- Recreational hunting is a valid pastime, however previous programs in Australia have shown that it is not effective at controlling the impact of pest animals.
- Recreational hunting on public land needs to be carefully managed and requires significant resources to do so. In the ACT, these resources are best put towards aerial control for the most effective control of pest animal impacts.
- Professional ground shooting is less effective than thermal assisted aerial shooting, particularly across the challenging terrain found in Namadgi National Park, Murrumbidgee River Corridor, Tidbinbilla and Googong.



# Tidbinbilla Visitors Centre

## Talking points

### Demolition

- On 12 November 2024, the tender was released for the demolition of the old Tidbinbilla Visitor's Information Centre (VIC) building and remediation of the site.
- The remediation work for the Tidbinbilla VIC will remove contaminants and unsafe materials and stabilise the site.
- The tender was open for four weeks, the successful contract was awarded to AGH Demolition and Asbestos Removal on 23 April 2025.
- A development application is being prepared to support the demolition of the old Tidbinbilla visitors information centre. Lodgement of the DA is expected in August 2025.
- Works are expected to be completed in the second half of 2025, pending approval of the development application.
- Site remediation is expected to be completed by mid-2026

Formatted: Font: Bold

### Master plan-Planning For a New Visitors Centre at Tidbinbilla

- The 2023/24 budget provided funding over 2 years to refine the scope and options for a new visitors centre at Tidbinbilla.
- The ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) is developing further leading the development of a master-planning to provide a long-term vision and plan for the upgrade and improvement of Tidbinbilla, including how a visitors centre compliments the reserve.
- ~~PCS is leveraging its engagement to date to set the direction for the development of the master plan and to further consult more broadly with the Canberra Community on options for Tidbinbilla.~~
- ~~Key considerations of the plan include visitor centre requirements, visitor amenities, cultural and education interpretation, walking trail upgrades, access and fee collection, and conservation initiatives.~~
- ~~Community consultation will occur and community feedback incorporated into a finalised master plan. A communications plan is being developed to support this process.~~
- There has been early consultation and detailed Options Analysis with the public, staff and the Ngunnawal community about a potential new location for a new visitor's centre, however this location has yet to be formally endorsed.
- Further consultation will be undertaken with the Ngunnawal community, targeted stakeholders and user groups, staff, industry, volunteers, education and tourism sectors as options are developed and finalised.
- Engagement to date to with the Ngunnawal Community has indicated a preference for a new Visitor Centre location at Dalsetta. PCS will continue to validate and explore suitable locations given a number

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Cleared as complete and accurate: 12/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: Luke Halls  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment  
TRIM Ref:

Ext: 78628  
Ext: [REDACTED]

[of sighting restrictions including: bushfire building regulations; slope; ecological and cultural values; visitor experience; and revenue generation.](#)

- Funding was received from the Australian Government Disaster Ready Fund to incorporate design elements for safeguarding culturally significant artefacts at Tidbinbilla. The funding will help to protect and preserve cultural sites and in-situ artifacts and objects from the impacts of natural disasters.

#### **Temporary Visitor's Centre**

- A new demountable building was installed at the entrance to the reserve in April 2024, providing visitors an opportunity to interact with staff in-person about the many walks and activities on offer at Tidbinbilla. The temporary visitor centre also provides first aid to visitors and is a coordination point for search and rescue.
- The temporary visitor centre has Wi-Fi, accessible public toilets, drinks, snacks and ice creams and other amenities to facilitate critical visitor services for the foreseeable future while planning for a new permanent visitor centre is underway.

### **Key information**

- Demolition works are anticipated to be completed in the second half of 2025 pending statutory approvals and weather impacts.
- The temporary visitors centre will remain operational while the demolition works occur.

### **Background information**

- The Tidbinbilla VIC was closed in May 2023 due to health and safety concerns, and a temporary visitors centre was established in April 2024 to service the community.
- There will be no impact to the temporary visitor centre while the existing centre is being demolished. Visitors and volunteers will be able to access the reserve as normal.



# Insert Brief title here

## Talking points

### Invasive plants

- The spread of invasive plants into the ACT's parks and reserves is a key threat, impacting their ability to provide quality habitat for the ACT's threatened plants and animals.
- There has been 10,47,700k ha of plant control work done so far this year. The main species controlled in 2024/25 has been St John's Wort, Serrated Tussock, African lovegrass and Blackberry.
- Monitoring data guides where and how we act. Weed mapping and surveillance help prioritise control efforts, ensuring resources target high-risk areas. This data-driven approach improves response times and supports more effective, targeted management.
- ~~The government works closely with other organisations and the community to fight against weeds through the Invasive Plants Working Group.~~
- The NatureMapr and iNaturalist app citizen science platform is allowing early reporting of and response to new weed incursions.
- Sadly, ongoing monitoring demonstrates that African lovegrass is impacting further into Canberra Nature Park nature reserves, including the biodiversity hot spot, Black Mountain Nature Reserve. This is a significant environmental biosecurity issue and fire risk. The government in collaboration with ParkCare volunteers are actively fighting this highly invasive weed. Prioritising weed control efforts is now critical.
- A range of control methods are used to manage invasive weeds including biocontrol, prescribed burning, herbicides, manual removal, grazing, slashing, mulching and revegetation. Combining these methods reduces herbicide use. Recently the tritter mower has been particularly effective on blackberry thickets which are challenging to access. Follow up herbicide is used to control any remaining plants following tritter work.
- Extensive surveillance and control work has been undertaken on alligator weed in the Ginninderra creek waterways to prevent overflow and escape into other waterways.
- The 2024-25 Adopt a Park program guidelines prioritise funding of projects that control invasive weeds to benefit ecosystem and biodiversity functions and encourage projects adjacent to areas of high conservation value.

Formatted: Underline, Not Superscript/ Subscript

### Invasive animals

Cleared as complete and accurate: 17/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Luke Halls Ext: 77112  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

- The Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) manages the impact of invasive pest animals through controlling rabbits, feral horses, feral pigs, foxes, feral deer and feral goats.

±

- These control actions are conducted in cooperation with neighbouring land managers to minimise their negative impacts on conservation reserves and agricultural land in the ACT.
- A mustering program was recently completed to remove all feral goats from Rob Roy Nature Reserve. Feral goats previously occurred in several ACT conservation areas and Rob Roy is currently the only known population within the ACT (feral goats do occur at Googong Foreshores).
- Feral animal control operations (ground shooting) were also conducted at Googong Foreshores from 14 to 16 April 2025.
- The Thermally Assisted Aerial Control Program (TAAC) is a nation leading program to remove invasive animals from conservation areas in the ACT, through the use of a helicopter and thermal camera equipment. This program assists in detecting and controlling pest animals, particularly feral pigs and deer, in the ACT's parks and reserves.
- The 2025 TAAC program concluded on the 30 May 2025.
- Warragul(Dingo)/Wild dog activity has increased in the ACT since the start of 2025 with stock attacks occurring in multiple locations, this follows reports of increased activity across the south-east area of the ACT. The team have responded by employing a second pest animal controller (trapper) on short term contract and engaging two contract trappers. Additional baiting is also being delivered to respond.

#### **Feral Horses**

- Feral horses in the ACT are managed in accordance with the [Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan \(2020\)](#). This Plan establishes a zero-tolerance policy towards feral horses in Namadgi National Park.
- Seven horses were culled during the 2024 thermal assisted aerial control program. This culling prevented the growth of the feral horse population and damage to the environment through the trampling of sensitive ecosystems, waterways and plant communities.
- No horses were culled during TAAC operations in 2025.
- PCS continues to monitor feral horses remaining in the Clear Range area, with less than 15 observed near the park boundary, on private property in NSW.

#### **Rabbit Control**

- In the 2023-24 ACT Budget, the government increased its investment in rabbit control. This has resulted in a significant increase in control action across the ACT.
- Control programs aim to keep rabbit numbers at levels where impacts are minimal.
- Over the past 12 months, PCS has implemented control programs throughout Canberra Nature Park, Namadgi National Park and the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.
- EPSDD and TCCS have been working together to expand this work into several urban sites. Work has progressed from City Hill, Grevillea Park, Amaroo/Moncrieff and Nicholls into

Formatted: Space After: 8 pt, Line spacing: Multiple 1.08 li, No bullets or numbering, Tab stops: 6.84 cm, Left

Ngunnawal Hill, Bonner, Forde, Harrison, Dickson and Ainslie, with control continuing across all urban sites throughout 2025.

- EPSDD is currently trialling thermal shooting as a primary control method, complimented by rabbit warren fumigation and ripping (collapsing warrens). This method is proving highly effective across both urban and some rural sites.
- Operations are listed on the TCCS Weekly Maintenance Activities web page.

#### **European Wasps**

- The ACT Government is proactively tackling European wasps with an eco-friendly Queen trapping program. This initiative traps newly emerged wasp queens looking to start a new nest & helps protect our parks and creeks by preventing new European wasp nests from ever starting. From October to December 2024, 2,224 queen European wasps have been captured, overtaking the 2023 total by 733. A further update on trapping outcomes is expected in April 2025.
- The ACT Government treats European wasp nests on government land. Wasp nests on private property are the owner's responsibility to have it removed by a qualified pest control operator. People should not attempt to treat the nest themselves as they risk being stung.
- The public can report a wasp nest or sighting on public land by submitting a request using the European Wasp, Ants or Bees Report form through the [City Services website](#).
- The ACT Government endeavours to investigate and control European wasp nests on ACT Government land within 5-10 business days. When a request is received, it is prioritised based on various factors such as public safety, resource availability and the need for further information or investigation.
- Priority is given to control identified European wasp nests before investigating sightings or nuisance wasp incursions where the nest location is unknown.

# Reduce your risk around waterways (including Gibraltar Falls)

## Talking points

### Summer Season Drowning

- The drowning that occurred in 2024 over summer at Pine Island, is a tragic reminder of the danger that can exist when swimming in the natural environment. This is now a matter for the Coroner.
- The Government continues to work to make popular areas for swimming as safe as possible. The Government has installed safety signage, is trialling safety equipment, and has improved sight lines and access to waterways.
- However, the risks associate with swimming in the natural environment cannot be eliminated and those going to these locations must bear the responsibility to keep safe. The messages are simple:
  - The ACT's waterways are not patrolled and there are no flags. Visitors must risk assess and make their own decisions on whether to get into the water.
  - Some waterway areas do not have mobile phone coverage. This makes calling for help much more challenging.
  - If you cannot swim do not go into the water, even with floatation equipment.
  - Weather and water conditions can change quickly and prove hazardous.
  - Obstacles and hazards beneath the water can be difficult to see and pose a real risk to swimmers.
  - Alcohol and swimming do not mix.
  - Don't swim alone and always keep watch on other.
  - If you decide to get in the water, ensure you have assessed the risks and enter in a matter that matches your capabilities.

### Waterway safety

Cleared as complete and accurate:	18/06/2025	
Cleared for public release by:	Executive Group Manager	Ext: 78628
Contact Officer name:	Michaela Watts	Ext: 71831
Lead Directorate:	City and Environment	

- In July 2023, the ACT Coroner's Office released a report into the matter of four deaths by drowning in the ACT that occurred between October 2020 and January 2022.
- The report included two recommendations for the ACT Government including:
  - deliver a safety campaign to increase awareness of the risks of swimming in rivers and natural waterways,
  - determine if there was any type of rescue equipment that could be placed at popular riverside locations.
- The ACT Government ran the first Reduce Your Risk Around Waterways public awareness campaign from 1 December 2023 to 28 February 2024.
- In 2023-24, the campaign achieved more than 6 million impressions and 6,100 clicks through to the webpage on the ACT Parks and Conservation website. During this period the website also saw almost 7,200 views, indicating a high level of engagement on the topic of water safety.
- The 2024-25 Reduce Your Risk Around Waterways campaign commenced on 1 December 2024 and ran until 28 February 2025. The campaign achieved more than 8 million impressions and 7,319 clicks through our webpage on the ACT Parks and Conservation website, resulting in an increase of engagement from the previous year.
- The primary target audience for the 2024-25 campaign was males and people born overseas. The campaign included new translated advertisements and strategically placed communications located close to our university campuses and public transport.
- Radio advertisements, social media and online advertisements were translated into Mandarin, Vietnamese, Nepali and Punjabi. These performed well with our targeted ads achieving 1,674,945 impressions and 1,474 clicks.
- The Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) also installed large swim safety signs at 17 key locations to enhance the messaging on site.
- EPSDD Communications updated all our reserve and park web pages cross-referencing all installed swim safety signs with the appropriate warning, regulation information and safety icons.
- Additionally, PCS trialled the installation of 9 lifebuoys at popular riverside locations including Casuarina Sands, Casuarina Pool, Cotter Campground, Cotter Bend Uriarra East and West and Swamp Creek. These devices are placed next to swim safety signs to ensure they are clearly visible in the event of an emergency.
- These sites were chosen as locations with high visitation rates and those less likely to experience vandalism or theft of equipment. This trial will help to determine the level and types of use of the equipment. PCS continues to monitor safety measures and risk at all sites and this will help inform future management decisions. I ask the community to respect this equipment as it can save lives. It is there for safety.

The ACT Government will look to run the 2025-26 Reduce Your Risk Around Waterways public awareness campaign later this year.

## **Gibraltar Falls**


- Gibraltar Falls was closed in February 2023 following the tragic deaths of two people at the location.
- A safety review was completed in 2023. The ACT Government is implementing the recommendations of the review which includes:
  - improving infrastructure at the site by installing a 1.5m high, 210m long fence along the walking track near the falls; and
  - upgrading the visitor warning signs.
- The Gibraltar Falls site remains closed while this work is being finalised. The government will provide a further update in the coming months.
- I appreciate the community's patience while these important safety measures are implemented.

## **Key information**

- The Conservator of Flora and Fauna will make the final decision to reopen Gibraltar Falls under the Nature Conservation Act 2014 once satisfied with the infrastructure and agreement from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service and other key stakeholders.
- The cost of upgrading infrastructure at Gibraltar Falls will be known when the project is finalised in the coming weeks, however the fence construction is expected to cost approximately \$740,000.
- The fence and associated infrastructure were installed in response to advice and a risk assessment completed by expert design and behavioural insight consultants.
- The ACT Government is also investing \$3.6 million to redevelop the Woods Reserve campground, walking tracks, and linkages to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. This redevelopment will provide visitors with enhanced facilities and new opportunities for engaging with our beautiful park's estate.
- The cost of designing, purchasing, and installing the new swim safety signs at the 17 riverside locations and 9 lifebuoys was approximately \$72,000. Installation was completed in November 2024, and PCS is considering rolling life buoys out at additional sites
- The ACT Government has also submitted proposals under the Australian Government's Mobile Black Spot Program to increase mobile phone coverage at three locations including the Cotter and Casuarina Sands. Whilst this is a matter for the Australian Government to resolve, the ACT Government acknowledges that gaps in mobile phone coverage may make it difficult for visitors to these locations to call triple-zero in the event of an emergency. However, landlines are available at the Cotter Campground and Casuarina Sands.

## **Background information**

- The four deaths by drowning referred to in the ACT Coroner's 2023 report occurred at Cotter Bend on 25 October 2020, Tharwa Sandwash on 19 December 2020, and Kambah Pool on 22 January 2022. All deaths were deemed to be accidental.

- 
- The two deaths at Gibraltar Falls occurred on 12 February 2023 and 18 February 2023. There is no timeline on the finalisation of the Coroner's report, noting work is underway to improve visitor safety infrastructure on site.
  - An additional drowning death occurred at Uriarra West on the Murrumbidgee River on 8 February 2024.
  - The most recent drowning death occurred at Pine Island Reserve in Greenway on 29 December 2024.

# Crace Grasslands

## Talking points

- I have been briefed by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna that Conservation Bollards have been installed in a section of public land between Drooka Crescent in Crace and the Gungaderra Nature Reserve.
- These bollards help to indicate that a buffer zone exists between the bike path and the reserve. This buffer provides additional protection and habitat for the Striped Legless Lizards that exist within the Reserve. The Striped Legless Lizard is a threatened species and has special protection status within the ACT.
- These bollards are used across Canberra where there are ecological values that need to be protected and exist outside of the ACT's nature reserve.
- In 2022, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna provided advice that this buffer zone should have a special mowing regime applied, to ensure that the grass remained at a level and state that is suitable for the Striped Legless Lizard.

## Key information

- On 25 July 2024, a Crace resident emailed the Conservator to request a discussion about the mowing regime to an area of public land between Drooka Crescent in Crace and the Gungaderra Nature Reserve (GNR).
- The constituent raised concerns around the loss of amenity and the potential for snakes due to the special mowing regime.
- The conservation advice provided by the Conservator to TCCS in 2022 is as follows:
- Mowing/slashing of this habitat should be minimised but can be undertaken occasionally (once or twice a year at its most frequent) when the grass gets long. The following guidelines can be used to plan for mowing of the site.
  - The site should only be mown when the average grass height is above 20cm.
  - Ideally mowing should be undertaken in Autumn but it is acceptable to undertake occasional mows in Spring or Summer. Mowing in Winter should be avoided.
  - Mowing should be undertaken during the warm parts of the day when the lizards can actively avoid the machinery.
  - Ideally grass should not be mown below 10cm high, in years of very rapid grass growth 5cm is acceptable. .

Cleared as complete and accurate:	18/06/2025	
Cleared for public release by:	Executive Group Manager	Ext: 78628
Contact Officer name:	Karen Taylor	Ext: 54668
Lead Directorate:	City and Environment	

- If possible a catcher or vacuum collector should be used to gather the cut grass, leaving the cuttings in place will have long term negative impacts on the habitat.
- The Conservator and conservation officers undertook a site inspection of the area on 1 August 2024. The site inspection confirmed that the mowing regime is protecting environmental values and habitat that exists alongside the boundary of the GNR.
- The site inspection confirmed that there is over 30m of area from the bike path in the direction of the GNR boundary that is not subject to a special mowing regime and so is kept to a very short standard.

## Background information

- Decisions about special mowing regimes are progressed in accordance with the *City Parks Mowing Management Guidelines for Urban Native Grassland and Woodland Sites 2020* (Mowing Guidelines). These mowing guidelines were developed in close consultation between TCCS, the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) and the Conservator. The Mowing Guidelines support co-ordinated and consistent management of urban vegetation.
- The Conservator's office provides ecological advice to inform mowing practices on a site-by-site basis, to both inform the Mowing Guidelines for ongoing management, as well as one off management actions. Any proposed amendments to current mowing regimes or activities is discussed with the relevant stakeholders within EPSDD and TCCS to ensure the outcomes are operationally achievable and provide good ecological outcomes.

# Parks and Reserves

## Talking points

### Woods Reserve Upgrades

- Woods Reserve is located on the banks of Gibraltar Creek south-west of Canberra and in walking distance from Gibraltar Falls. It is a popular place for camping (tents and campervans), picnics and functions.
- In early 2025, the Government released tenders for upgrades to Woods Reserve.
- Proposed works include new and upgraded carparking, campsites, day-use amenities, amenities blocks, visitor areas, walking tracks, a lookout and making the reserve accessible for people with a disability.
- Ageing toilet blocks will also be replaced with a new centralised toilet facility for day users, with disabled access and hot showers for campers. Tenders have now closed.
- A Development Application was successfully submitted on 10 June (DA 202544213 - 331/0 Paddy's River).
- The Request for Construction Tenders was also released on Tuesday, 24 July 2024. <https://www.tenders.act.gov.au/tender/view?id=292334>.
- A construction contract is expected to be in place by the end of 2025, with construction works commencing in early 2026. Site closure of Woods Reserve is expected to occur by 1 November 2025 with demolition and early works of the campsite occurring ahead of construction. The Government will provide a further update by mid-2025 following the conclusion of the tender process.

### Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre

- The temporary Visitor Centre at Tidbinbilla ~~is proving a popular, provides accessible, and convenient place for~~ visitors to Tidbinbilla ~~to receive~~ with essential visit and safety information and with the opportunity to talk to staff about their visit.
- A contractor has been engaged to demolish the original Visitor Centre commencing later in e-in July -2025.
- In the 2024-25 ACT Budget, funding was provided for further planning for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve which will provide a long-term vision and plan. This will include a visitor centre and amenities, cultural and education interpretation, walking trail upgrades and conservation initiatives.

### Maintenance of Parks and Reserves

Cleared as complete and accurate:	18/07/2025	
Cleared for public release by:	Executive Branch Manager	Ext: 71831
Contact Officer name:	Charlie Stephenson	Ext: <span style="background-color: #cccccc; display: inline-block; width: 80px; height: 1em;"></span>
Lead Directorate:	City and Environment	

- The ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) is the custodian and land manager for almost 70% of the ACT.
- PCS is also responsible for programs and initiatives that deliver conservation and land management outcomes and visitor recreation experiences. The estate comprises of a National Park, reserves, land that offsets development impacts and forestry lands.
- PCS manages approximately 2,500km of roads and related infrastructure, 400km of walking trails and over 15,000 fixed assets.
- Natural hazards in the ACT that pose a threat to conservation areas include bushfires, heatwaves and severe storms. The impact of climate change is projected to result in an increase in temperature and extreme heat events, more severe fire weather, reduced rainfall, and an increase in extreme rainfall events in the ACT over the coming decades.
- PCS is delivering infrastructure and resilience improvements within the reserve estate, with a focus on enhancing the environment, visitor experience and mitigating the impacts of a future climate where natural disasters have been predicted to be more severe with greater impacts.
- Weed control and management is a key focus of operations during the spring and summer season with officers on the ground across the estate to manage environmental threats. The team place an enhanced focus on popular visitor areas and known sites where invasive species have been detected.

### **Parks Visitation**

- The 2023-24 financial year visitor survey results indicated a high level of community satisfaction with the management of our nature reserves and national parks (86.8%) and the quality of the visitor experience (90.8%). The next survey is being held from March - May 2025.
- Visitors to ACT parks and reserves are encouraged to check the Parks website for local conditions, particularly when planning a visit to Namadgi National Park where weather or road conditions may result in road closures.
- Recreational trails at Mt Painter, The Pinnacle, Black Mountain, Bruce Ridge, Mt Taylor, Red Hill, Molonglo Gorge, Mt Majura and Pine Island have received safety, sustainability and visitor experience upgrades. Funding was provided by the ACT Government and Australian Government.

### **Namadgi National Park**

- The Commonwealth funded Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grant Program (\$6.583m) has concluded and complemented ACT Government investment to deliver:
  - visitor experience improvements to walking trails in Namadgi National Park,
  - upgrades to the Namadgi Visitor Information Centre and Depot, including accessible toilet and upgrades to the BBQ area (nearing completion),
  - road repairs and stream crossings,
  - boundary fence repairs; and
  - nature-based visitor experience accommodation improvements ~~(underway)~~.

- Namadgi National Park is open and accessible to the public, including, the Orroral Valley campground and the Link Road from Honeysuckle to Orroral Ridge, with the following exceptions:
  - Gibraltar Falls remains closed ~~with the intention to reopen in mid-2025~~ and the opening will be linked to the works being undertaken at Woods Reserve.
  - The Yankee Hat rock art precinct remains closed until post-fire renewal works are completed. Consultations with Traditional Custodians have now concluded, and ACT Heritage has approved the program of infrastructure renewal works. Works are expected to be completed by the first half of 2025 and a reopening later in 2025.

#### **Cattle in Namadgi**

- Cattle from a NSW property were detected in southern Namadgi National Park for several months despite the efforts of the farmer, NSW Parks and Wildlife Service, and ACT Park Rangers to relocate them. The cattle were removed in March 2025 and have not re-entered the Park since.

# Environmental Volunteers and Groups – Funding Arrangements

## Talking points

### Review of Environmental Groups and Funding Arrangements

- The ACT Government recognises the contribution from community environmental groups to both government and the Canberra community in supporting the environment and undertaking climate action.
- In the 2024 election, the government committed to reviewing the best way to assist local environmental groups with their ongoing needs and activities and to identify how their initiatives could be supported.
- The government has commenced a review of the environmental services required by the government and the ACT community. This reviews are underway and will hopefully be finalised soon. It will ensure that funding in forward years is being directed to the highest priorities.
- The government is confident that, following this review, government funded programs will continue to have a positive impact on our environment and community into the future, and represent high value for money.
- City and Environment Directorate officials has met with Catchment Groups (Molonglo Conservation Group, Ginninderra Catchment Group, Southern ACT Catchment Group), ACT Wildlife, SEE Change, the Conservation Council ACT Region and the Canberra Environment Centre and advised them of the review. These groups have received an extension in current funding for one year to 30 June 2026 whilst the review is underway.

### Importance of volunteers

- The ACT Government has a long and proud history of supporting ACT's environmental volunteers and community groups. Volunteers are essential to helping protect, conserve, and enhance the ACT's environment.
- Environmental and animal protection volunteering is one of the top 3 ways people contribute to their community as a volunteer.

Cleared as complete and accurate:	18/07/2025	
Cleared for public release by:	Executive Group Manager	Ext: 71831
Contact Officer name:	Frank Garofalow	Ext: 70497
Lead Directorate:	City and Environment	

- The [2024 State of Volunteering in the ACT Report](#) tells us that for every \$1 invested in volunteering, \$5.40 is returned in benefits for the community. This is why it is important we have the right programs and settings in place to support these generous contributions.
- The ACT Government is proud to invest in a range of initiatives and programs that support environmental volunteers and facilitate the community organisations that assist them.

#### Supporting Canberra's Environmental Groups and Volunteers

- In the 2024-25 ACT Budget, the government invested \$1.314 million over 4 years under the Supporting Canberra's Environmental Groups and Volunteers initiative to address recommendations from the ACT Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Environmental Volunteerism.
- We have also committed to employing additional dedicated volunteer co-ordinators to support the Urban Parks and Places Program and other urban community on-ground programs that work to keep our urban environment healthy.
- We will be reviewing how to best assist local environmental groups with their ongoing needs and activities. We will work with the Environmental Peak Groups to identify how government can best support their initiatives.

#### Existing initiatives and ongoing programs

- These new initiatives and commitments compliment existing programs supporting environmental volunteers.
- The ACT Parks and Conservation Service funds 5 FTE staff to coordinate the **ParkCare volunteer program**. In 2024-25, it also funded \$136,700 in non-employee expenses to support on-ground volunteer activities, including volunteer training, personal protective equipment, uniforms, tools and equipment.

ACT Government funds 2 FTE staff to support the **Urban Parks and Places Volunteer Program including the Adopt a Park grants program** (\$215,000 a year). Funding to provide volunteers with uniform, tools and personal protective equipment is allocated from TCCS operational budgets. Input from volunteers also informs allocation to weed and pest control programs.

- The ACT Government funds 2.2 FTE staff to support **Citizen Science programs including the Waterwatch and Frogwatch programs** and invests over \$426,000 per year for program coordinators who are embedded in the catchment groups. These programs are supplemented by \$40,000 from contractors per year who support the program.
- Since 2021-22 the **Volunteer Activation Initiative** has invested \$3.5m in ACT's environmental volunteers and the community groups that support them. This investment will continue from 2025-26 year as on-going funding.
  - This funding includes significant investment in volunteer-led environmental and community wellbeing outcomes, currently delivered by the three ACT **catchment groups**, The **FrogWatch Program** and **ACT Wildlife**.
  - The investment includes ongoing funding for the long-running **Environment Grants program**, which in 2024 invested over \$350,000 in community-led projects to enhance ACT's environment and connect people with nature.

- The ACT Government's **2025-26 Environmental Grants round** opened on 5 June 2025 and closed on 17 July 2025. \$360,000 is available for community groups for local projects that:
  - improve the environment
  - connect more people to nature
  - support Caring for Country initiatives, and
  - for environmental volunteer groups to enhance their skills and to help groups care for our local environment.
- The ACT Government occasionally enters into **supplementary grants** with local, environment-focused community groups to support key environmental work that falls outside of other grants programs.
- In 2024-25 over **\$3.9 million in supplementary grants**, including funds administered on behalf of the Australian Government, was invested in community and volunteer groups to deliver important environmental work.
- ACT Government is also proud to be collaborating with Landcare ACT to host another **Environmental Volunteers Conference** in August 2025. Building on the success of the event in 2023, the conference will bring together volunteers and experts from across the ACT to share ideas, network, and celebrate the accomplishments of environmental volunteers.

## Key information

- The ACT's flagship volunteering programs – ParkCare, Urban Parks and Places, and Waterwatch – support more than 120 volunteer groups and 4,500 individuals to give back to their community by helping to maintain and enhance the ACT's natural

## Background information

- The ACT Government has a range of well-established and highly effective environmental volunteer programs. Through these, volunteers provide more than 50,000 volunteer hours per year to support environmental and wellbeing objectives.

# EPSDD E09 – Bushfire Operations Plan

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	13,375	0	0	0	<b>13,375</b>
Offset – Expenses	-10,406	0	0	0	<b>-10,406</b>
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>2,969</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,969</b>

The ACT Government will undertake critical activities to reduce bushfire risk across the ACT's parks and reserves as part of the delivery of the annual Bushfire Operations Management Plan (BOP).

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2024-25 Budget initiative '*Bushfire Safety Risk Reduction*' which provided funding to reduce the health risks of smoke exposure for firefighting staff, and boost road maintenance equipment for the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

## Talking points

- I am pleased that an additional almost \$3 million has been allocated to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) to deliver the Bushfire Operations Management Plan (BOP) in 2025-26 financial year. This additional funding will help PCS deliver fuel reduction activities and maintain firefighting access to our parks and reserves into the upcoming fire season and beyond.
- The BOP is vital to reducing bushfire risk to Canberra. The BOP does this through hundreds of individual projects including undertaking fuel reduction activities such as grazing and burning on ACT Government land, ensuring that the road network is serviceable for emergency vehicles during times of fire response, and building capacity in our team of over 150 PCS firefighters.
- The essential new works in this year's BOP will tie in with the purchase of machinery provided in the 2024-25 BOP, meaning PCS will be able to in-source some roading work to reduce costs and improve preventative fire road maintenance within our parks and reserves.
- I am aware that the ACT's Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Version 5 (SBMPv5) is currently being finalised, and that this document provides overall strategic direction for fire management over the next five years.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 19/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
 Contact Officer name: Michaela Watts  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment  
 TRIM Ref:

- The funding provided in this budget initiative is for existing commitments and land management requirements for fire purposes, and PCS will work with the Emergency Services Agency to propose any additional works once SBMPv5 is finalised.

## Key information

- The Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP) is developed and executed to meet the requirements set out by the Emergencies Act 2004, ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) and ACT Bushfire Management Standards 2023.
- \$13.375 million has been allocated to deliver the BOP in 2025-26 FY (this is \$2.969mil above the existing \$10.406mil budget). This will maintain the existing staff complement of 53.6 FTE over the coming year.

## Background information

- PCS within CED is responsible for delivery the annual BOP, which applies to all unleased Territory lands under the custodianship of CED (previously EPSDD and TCCS). This includes over 70 per cent of overall ACT land, such as Namadgi National Park, Canberra Nature Park, the Lower Cotter Catchment, Googong Foreshore, and urban open spaces.
- The BOP is an annual plan outlining bushfire management activities PCS will implement each financial year. The BOP details the works and activities that PCS aims to achieve within each financial year to mitigate bushfire risk within the ACT, consisting of fuel and access management plans, adequate fire response capacity, and other capability-building activities.
- ACT Bushfire Management Standards 2023 is subordinate legislation to the *Emergencies Act 2004*. These standards legislate details to PCS, like the need to keep fuel risk at very low levels close to assets and rural roads to be cleared of vegetation at a certain distance. The BOP works proactively seek to meet these standards as the Rural Fire Service can issue formal improvement directions to land custodians if these standards are not met.
- Accordingly, the BOP includes a wide range of fuel load management strategies including prescribed burning, slashing, spraying, physical removal and the use of cattle grazing, along with fire trail network maintenance. The application and effectiveness of these methods are regularly reviewed and improved.
- Following the 2023-24 BOP, the residual risk to the community was reduced from 37% to 31% which is a an even stronger result than the target band of 47% - 33% outlined in the Regional Fire Management Plan 2019-2028. The 2024-25 BOP program is underway to maintain a reduced level of risk.

# Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme (known publicly as the Home Energy Support Scheme)

## Talking points

- The ACT Government is ensuring a ‘just transition’ as part of its climate change response, noting that inadequately insulated, and energy inefficient homes contribute to higher energy bills and poor thermal comfort.
- Ensuring that supports are available to help our community members become early beneficiaries from the transition from gas to electric has a renewed and more targeted focus in this term of Government.
- Through the Home Energy Support Scheme, the ACT Government committed \$50 million to deliver a range of measures to reduce energy hardship for low-income homeowners as well as public, private, and community housing renters.
- The program offers a range of financial and other support for Canberra’s most vulnerable households to replace inefficient appliances and improve thermal efficiency. Participating households will benefit from reduced energy costs and improved wellbeing.
- Eligible homeowners can access rebates for energy efficient products under the *Home Energy Support: Rebates for Homeowners Program*.
- Homeowners with an eligible concession card can access
  - one rebate of up to \$2,500 to install rooftop solar (Category A), and
  - an additional rebate of up to \$2,500 for reverse cycle heating and cooling, eligible hot water systems, ceiling insulation or electric stove tops/ovens (Category B).
- Since program inception to 16 July 2025, 659 Category A and 860 Category B products have been installed at a total value of \$3.6 million.
- The *Public and Community Housing Upgrades Programs* is the largest component of the Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme (VHES) and delivers ceiling insulation and gas to efficient electric appliance upgrades in social housing properties. The program will ensure all social housing meets the minimum ceiling insulation standard by November

Cleared as complete and accurate: 03/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: Fiona Wright  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

2026 and facilitates tenants to transition off the gas network to efficient electric appliance upgrades including cooktops, hot water and heating and cooling systems.


- As of 16 July 2025, 3,495 social (public and community) housing properties have received a ceiling insulation and/or electrification upgrade:
  - Ceiling insulation only = 1,901 properties (1,873 public + 28 community)
  - Electrification only = 831 properties (610 public + 221 community)
  - Ceiling insulation and electrification = 763 properties (700 public + 36 community)
- A further investment of \$21.776 million was announced in the 2025-26 budget to bring forward provisioned funding to fully electrify all feasible public housing properties by 2028, as part of the Integrated Energy Plan. This work, which will build on progress under the VHESS will commence in early 2026.
- Rebates of up to \$2,500 are available for rental providers registered under the *Affordable Community Housing Land Tax Exemption Scheme* to upgrade ceiling insulation in their rental properties in line with the minimum ceiling insulation standard. The program launched in April 2022, and as of 16 July 2025, 61 rebates have been paid.
- The *Chronic Health Conditions: Home Energy Efficiency Upgrades pilot*, which ran from February 2023 to August 2024, provided ceiling insulation and gas to electric appliance upgrades for low-income homeowners with chronic health conditions. A total of 50 households received upgrades.
- Insights from this pilot were used to inform the design of the ACT Government's *Community Partnership Electrification Program* (known publicly as the *Access to Electric Program*). This program is a commitment under the Integrated Energy Plan

## Key information

- Monitoring and evaluation reports on the Home Energy Support Scheme, released publicly in September 2024, showed program participants reporting improvements to their wellbeing, comfort, climate resilience and energy costs as a result of the Scheme.
  - 86% of public housing and 71% of community housing respondents reported the comfort of their homes had improved since receiving the upgrades.
  - 64% of public housing respondents reported their wellbeing has improved, including 20% who said they had improved mental wellbeing due to lower energy costs.
  - 64% of community housing respondents reported that they can more easily cope with heatwaves when they happen.

## Background information

- The Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme is known publicly as the Home Energy Support Scheme. This decision was made through consultation with community stakeholders, including ACTCOSS and Council on the Ageing.
- The Scheme supports the following ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025 goals:
  - 2.A - Support low-income residents

- 
- 4.C - Climate-wise, zero emissions rental homes
  - 4.D - Climate-wise, zero emissions public housing
  - 4.E - Climate-wise, zero emissions low-income homes.

[Return to Index](#)

# Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy Implementation

## Talking points

- As of 14 July 2025:
  - there are 12,025 Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEVs) registered in the ACT, this is compared to 8,750 registered at 14 July 2024
  - the ACT has 198 individual public EV chargers servicing **274 charging bays across 86 sites**, noting some chargers are capable of charging two EVs at once
- There is one Direct Current (fast) (DC) charging bay for every 107 registered electric vehicles in the ACT, which exceeds the Australian Government's suggested 2025-26 target of 165 EVs/DC plug for the ACT.
- The ratio of registered EVs to the number of fast DC charging bays is known as the plug ratio. The urban zones with the lowest plug ratios (i.e. most chargers) are
  - CBD (22)
  - East Canberra (33)
  - Inner South (76) and
  - Gungahlin (88)
- The urban zones with the highest plug ratios (i.e. least chargers) are
  - Belconnen (532)
  - Weston/Molonglo (282) and
  - Woden Valley (232)

### Government funded supported public charging

- As of 14 July 2025, there are 62 public chargers (with **106 charging bays**) that have been installed with the assistance of government funding. This has been undertaken through a series of competitive grant rounds.
- Grant funding for EV charge point operators to support the establishment of a sustainable EV charging industry, are issued under the *Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Funding Program* (launched in 2022) and ongoing *Public EV Charging Infrastructure Fund* (launched in 2023).

Cleared as complete and accurate: 03/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: Ros Malouf  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- The latest round of grants awarded \$887,355 to support 40 chargers (with 70 charging bays) to be installed, which was announced on 17 July 2025. These installations are expected to be completed progressively between now and the end of 30 July 2027.
- **The ACT has reached its ZEV Strategy target of 180 public chargers by 2025.** However, the Government recognises there are still gaps in the network, especially in locations with many apartments residents who often can't charge at home.
- The projects under the grant rounds will fund EV chargers at new locations across the Territory, targeting gaps in the network, tourist destinations, shopping centres, and areas with high-density residential buildings.
- Rebates for local clubs to install EV chargers and other sustainability upgrades on their premises have been provided through the Community Clubs Program.

#### DC Charging Hubs

- The ACT's Integrated Energy Plan 2024-30 identified the need for DC fast charging hubs to support the transition to electric vehicles for both private passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles. These are 'petrol station' style hubs with a concentrated number of fast DC Chargers.
- Hubs will be located in the most viable locations where traffic flow, amenities, electrical infrastructure and suitable land are all present.
- In December 2024, workshops were held with industry and potential users of DC fast charging hubs discussed how these hubs could be developed in the ACT.

#### Support for EV charging in multi-unit developments

- To provide support for unit owners to transition to EVs, \$2.2 million was allocated in the 2024-25 Budget for an EV Ready Apartments loans program.
- This program will offer interest-free loan support to owners' corporations to install the backbone charging infrastructure. Residents will then be able to purchase their own charger at an equitable cost when they are ready to transition.

#### ACT Government Passenger Fleet Transition:

- As of 14 July 2025, the ACT Government has over 590 EV chargers installed across Government sites, with its Passenger Fleet comprising:

Vehicle Category	Vehicle Type	Number	Percentage
Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEV)	Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV)	252	44.0%
	Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicles (FCEV)	7	1.2%
Low Emissions Vehicles	Plug-in Hybrid Vehicles (PHEV)	188	32.8%
Vehicles	Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) Vehicles	126	22.0%
	<b>Total</b>	573	100%

[Return to Index](#)

## Background information

- The Strategy released in July 2022 sets a sales target of 80-90% of all light vehicle sales being zero-emission by 2030 and is supported by a suite of actions including:
  - expanding the ACT public charging network with 180 EV chargers by the end of 2025. (This was achieved in May 2025).
  - commitments to explore the phase-out of new internal combustion engine vehicles by 2035.
  - prohibition of new internal combustion engine vehicles onboarding into taxi and ride-share fleets by 2030.
  - \$2,000 incentives for installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure for apartment buildings (replaced by EV Ready Apartments program).
  - financial incentives for ZEV purchase such as stamp duty waivers (now emissions based duty rates), 2 years free registration for new and used ZEVs (now lower cost registration), as well as low interest loans of up to \$15,000.
  - changes to the Territory Plan to make new builds electric vehicle ready.
  - continued action to ensure that 100% of all newly leased Government vehicles are ZEVs where fit for purpose and explore opportunities to replace ACT Government heavy fleet vehicles with ZEVs.
- The ACT Government non-passenger fleet includes an electric van, electric ride-on mowers, an electric forklift and a hybrid-electric fire truck.

### NSW Region

- Fast chargers in regional areas surrounding the ACT will also be critical to reducing driving range anxiety for ACT residents who need to travel outside the Territory.
- The NRMA, Tesla and other charge point operators have invested in public EV charging infrastructure in regions surrounding the ACT such as Yass, Goulburn, Gundagai, Batemans Bay, Braidwood and Bega.
- Australia's largest EV charging hub is under construction in Goulburn. The Tesla charging location will provide 20 DC charging bays offering speeds of up to 250kW per plug and will be open to all EV models.

# Biosecurity Threats – Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases

## Talking points

### Talking points:

#### High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1

- Australia is the only continent where high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 has not been detected.
- Outbreaks overseas have led to mass mortalities of wild birds and poultry and the deaths of some mammals (including livestock and humans). There is a high risk that this could happen in Australia and the ACT.
- The risk of an incursion of H5N1 in Australia has increased and national preparedness is a priority.
- The ACT is actively engaged with the Australian Government and other states and territories in H5N1 preparedness activities being conducted by the agriculture, environment, health and emergency management portfolios.
  - In February 2025, the ACT Government agreed to enter into a Federation Funding Agreement (FFA) with the Commonwealth which will provide the ACT with \$700,000 to support surveillance, detection, diagnosis and response to H5N1.
  - Separately, the ACT will receive an additional \$100,000 from the Commonwealth in direct departmental payments to progress HPAI preparedness and response planning for susceptible wildlife.
- The ACT is strengthening its existing biosecurity response plans to prepare for the increased risk of H5N1.
- The Government, working as part of a national program, is continuing to conduct wildlife risk assessments for Avian Influenza encompassing all species of native birds and mammals in the ACT.
- Surveillance in wild birds continues monthly at Jerrabomberra Wetlands with all samples taken to date testing negative to Avian influenza.
- ACT Biosecurity and ACT Health have been meeting regularly to ensure a “one health” approach to preparedness and response actions.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Tegan Liston Ext: 57325  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- ACT Biosecurity investigates reports of sick or dead wild birds. The ACT community is asked to report any unusual bird deaths to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

### **Varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*)**

- Varroa mite is now in the ACT.
- The ACT Government is working with affected beekeepers to provide advice on management techniques.
- The ACT Government will continue to update beekeepers directly and publish any updates about Varroa mite in the ACT region on the [ACT Environment website](#)
- Varroa mite is a parasite of honeybees and is considered a major threat to honey production and horticultural industries dependent on pollination. It does not pose a threat to food safety or human health.
- Varroa mite was first detected in Australia in 2022 triggering a national response to manage the biosecurity risk and spread.
- Varroa mite is no longer eradicable from Australia.
- The ACT Government has been working with local beekeepers to help build resilience and prepare them for the arrival of Varroa mite in the territory and minimise the ongoing impacts as it becomes endemic in the ACT.
- Varroa mite is thought to be one of the greatest threats to Australia's honey and honeybee pollination plant industries.
- Varroa mite do not pose a risk to human health or food safety.
- There are no movement restrictions between the ACT and NSW for bees, hives and beekeeping equipment.
- If ACT beekeepers suspect their bees have Varroa mite, they must call 6207 3587 or email [ACTBiosecurity@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTBiosecurity@act.gov.au).
- More information about Varroa mite, hive care and how to inspect bees for varroa mite is available on the [ACT Government Website](#).

### **Red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*)**

- Red imported fire ants (RIFA/fire ants) are one of the worst invasive species to reach Australia, and are currently under eradication in Queensland and northern NSW.
- Fire ants can impact our environment and many industries and can cause extensive damage to ecological and agricultural systems.
- Fire ants can restrict everyday activities such as barbeques, picnics, and sporting events and have the potential to kill humans, pets, and animals including our iconic Australian species.
- Recent weather conditions in Queensland and northern NSW, including ex-tropical cyclone Alfred, have raised concerns around the potential for further spread of fire ants.
  - The National Fire Ant Eradication Program is focusing monitoring and surveillance efforts in areas that received significant rainfall.

- Restrictions currently apply under the *Biosecurity Act 2023* for the importation of materials that have the potential to carry fire ants into the ACT.
- These materials include organic mulch, soil and anything with soil on it, baled material like hay, potted plants, turf, agricultural or earthmoving machinery, and mining and quarrying materials.
- These restrictions apply to areas within 5km of identified fire ant nests in northern NSW, and areas in southeast Queensland declared as a fire ant biosecurity zone.
- These measures will help reduce the risk of fire ants inadvertently entering the ACT.
- The ACT remains engaged with the Australian Government and other states and territories in the fight against fire ants. The ACT contributed \$1.23 million to the National Fire Ant Eradication Program as its cost share for FY2024-25 to FY2026-27.
- Anyone suspecting fire ants in the ACT can also contact the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

## Background information


- The ACT has a dedicated biosecurity planning and response team that constantly monitors the biosecurity threat environment. This team works closely with the Australian, state and territory governments and industry to identify and manage biosecurity risks and outbreaks.
- The ACT Government continues to strengthen its biosecurity legislation and undertake increased levels of planning in response to the current threats.

### **Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus (ToBRFV)**

- The ACT continues to participate in national biosecurity response activities in relation to Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus (ToBRFV).
- ToBRFV was detected in South Australia in August 2024 and was confirmed in Victoria in January 2025. ToBRFV is a highly contagious plant virus that affects tomatoes, capsicums and chillies. It is a considerable threat to Australia's \$5.8 billion vegetable industry (ABS 2023) due to reduced yield and quality of produce.
- The ACT does not have a tomato industry.
- There is no risk to food safety or human health from eating tomatoes with this virus.
- National Management Group agreed on 29 May 2025 that eradicating ToBRFV from Australia is no longer technically feasible. Current containment strategies are remaining in place while a new strategy is being developed with affected industries.

### **Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer (PSHB, *Euwallacea fornicatus*)**

- Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer (PSHB) is a tiny beetle that bores into tree trunks, stems and branches and can lead to tree death. The beetle is an agricultural and environmental pest. It has over 500 host species, including amenity, native and horticulture production trees. It spreads with the movement of infested trees (nursery stock), firewood and green waste material.

- 
- PSHB was detected in Western Australia in August 2021. It is unknown how and when the pest entered Australia.
  - There have been no detections of PSHB outside the Perth metropolitan area.
  - National Management Group agreed on 18 June 2025 that PSHB is no longer technically feasible to eradicate and agreed that the response will now move into an 18-month Transition to Management (T2M) phase.
  - Industry, community and government parties will work together as part of the transition to slow the spread of PSHB and minimise the spread beyond the Perth metropolitan region. The ACT continues to participate in these discussions.
  - The ACT Government will continue to monitor any potential increased risk associated with PSHB and develop appropriate communication, surveillance and statutory controls as necessary.

# Urban Development Proposals and the Environment

## Talking points

### Drake Brockman Drive Upgrades

- I am aware that an environmental organisation has raised concerns about the impacts of the Drake Brockman road duplication on the environment.
- The Conservator of Flora and Fauna has briefed me on the development and the engagement with the proponent to protect mature native trees and minimise environmental harm.
- I note that the development has progressed through rigorous planning and development approval process of the ACT and the Commonwealth.
- The proposal was granted approval in November 2024, subject to conditions. As a condition of this approval, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) must be prepared and endorsed by the Conservator prior to any works commencing. The CEMP needs to clearly articulate clearing procedures and boundaries, how significant trees are to be protected, and to confirm that clearing will occur outside of threatened bird breeding seasons.
- The CEMP will be referred to the Conservator for assessment and endorsement, and will be closely scrutinized to ensure all conditions have been met.

### Wombat Management in Development Areas

- The protection of wombats from harm in areas proposed for development has been a considerable focus for the Government over the past year.
- With valued input from stakeholder groups, the Conservator for Flora and Fauna has finalised guidelines for reducing impacts from development and related activities on wombats and other burrowing native animals.
- The [Management of Burrowing Animals During Development Guidelines](#) have already been used to guide government assessments and to provide advice to developers on what is required to assess and manage burrowing animals.

### Development at the Federal Golf Course

Cleared as complete and accurate:	09/06/2025	
Cleared for public release by:	Executive Group Manager	Ext: 78628
Contact Officer name:	Karen Taylor	Ext: 54668
Lead Directorate:	City and Environment	

- The Government notes that the Federal Golf Club and Mbark are proposing to develop a retirement village, access road and water infrastructure in the southern area of the Federal Golf Club (Block 1, Section 56 Red Hill).
- The Conservator has issued an Environmental Significance Opinion for the proposed development.
- The proposed works will result in a small reduction in foraging and roosting habitat for both Gang-gangs and Superb Parrots. This is unlikely to have significant impact, as the Red Hill Nature Reserve is nearby, the project will avoid areas where animals search for food, and these species also use nearby urban areas.
- All areas of the threatened Box Gum Woodland ecological community within the Federal Golf Club have been avoided, and no impacts to these areas is anticipated.
- In April 2024, four DA's were submitted to the Territory Planning Authority to replace the three DA's submitted in October 2023. These DA's will now be subject to independent assessment pursuant to the *Planning Act 2023*. This will include a referral to the Conservator and will be subject to the new Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design Guide requirements.

#### Lawson North

- Lawson North is known to have important conservation values including Natural Temperate Grassland and Box Gum Woodland threatened ecological communities.
- The site contains habitat for threatened fauna such as the Golden Sun Moth, Striped Legless Lizard, Perunga Grasshopper and Key's Matchstick Grasshopper.
- Scarlet Robins, White-winged Trillers and Gang-gang Cockatoos nest and forage in the mature trees in the area. There is also a known population of the endangered Ginninderra Peppercress adjacent to the proposed development area.
- Defence Housing Australia (DHA) lodged a referral under the EPBC Act on 4 July 2022, which closed for public consultation on 7 September 2022. The ACT Government provided expert advice on the scale of impact on several threatened matters at the site.
- On 7 October 2022, the Australian Government determined that the proposal is a controlled action, which means it will require assessment and approval under the EPBC Act before it can proceed.
- In December 2022, the Australian Government published a Statement of Reasons for the decision, which outlines the matters considered when making the determination that the proposal is a controlled action. The Statement of Reasons summarises the high ecological value of the site, and that the proposal may significantly impact numerous threatened values.
- DHA has since submitted a project variation to reduce the size of the development footprint and therefore reduce impacts to biodiversity and heritage values located on the site. The project will be assessed by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which will be referred to the Conservator to review and provide comment on in due course.



## Background information

- The DHA proposal is for an estate of approximately 443 dwellings, north of the existing Lawson estate. The referral area totals approximately 47.16 hectares with more than 100 hectares of the site being retained as an offset.
- The site is expected to remain declared National Land, the National Capital Authority (NCA) is the decision maker on all aspects of the proposed development. The ACT Government has no specific approval role which means a bilateral agreement would not be available.
- The Development Control Plan for the site requires that a concept plan be prepared and approved. A range of matters are required to be addressed in the concept plan including traffic, vehicle access, road network, access to Lawson south and active travel. The concept plan will be subject to public notification and consultation. This will include consultation with the ACT Government.
- Should the NCA approve the concept plan, a works approval (development) application will be lodged with the NCA for assessment and determination. Further public notification will occur at this stage.

# Callum Brae Crematorium

## Talking points

- The Government acknowledges the concern from community groups about the potential impacts from the construction of a crematorium on a block adjacent to the Callum Brae Nature Reserve.
- The proposed development has been assessed in accordance with the ACT's planning laws and frameworks that include environmental assessments.
- I am aware that the federal Department for Climate, Environment, Energy and Water has reaffirmed their original decision that the development is not a controlled action under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).
- Further to this, I am aware that this decision was recently appealed through the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) and a decision has been handed down.
- Whilst I am yet to be briefed on the full details of the ACAT's decision, I understand that the Tribunal's decision is largely consistent with the Authority's decision to approve the development but varied the Authority's decision by adding further conditions of approval.
- The new conditions imposed by ACAT are focused on Crown lease provisions, improved tree retention and planting, and changes to the internal road alignment; again for improved tree retention.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 78628  
Contact Officer name: Karen Taylor Ext: 54668  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

# Regulatory and Compliance Action

## Talking points

### Talking Points

#### Dogs Off Leash Campaign (Minister C&GS)

- It is an offence to walk dogs off-leash in most of the ACT's parks and reserves where dogs are permitted.
- Dogs are entirely prohibited from about half of all ACT reserves and about a third of Canberra Nature Park reserves.
- Dogs may try and chase and attack native animals, including slow moving animals such as the Rosenbergs Goanna.
- Sadly, we continue to see Canberrans enter reserves with dogs where dogs are prohibited, or where dogs are walked off lead.
- The ACT Government will continue to regulate through education and enforcement where dogs are detected off lead.
- More information about walking dogs in the ACT's parks and reserves is available on the [ACT Parks website](#).

#### Cessation of Fisheries Compliance and Patrols (Minister CCEEW)

- In the 2023-24 Budget included funding towards a dedicated fisheries compliance conservation officer to help protect the ACT's native fish and to provide information on legal and ethical fishing practices to stakeholders.
  - Since conducting compliance activities the encountered non-compliance rate has fallen from 20% to 11%.
  - The compliance officer undertook 8 club talks and education evenings, installed 15 information signs, stocked 146,000 native fish in ACT lakes and ponds, updated the ACT fishing brochure, and assisted the ACT PCS Licensing and Compliance Unit in drafting a proposed new Fishing Gear Declaration under the Fisheries Act.
  - Whilst education has been a priority, more than 50 warnings and 4 infringement notices have been issued as well as 19 illegal fishing traps and lines located and removed( some of these had turtles, rakali or threatened crayfish caught in them).

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Daniel Walters Ext: 76334  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- Noting the low level of non-compliance, the government has decided to invest in other environmental priorities. Whilst there will no longer be a dedicated fisheries compliance conservation officer, some of the functions will be included in the ACT's broader environmental conservation regulatory program.
- Brochures about fishing in the ACT are available in English, Chinese and Vietnamese on the [ACT Government website](#).
- Anyone with information about illegal fishing is encouraged to contact Access Canberra on 13 22 81.

### **Key Information**

- Regulating the ACT's environmental legislation including the Nature Conservation Act (NC Act) and the Fisheries Act is necessary to ensure the environment remains protected from actions that may cause harm or otherwise be in breach of legislation.
- Regulation is undertaken by Conservation Officers appointed under the NC Act and may involve audits of licence holders and patrols of the ACT's natural areas.
- The Government has increased the number of Conservation Officers that can undertake regulatory activities.
- The approach to encouraging compliance by the public is to educate, warn, then enforce. Education may be in-person or via published materials or signage. Verbal or written warnings may be given where assessed as being a sufficient deterrent. Enforcement action may include issuing infringement notices or prosecution in court.
- Infringement notice penalties under the NC Act and Fisheries Act range from \$30 to \$1,500. A person who receives an infringement notice remains innocent of any alleged offence until proven guilty in court and has the option of paying the infringement penalty. If the person takes this option, then under section 122 of the *Magistrates Court Act*:
  - any liability of the person for the offence is discharged; and
  - the person will not be prosecuted in court for the offence; and
  - the person will not be taken to have been convicted of the offence.

# Sch 1 1.14



# Sch 1 1.14

# Dingoes

## Talking points

### Attacks on Stock

- The ACT Government recognises that some adverse animal welfare outcomes and economic losses are experienced by rural lessees when wild dogs and Dingoes attack livestock.
- Waragul (Dingo) control is undertaken in designated management zones to reduce livestock losses on neighbouring rural properties. This work is undertaken in collaboration with rural landholders and the NSW Government.
- The current Dingo management program includes baiting and thermal shooting and until recently trapping. Recent developments (outlined below) have removed trapping as a management tool for an unknown period.
- Trapping is considered the most effective management tool for wild dog/dingo control. Baiting and shooting operations have increased in lieu of trapping but are unlikely to achieve program objectives as stand alone tools
- Property owners are encouraged to report Dingo sightings or attacks to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

### Prohibition of soft jaw traps and recent changes to regulatory controls (Minister for C&GS)

- The ACT Government has recently updated the Animal Welfare Regulation 2001 that controls the use of soft jaw traps within the ACT.
- In 2019 updates were made to the Animal Welfare Act and Regulation that govern animal welfare in the ACT. As part of those changes, the use and possession of soft jaw traps was prohibited through regulation.
- This prohibition did not consider a genuine requirement for the use of soft jaw traps by our Parks and Conservation Service and rural land holders in the control of pest animals and invasive species.
- The ACT Government has worked with the ACT's Animal Welfare Authority to explore options that permit the use of soft-jaw traps in the ACT.
- The new regulation is published on the legislation register, however permits persons authorised under the Biosecurity Act 2023, and Nature Conservation Act 2014 to possess and use soft jaw traps. Rural Lessee's will required to apply for a trapping permit.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Rosie Cooney Ext: 50023  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- Updates will be shared with rural landholders via the cooperative working groups and direct correspondence as to these changes.
- All trapping using soft jaw traps is delivered in accordance with the National Codes of Practice for the particular pest animal being managed.

#### **When were traps suspended from use?**

- Section 5A of the Act which previously prohibited the use and possession of soft jaw traps was brought the attention of the ACT Government in April /May 2025 and as a result PCS removed all government-owned soft-jaw traps from the ACT and stopped trapping operations.
- Baiting and shooting in identified management areas continued but are considered less effective.
- ACT Rural landholders were notified of this development through the Rural landholders Association and a webinar was held on the 10/07/2025 through an invite provided to rural lessees. Updates will be provided following notification of the regulation.

#### **Will any action be taken on this?**

- It would not be appropriate for the government to comment on this. This is a matter for the regulator.

#### **Proposed Policy Change to Recognise the Waragul (Dingo) as a native animal**

- The Dingo is known as 'Waragul' in Ngunnawal language (Winanggaay Ngunnawal language group), and this term should be used when referring to animals on Ngunnawal Country.
- The name Waragul will be adopted in all communication and policies except where the term wild dog is required by pest control permitting laws.
- On 5 July 2024, the ACT Government announced plans to formally recognise Waragul as a native animal.
- A policy approach is under development to ensure that:
  - Waragul are protected under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*.
  - Appropriate mitigation measures are maintained that limit, as far as possible, the impacts of Waragul-related livestock losses on rural properties.
- To progress these changes over the coming months, EPSDD proposes to:
  - Draft a Controlled Native Species Plan for the Waragul (Dingo) under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*, commencing in 2025;
  - Remove the listing of dingo as a pest under the *Pest Plants and Animals (Pest Animals) Declaration 2021*;
  - Review the science, stakeholder values, control methods, and policy on this issue to ensure best practice for Waragul management.
- The ACT Government will soon establish a consultative committee to inform this policy reform. The consultative committee will include representatives of the Ngunnawal community, ACT and NSW conservation community, and rural lessees.

- Throughout these policy changes existing management programs for Waragul will continue in their current form.

## Key information

- Dr Kylie Cairns, University of NSW has now undertaken genetic analysis of 50 ear samples taken from Waraguls in Namadgi National Park.
- Of the sampled animals, 47 (94%) showed no indication of any domestic dog ancestry, and two had very small amounts (4% and 7%) of domestic dog ancestry. This remains within the cutoff generally labelled as “pure” Dingo in published literature.
- One domestic dog was detected, with genetic data indicating a mix of kelpie, koolie and cattle dog, with small amounts of dingo ancestry not related to the local population, indicating a roaming or escaped domestic dog.
- This finding is consistent with 2 Australia-wide genomic studies, which have found Dingoes have minimal domestic dog genetic make-up and a much higher level of Dingo ancestry than previously thought.
- The ACT Scientific Committee has advised that a distinction should be made between the Dingo and feral domestic dogs in any legislation and/or regulations and recommended that the Waragul should be managed as a controlled native species.

## Background information


### Terminology

- Domestic dogs and Dingoes are often currently considered the same species (*Canis familiaris*), but this taxonomy is disputed, with multiple species names used in scientific literature. Dingoes represent a separate evolutionary lineage and are different to domestic dogs in shape, physiology and behaviour.
- The term “domestic dog” encompasses free-ranging (feral) and pet dogs.
- The term “wild dog” is used in the National Wild Dog Action Plan to describe “all wild-living dogs, including Dingoes, feral dogs, and their hybrids”.

### Ecological and Cultural significance

- Dingoes play an important functional role of top order predator in Australian ecosystems and are therefore of conservation importance.
- The Waragul holds a special place within the Ngunnawal society and dreaming since the first sunrise, representing resilience and protection.
- Within Ngunnawal family groups, Waragul were raised in the company of women and children to provide an effective hunting aid, a living blanket, and protection. Dingoes hold a special place within the Aboriginal communities more broadly as their footprints were tracked to find waterholes and pathways (song lines) across Country.

### Legislation and management

- 
- In the ACT, wild dogs/Dingoes are currently listed as a single-entity pest animal in the *Pest Plants and Animals (Pest Animals) Declaration 2021*. Consequently, Waragul are not currently afforded protection as a native species under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*.
  - Current management of Waragul in Namadgi National Park strives to limit the impact on populations by maintaining a “conservation area” where management actions do not occur.
  - Baiting programs are limited to two scheduled 5 weekly periods with additional infrequent reactive baiting in times of above average grazing impacts. A Pest Animal Controller (trapper) is employed fulltime.
  - The ACT is a signatory to three cooperative wild dog management plans with NSW.

There are no plans to limit or stop the mitigation measures currently in place to manage Waragul in the ACT, including Namadgi National Park.

# First Nations Engagement and Programs

## Talking points

### Ngunnawal Engagement

- The Environment Portfolio previously engaged the Ngunnawal community directly through monthly meetings with the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee (DNCCC). The term of the current DNCCC members ended in 2024 and the purpose and function of the committee is currently under review.
- Other entities include the Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs) regularly engaged through ACT Heritage on matters that affect cultural heritage in the ACT.
- Four Ngunnawal Cultural Advisors have been appointed to work closely with Office of Nature Conservation (ONC) ecologist and Parks and Conservation Service land managers on habitat restoration, embedding cultural values and practices in ACT Government's restoration practice.

**Note:** The Ngunnawal Cultural Advisors received the NAIDOC Caring for Country award for 2025.

- The Environment Portfolio also regularly engages 15 Ngunnawal community members to undertake Aboriginal Waterway Assessments (AWAs). This group is convened through the Office for Water and led by the Ngunnawal Water Policy officer.
- The Office of Water scheduled an engagement session with the Ngunnawal Community on Saturday, 8 February 2025 about the ACT and Region Catchment Strategy.
- The Office of Water engaged First Nations Consultant, Paul Knight to consult with First Nations communities in the ACT and region to understand their aspirations for participating in ACT water and waterway management and to deliver on water related Closing the Gap inter-governmental commitments.
- When appropriate and at the advice of the above entities, the Environment Portfolio also engages with community directly through established communication networks managed by the Traditional Custodian Engagement Team. This type of engagement is intended to reach the whole Ngunnawal community.
- The Office of Nature Conservation held a targeted consultation session alongside the Traditional Custodian Engagement Team for the Ngunnawal Community on Saturday, 5 April

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 78628  
Contact Officer name: Mary Mudford Ext: 75179  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

to continue discussions and seek input on the Nature Conservation Strategy that is currently in development.

#### Review of DNCCC


- The Government is currently working to undertake a review of the DNCCC.
- Since the establishment of the DNCCC in 2019 it has been an effective mechanism for engagement between the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and representatives of the Ngunnawal Community.
- With the DNCCC members terms expired, it is timely and appropriate to undertake a review to examine how the DNCCC has operated and options to further strengthen engagement practices.
- The ACT Government continues to respect and value its relationship with the Traditional Custodians of the ACT and actively works together on a wide range of land management, cultural, environmental, and heritage matters through the active engagement of a number of governance entities and advisors that exist within the First Nations Community.

#### First Nations Conservation Training Program

- The ACT Government, in partnership with 18fifty3 Group, is delivering a First Nations Conservation Training Program.
- The program offers structured employment and accredited training for eight First Nations individuals over four years, with two cohorts of four trainees.
- Trainees are employed full-time and supported to complete a Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, alongside additional certifications including First Aid, Chemical Application, Chainsaw Operation, and Working with Vulnerable People.
- Preference is given to Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians, with recruitment prioritised through community networks to ensure culturally appropriate engagement and representation.
- Employment outcomes include paid work aligned with award wages, cultural leave entitlements, and structured career pathways in land management and conservation.
- The program integrates cultural mentorship and on-Country learning, guided by Ngunnawal Elders and Aboriginal NRM facilitators, strengthening cultural connection and leadership.
- Trainees contribute directly to government restoration projects, including tree planting, weed control, erosion management, and habitat connectivity works across priority sites.
- The initiative supports Closing the Gap objectives by building capacity, creating employment, and embedding First Nations leadership in environmental stewardship

#### Youth programs

- The purpose of these youth programs are to address the disparity experienced by First Nations young people in education, justice, and health, with the data showing 'Connection to Country, built through First Nations mentors enhance both individual and collective resilience for First Nations Youth'.
- The 2024-25 program is underway with 42 First Nations young people engaged through four EPSDD led and supported programs.

- 
- The programs include engagement with four First Nations service providers and businesses.

# Kangaroo Management

## Talking points

### 2025 Kangaroo Management Program

- The culling component of the 2025 Kangaroo Management Program commenced on 10 June and has now concluded.
- Sixteen (16) reserves were closed for the culling program, including:

Aranda Bushland Nature Reserve	Jerrabomberra West Grasslands Nature Reserve
Callum Brae Nature Reserve	Molonglo River Reserve - Kama
Crace Grasslands Nature Reserve	Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve
Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve	Mount Majura Nature Reserve
Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve	Mount Mugga Mugga Nature Reserve
Gungaderra Grasslands Nature Reserve	Mulanggari Grasslands Nature Reserve
Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve	Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve
Jerrabomberra East Grasslands Nature Reserve	Red Hill Nature Reserve

- Target numbers were achieved at fourteen of the sixteen sites by Friday 4 July and all sites were re-opened before commencement of the July school holidays.
- Mount Ainslie and Mount Majura were closed again from the 21 July, where a target of 297 remained. Operations are now concluded and both reserves are open from today (1 August).
- The number of kangaroos identified to be culled this year was higher than recent years, with a total target of 2981.
- The ACT environment in 2025 is drier than in recent years, which has resulted in reduced vegetation growth. As such, the number of kangaroos that can be sustainably maintained is substantially reduced across most sites compared to the last few years.
- Monitoring of ground layer vegetation and kangaroo populations was completed across priority nature reserves to inform kangaroo management recommendations for 2025.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
 Contact Officer name: Luke Halls Ext: 77112  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- The GonaCon fertility control program is underway and will be completed by the end of August. GonaCon has been administered to 4 female kangaroos at Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary, 6 females at Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve, and 8 females at Mulanggari Nature Reserve.
- GonaCon has been used at these sites in previous years, therefore only a small number of additional treatments were required this year to maintain the desired proportion of infertile females.
- Administration of GonaCon has started at a fourth site this year – Red Hill Kangaroo Management Unit (which includes Red Hill Nature Reserve and Federal Golf Club).

### **Refresh of Eastern Grey Kangaroo Controlled Native Species Management Plan**

- As part of their statutory role, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna is working to update the Eastern Grey Kangaroo Controlled Native Species Management Plan to incorporate the recommendations from the 2024 independent review.
- The independent review of the 2017 Eastern Grey Kangaroo Controlled Native Species Management Plan was completed in March 2024.
- The review is very complimentary of the ACT Government’s approach to kangaroo management, noting and I quote:  
*“the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting for kangaroo management in the ACT is extremely impressive and an outstanding exemplar for adaptive management”.*
- The review makes 34 recommendations that contribute to continuous improvement of kangaroo management in the ACT.
- A new Eastern Grey Kangaroo Controlled Native Species Management Plan is currently being prepared based on the recommendations of the review. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on the new draft in 2025.

### **Welfare considerations**

- All kangaroo culling in the ACT is undertaken in accordance with the National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Non-commercial Purposes.
- The ACT also enforces additional measures to ensure high animal welfare outcomes, including rigorous testing of all kangaroo shooters and restricting culling of female kangaroos to between March and July each year to avoid orphaning young at a vulnerable age (8-12 months old, which includes large pouch young and small young at foot).
- Independent veterinary audits of the ACT Government culling program are undertaken periodically to assess compliance with the National Code. The most recent audit in 2023 concluded that the culling operation was compliant with all aspects of the Code, and that current shooting protocols should be maintained.

### **Kangaroo Fertility Control**

- GonaCon Immunocontraceptive Vaccine was incorporated into the Kangaroo Management Program for the first time in 2022.

- It is expected that the use of GonaCon in ACT's reserves will reduce, but not eliminate, the need for conservation culls in the future.
- GonaCon has been used at four sites so far. From 2022 to 2025, a total of 83 female kangaroos at Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary, 66 female kangaroos at Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve, and 61 female kangaroos at Mulanggari Nature Reserve have been treated with GonaCon. Red Hill Kangaroo Management Unit (including the reserve and Federal Golf Course) was added to the program in 2025.
- GonaCon treatments will likely be required at these sites in future years to maintain a high proportion of treated females in the population. Additional sites will be added to the program when feasible.

#### Wallaby management at Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary

- Fenced sanctuaries like Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary (Mulligans) often require a range of additional management actions to protect environmental values.
- The Mulligans fence means kangaroos and wallabies are protected from mortality factors such as predation and motor vehicle collisions. As a result, wallaby populations have increased considerably.
- The ACT Government monitors and actively manages kangaroo and wallaby populations in Mulligans, undertaking conservation culling and fertility control trials to maintain ecosystem condition and ensure survival of all species.
- Culling of wallabies at Mulligans has been undertaken periodically since 2019 and is licenced under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*.
- In 2024, 252 Red-necked Wallabies and 68 Swamp Wallabies were culled.
- The first ever GonaCon Immunocontraceptive Vaccine trial in Red-necked Wallabies and Swamp Wallabies commenced at Mulligans in 2018. To date, 66 female Red-necked Wallabies and 21 female Swamp Wallabies have been treated with GonaCon. This trial has been expanded to the adjoining Gorooyaroo Sanctuary in 2025, with 22 female Red-necked Wallabies treated to date.
- Initial results indicate that GonaCon is highly effective in Swamp Wallabies, but less effective in Red-necked Wallabies. Booster doses have been administered to Red-necked Wallabies to test if this increases the effectiveness of GonaCon in this species. So far, administering a second dose does appear to be effective.

#### Pouch Young

- In accordance with the [National Code of Practice for the humane shooting of kangaroos and wallabies for non-commercial purposes](#), if a female kangaroo is culled, the pouch young and small young-at-foot must be humanely killed.
- If this is not done, the young kangaroos risk inhumane death from starvation or predation.
- The Government aims to avoid the time of year when most females have large pouch young or small young at foot aged between 8 and 12 months by restricting management of female kangaroos to the period between 1 March and 31 July each year.

- 438 pouch young were humanely killed in 2024 during the kangaroo management operations.
- The teams carrying out the cull are highly trained in the most appropriate methods to humanely kill kangaroos in accordance with the code of practice.

## Key information

- Kangaroos are managed in the ACT in accordance with the Eastern Grey Kangaroo Controlled Native Species Management Plan (an instrument under the Nature Conservation Act 2014) to mitigate their environmental, economic, and social impacts across public and private land.
- Native grassy ecosystems in the ACT have been impacted by various threats. Natural Temperate Grasslands and Yellow Box – Red Gum Grassy Woodland, are now critically endangered as a result. The Parks and Conservation Service has a legislative responsibility under the Nature Conservation Act 2014 to ensure threats to protected ecological communities are mitigated.
- Kangaroos are recognised as an important part of healthy, functioning grassy ecosystems in the ACT. However, their numbers can increase above sustainable densities in our highly fragmented urban reserves and in the absence of natural predators such as dingoes. This can result in over-grazing and significant negative impacts on the grassy habitat required by kangaroos and other native plant and animal species, including threatened species.

## Background information

[Humane Society International Australia report, \*Licence to Kill: The shocking scale of licenced wildlife killing in Australia\*](#)

- In November 2024, the Humane Society International Australia released a report about the licenced killing of native animals on private property across Australia.
- The report includes statistics and information provided by the ACT Government about kangaroo culling on ACT rural properties. The report also discusses the killing of dingoes in the ACT.
- Eastern Grey Kangaroos can be managed on rural lands in the ACT in accordance with the Eastern Grey Kangaroo Controlled Native Species Management Plan to minimise their impact on the economic viability of rural properties.
- The authors of the report oppose the killing of wildlife. They are critical of the current licencing frameworks in all states and territories and are calling for substantial reform.
- However, in their assessment of licencing frameworks the ACT performs strongly compared to other states and territories, and the report specifically mentions that the ACT is the only jurisdiction that requires non-commercial kangaroo shooters to pass shooter accuracy and species identification tests.

# Election Commitments

## Talking points

### Landscape Architect and Landscape Plan

- An election commitment of this Government is to appoint an ACT Government Landscape Architect and establish an office of the Landscape Architect to lead and develop a landscape plan for the ACT.
- The Landscape Plan will seek to ensure that our natural and urban environments thrive. This work will continue under the new City and Environment Directorate from 1 July.
- Preliminary work is progressing on the roles and functions of the Landscape Architect and the Landscape Plan.
- As Canberra continues to grow, we must develop a long-term plan that ensures harmony of the built and natural environment. The Landscape Architect will help us deliver that plan.
- I look forward to keeping the Assembly updated on the progress of this important initiative.

### Licensing Arrangements for Snakes

- The Government will look to review current licencing arrangements and identify whether legislation should be amended to allow the keeping of venomous snakes by individuals at private residences for education and training purposes.
- At present, keeping venomous snakes in the ACT is a regulated activity under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*. It is an offence to interfere with or keep snakes in captivity without proper authorisation. These regulations exist for the welfare of the animal and public safety.
- The Conservator of Flora and Fauna is responsible for issuing licences for businesses or individual people wanting to keep venomous snakes. This process works is independent of Government.
- The Nature Conservation (Licensing Related to Non-Exempt Animals) Conservator Guidelines 2024 are currently in place to help the Conservator making licensing decisions.
- Venomous snakes, and species that present risks to themselves, the environment and/or the public are listed as animals not permitted to be kept.
- Dangerous animals including venomous snakes, are only issued to premises that are recognised as a zoological facility or for educational institutes such as universities where the activity is authorised by an animal ethics committee.
- Licences are not issued to individuals to keep venomous snakes at their private residence.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Rosie Cooney Ext: 50023  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- The Government will give consideration on how we can assist in educating the community in relation to venomous snakes

#### Review of the Environmental Legislation and Regulatory Settings.

- The Government is currently progressing a statutory review of the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*, and concurrently designing a new Nature Conservation Strategy to help achieve the objects of the Act.
- The review commenced under the former Government and involved a Your Say community consultation.
- This review will improve the legislation that will be supported by a new Nature Conservation Strategy, also under development by the Government.
- These pieces of work acknowledge the importance and value of the ACT's natural environment and position alongside a growing city.
- I acknowledge and thank the Canberra community, particularly those from the environment sector, for their contribution to the review to date.
- The Government will give consideration to the reform proposals during 2025, and it is expected that further community consultation about the Nature Conservation Strategy will occur in late 2025.

#### Review of the Conservator and the EPA

- An election commitment of this Government is to undertake a review of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna (Conservator) and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to ensure they have the necessary support to perform their statutory roles effectively.
- Aspects of the Conservator's role has already been examined as part of the planning system governance review.
- The statutory review of the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* that is progressing will allow other aspects of the Conservator's role to be examined including how best to support it.
- Similarly, the *Environment Protection Act 1997* is scheduled for review and will provide the opportunity for Government to consider ways to strengthen the role and support given to the EPA.
- The upcoming Machinery of Government which will merge TCCS, EPSDD and Access Canberra will also present an opportunity to review the governance arrangement for the Conservator and EPA.
- I look forward to speaking more about these reviews over the course of this term of government.

# Air Quality and Wood Heaters

## Talking points

### Air Quality

- The [2024 ACT Annual Air Quality Report](#) prepared by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) shows Canberra's air quality is very good.
- There were only two minor exceedances of the national health-based air quality standards for PM2.5 in winter at Monash associated with wood heaters and one exceedance for PM10 at Civic associated with earthworks for the light rail. There were no exceedances for carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and ozone at any of the ACT's three monitoring stations.
- Annual average levels for particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) associated with wood smoke remain at some of the lowest levels experienced in the past 10 years.
- Burn Better Public Education Campaign
- The Government's annual Burn Better public education campaign aims to educate Canberrans about how to use their wood fire heaters responsibly to reduce smoke pollution in the ACT throughout the winter months.
- In 2024, the campaign ran from 27 May to 30 August with a budget of \$20,000.
- The campaigns received 3,953,164 impressions, and 3,164 clicks through to the website.
- The 2025 campaign commenced in June and will run till the end of August with a similar approach to last year's campaign with a focus on the correct operation of a wood heater to minimise smoke and illegal collection of firewood from parks and reserves.

### Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy

- On the 28 November 2023, the Assembly was updated on the achievements under the First Action Plan of the [Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy 2021-25](#).
- Some key achievements include:
  - The government has strengthened its smoke plume modelling capabilities to better plan to mitigate the effects of bushfire smoke on the ACT community, particularly from prescribed burns.
  - The ACT's air quality website has been updated with a clearer and more interactive dashboard relating to air quality allowing the public to interrogate air quality data more easily, including on smartphones.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Daniel Walters Ext: 76334  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- The Outdoor Smoke Health Impacts fact sheet has been updated to incorporate information on ways to reducing smoke entering buildings.
- WorkSafe ACT has developed a smoke, pollen and dust webpage that sets out the duties of persons conducting a business to ensuring the air quality in the workplace is safe. The webpage provides practical information on how employers can manage the risks of poor air quality caused by dust storms, pollen and smoke and provides links to useful resources to assist businesses in assessing air quality such as the air quality index for the ACT.
- The Government is reviewing whether additional work is required.

### Wood Heater Removal Program

- The [Wood Heater Removal Program](#) (WHRP) aims to improve the ACT’s air quality by offering financial incentives for the removal and disposal of older high emission wood heaters.
- As of 14 July 2025, 1,356 wood heaters have been removed since the program commenced in 2004 with a projected health benefit of over \$6 million.
- EPSDD conducted a trial to replace wood heaters with an energy-efficient electric heating system in public housing properties from March to September 2024. Nineteen tenants participated in the trial.

<b>Rebates available through the Wood Heater Removal Program</b>	
\$500	All ACT homeowners
\$1250	ACT homeowners with an eligible concession card: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Government Pensioner Concession Card</li> <li>• Department of Veterans’ Affairs Gold Card</li> <li>• Australian Government Health Care Card</li> </ul>
<b>2024 Public Housing trial</b>	Removal and replacement of wood heaters with energy efficient heating/cooling system fully funded through existing government budgets.

## Key information

- ACT Health monitor’s the ACT’s air quality at 3 locations at Monash, Civic and Florey.
- This is done in accordance with the Ambient Air Quality National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) under the *National Environment Protection Council Act 1994* (Act). EPSDD is responsible for the legislation.
- ACT Health provides hourly advice to the public on the levels of pollutants above the NEPM standards through the online Air Quality Index and AirRater App.

[Return to Index](#)

- The ACT Government has a range of programs to address emissions from domestic wood heaters, including:
  - regulating commercial firewood to ensure it's sold in a seasoned condition
  - prohibiting the installation of wood heaters in new development areas where planning studies show there would be an adverse impact on air quality. This includes Dunlop, East O'Malley and the entire Molonglo Valley (except Wright)
  - rebates available through the Wood Heater Removal Program to remove old inefficient heaters; and
  - the Burn Better public education campaign to educate Canberrans about how to correctly operate a wood heater.
  - regulating the sale and installation of wood heaters to ensure they meet the current Australian Standards for emissions (AS4013) and efficiency (AS4012).
  - regulating emissions from domestic wood heaters.
- These initiatives have put the ACT at the forefront nationally in addressing wood smoke pollution and have resulted in a significant improvement in our air quality.
- Information about these initiatives and copies of the ACT Annual Air Quality Reports, are available on the [Access Canberra website](#).

## Background information

- The ACT monitors 4 of the 6 NEPM pollutants including Carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), photochemical oxidants as ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), particulate matter PM<sub>10</sub> and particulate matter PM<sub>2.5</sub>.
- The ACT has never monitored sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) as it is primarily an industrial pollutant, and the ACT does not have heavy industry. In 2002, lead monitoring ceased with the phase out of leaded petrol.
- The ACT Government's [web page on Air Quality and Pollen](#), provides real time information on air quality, pollen counts, upcoming prescribed burning and health advice.
- The Government has commenced work to consider phasing out domestic wood heaters in all urban areas to improve air quality and the health and wellbeing of Canberrans.
- The consideration to phase out wood heaters was prompted, in part, by the [2023 Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's Special Investigation Report into Wood Heater Policy in the ACT](#) and a 2022 YourSay Panel survey exploring behaviours, motivators and barriers to remove and replace wood heaters which found:
  - 52% of the 1,955 respondents supported the gradual phase out of wood heaters
  - 59% of wood heater owners opposed the phase out of wood heaters
  - 89% of all respondents found air quality to be fair or poor
  - 73% of respondents indicated they were impacted by neighbours wood smoke
  - 72% respondents feel that wood heaters provide a unique source of warmth
  - 59% indicated they are enjoyable to use

- 10% of the respondents own a wood heater and of those 5% use as their main heating source
- The Government has released its [formal response to the Commissioner's investigation into wood heaters](#) which supports the phase out subject to outcomes of air quality and a regulatory impact assessments.
- The Government engaged environmental consultant's AECOM to undertake an air quality assessment for the ACT to inform its approach. The Government will also undertake a regulatory impact assessment to guide its decision.
- The Government has passed legislation which took effect in February 2025 that bans the installation of wood heaters that don't meet the current emission standards. This compliments the existing laws prohibiting the sale of these wood heaters in the ACT.
- The ACT Government has successfully lobbied the wood heater industry to reduce the emission standards for wood heaters (AS4013) from 1.5g/kg to 1.0g/kg. The revised standard is scheduled to be published in the third quarter of 2025. This effectively completes the Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy action to reduce wood heater emissions to 1.0g/kg but at the national level.

#### Burn Better Public Information Campaign

- The Burn Better campaign was previously called 'Burn Right Tonight', it was renamed to Burn Better in 2023 following a review of the campaign.

# Environmental Volunteers and Groups – Funding Arrangements

## Talking points

### Review of Environmental Groups and Funding Arrangements

- The ACT Government recognises the contribution from community environmental groups to both government and the Canberra community in supporting the environment and undertaking climate action.
- In the 2024 election, the government committed to reviewing the best way to assist local environmental groups with their ongoing needs and activities and to identify how their initiatives could be supported.
- The government has commenced a review of the environmental services required by the government and the ACT community. This reviews are underway and will hopefully be finalised soon. It will ensure that funding in forward years is being directed to the highest priorities.
- The government is confident that, following this review, government funded programs will continue to have a positive impact on our environment and community into the future, and represent high value for money.
- City and Environment Directorate officials has met with Catchment Groups (Molonglo Conservation Group, Ginninderra Catchment Group, Southern ACT Catchment Group), ACT Wildlife, SEE Change, the Conservation Council ACT Region and the Canberra Environment Centre and advised them of the review. These groups have received an extension in current funding for one year to 30 June 2026 whilst the review is underway.

### Importance of volunteers

- The ACT Government has a long and proud history of supporting ACT's environmental volunteers and community groups. Volunteers are essential to helping protect, conserve, and enhance the ACT's environment.
- Environmental and animal protection volunteering is one of the top 3 ways people contribute to their community as a volunteer.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Frank Garofalow Ext: 70497  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- The [2024 State of Volunteering in the ACT Report](#) tells us that for every \$1 invested in volunteering, \$5.40 is returned in benefits for the community. This is why it is important we have the right programs and settings in place to support these generous contributions.
- The ACT Government is proud to invest in a range of initiatives and programs that support environmental volunteers and facilitate the community organisations that assist them.

#### Supporting Canberra's Environmental Groups and Volunteers

- In the 2024-25 ACT Budget, the government invested \$1.314 million over 4 years under the Supporting Canberra's Environmental Groups and Volunteers initiative to address recommendations from the ACT Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Environmental Volunteerism.
- We have also committed to employing additional dedicated volunteer co-ordinators to support the Urban Parks and Places Program and other urban community on-ground programs that work to keep our urban environment healthy.
- We will be reviewing how to best assist local environmental groups with their ongoing needs and activities. We will work with the Environmental Peak Groups to identify how government can best support their initiatives.

#### Existing initiatives and ongoing programs

- These new initiatives and commitments compliment existing programs supporting environmental volunteers.
- The ACT Parks and Conservation Service funds 5 FTE staff to coordinate the **ParkCare volunteer program**. In 2024-25, it also funded \$136,700 in non-employee expenses to support on-ground volunteer activities, including volunteer training, personal protective equipment, uniforms, tools and equipment.

ACT Government funds 2 FTE staff to support the **Urban Parks and Places Volunteer Program including the Adopt a Park grants program** (\$215,000 a year). Funding to provide volunteers with uniform, tools and personal protective equipment is allocated from TCCS operational budgets. Input from volunteers also informs allocation to weed and pest control programs.

- The ACT Government funds 2.2 FTE staff to support **Citizen Science programs including the Waterwatch and Frogwatch programs** and invests over \$426,000 per year for program coordinators who are embedded in the catchment groups. These programs are supplemented by \$40,000 from contractors per year who support the program.
- Since 2021-22 the **Volunteer Activation Initiative** has invested \$3.5m in ACT's environmental volunteers and the community groups that support them. This investment will continue from 2025-26 year as on-going funding.
  - This funding includes significant investment in volunteer-led environmental and community wellbeing outcomes, currently delivered by the three ACT **catchment groups**, The **FrogWatch Program** and **ACT Wildlife**.
  - The investment includes ongoing funding for the long-running **Environment Grants program**, which in 2024 invested over \$350,000 in community-led projects to enhance ACT's environment and connect people with nature.

- The ACT Government's **2025-26 Environmental Grants round** opened on 5 June 2025 and closed on 17 July 2025. \$360,000 is available for community groups for local projects that:
  - improve the environment
  - connect more people to nature
  - support Caring for Country initiatives, and
  - for environmental volunteer groups to enhance their skills and to help groups care for our local environment.
- The ACT Government occasionally enters into **supplementary grants** with local, environment-focused community groups to support key environmental work that falls outside of other grants programs.
- In 2024-25 over **\$3.9 million in supplementary grants**, including funds administered on behalf of the Australian Government, was invested in community and volunteer groups to deliver important environmental work.
- ACT Government is also proud to be collaborating with Landcare ACT to host another **Environmental Volunteers Conference** in August 2025. Building on the success of the event in 2023, the conference will bring together volunteers and experts from across the ACT to share ideas, network, and celebrate the accomplishments of environmental volunteers.

## Key information

- The ACT's flagship volunteering programs – ParkCare, Urban Parks and Places, and Waterwatch – support more than 120 volunteer groups and 4,500 individuals to give back to their community by helping to maintain and enhance the ACT's natural

## Background information

- The ACT Government has a range of well-established and highly effective environmental volunteer programs. Through these, volunteers provide more than 50,000 volunteer hours per year to support environmental and wellbeing objectives.

# Environment Programs and Initiatives

## Talking points

### Regional Delivery Partners Program

- City and Environment Directorate has been successfully selected as a regional delivery partner by the Australian Government to deliver priority environmental and agricultural investments through the Natural Heritage Trust.
- The Australian Government has elected to fund:
  - Restoring grassland and woodland ecological communities in the ACT (\$2,250,000) – Investigating improvements to the condition of *Environment, Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) critically endangered Box-gum Woodland and Natural Temperate Grassland ecosystems.
  - Managing threats to high country wetlands (\$1,750,000) – Investigating ways to manage threats to the threatened ecological community of Upland Bogs and Fens which includes the ACT Ramsar site, the Ginini Flats Wetlands Complex.
- Project outlines were developed during workshops to consult with key stakeholders in November 2023 and were approved by the Australian Government in April 2024.
- On-ground activities in both projects commenced in May 2024, the projects will run until July 2028.
- The projects will be managed by ACT Natural Resource Management (NRM) and will utilise a range of partners to deliver outcomes. Partners include ACT Landcare, ACT Parks and Conservation Service, Office of Nature Conservation and the National Parks Association of the ACT.
- A portion of the on-ground works for these projects will be delivered, by a work team of four First Nations individuals coordinated by an indigenous NRM staff member.
- Team members will receive training in land management techniques. The team commenced in January 2025.

### Habitat Restoration with the Ngunnawal community

- The Government invested additional funding through the 2023-24 ACT Budget towards habitat restoration.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Frank Garofalow Ext: 70497  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- This program is managed by the Office of Nature Conservation and delivered with Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) and ParkCare groups, in collaboration with the Ngunnawal community.
- Three sites have been initially identified as a focus for restoration. These sites are Mount Ainslie/Mount Majura, Urambi Hills/Bullen Range and grassy valleys of Namadgi.
- Office of Nature Conservation and Ngunnawal Cultural Advisors are co-designing an ecocultural project that brings indigenous knowledge and western science together to restore Country and to provide opportunities for traditional owners to reconnect to Country.
- Nine On-Country days have been held across the project sites with another seven days planned including a Singing to Country event and Emu reintroduction workshops.
- On-ground restoration work to date includes planting over 2,200 native plants in woodlands and riparian zones, direct seeding, weed control, and removal of redundant fences.
- Future work includes planting over 8,000 tree and shrubs, direct seeding, burning and bush regeneration.

### **Connectivity Projects**

- ACT NRM is improving habitat connectivity within Canberra's urban environment, building on the Connecting Nature Connecting People initiative from 2022-2024.
- Connecting Nature Connecting People addressed key challenges in the ACT's urban environment, including biodiversity loss, habitat fragmentation, climate change, Closing the Gap, and the right to a healthy environment.
- An initial project was completed last financial year in the upper section of Sullivans Creek within Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve. It focused improving riparian conditions, reducing erosion and sedimentation, and enhancing butterfly habitat. This project is informed by the [Sullivans Creek Renaturalisation Opportunities Report](#).
- Restoration works included the construction of 5 small ponds and placement of timber at 7 sites to mitigate erosion and provide habitat in the upper catchment. First Nations business, Dreamtime Connections undertook a cultural training day with the First Nations Conservation Trainees which involved identification of bush tucker foods and medicines and planting of 150 tube stock. Friends of Mulligans Flat ParkCare group planted 150 shrubs, trees and grasses on the 14th May 2025. A further 2300 grasses were planted by a contractor at 5 sites in association with the frog ponds / woody debris sites.
- Projects for this financial year are focusing on small mammal habitat in the Northern Woodlands section of Gungahlin and Rikali and Platypus habitat around Giralang Ponds.
- Restoration works in the North Gungahlin Woodlands are improving habitat connectivity for small mammals such as Antechinus and Common Dunnart. The project includes the installation of eight habitat nodes using large woody debris and the planting of 800 native trees, shrubs, and grasses across 6.76 hectares.
- The Northern Woodlands complex contains 1,875 ha of critically endangered Box-Gum Woodland and Derived Native Grasslands, representing 23% of the ACT's total extent.

Restoration efforts aim to protect and connect these high-value ecological patches to support threatened species including the Golden Sun Moth and Pink-tailed Worm-lizard.

- The Giralang Wetlands project focuses on enhancing habitat for Rakali and Platypus along Ginninderra Creek. Works include the installation of habitat logs and rocks, and the planting of grasses and sedges, to improve water quality and riparian condition.
- Giralang Pond serves as a vital stepping stone between Gungahlin Pond and Lake Ginninderra. Restoration activities are designed to improve ecological function in this urban corridor, supporting birds, reptiles, and aquatic mammals.
- Habitat structures—referred to as “fauna furniture”—are being installed to mimic natural Rakali environments. These include submerged logs anchored with hardwood pins and strategically placed rocks to provide refuge and feeding platforms.
- Both projects incorporate baseline and follow-up monitoring using drone imagery and field surveys. This ensures restoration efforts are effective and responsive to environmental conditions.
- Both projects are working with local land managers from the City and Environment Directorate and are due to be completed later this financial year.

#### **Urban Rivers and Catchments Program**

- The ACT is receiving \$3.225 million over 4 years (to 2026-27) through the Australian Government’s Urban Rivers and Catchments program. The projects are being administered through ACT Government and delivered by Landcare ACT and Woodlands and Wetlands Trust.
- The projects are working to conserve native plants and animals and improve access to waterways which provide for health and social wellbeing.
- Landcare ACT’s project will help improve the health of significant urban waterways in Canberra. It will undertake works in areas requiring riparian restoration or water quality improvement across the ACT.
- Woodlands and Wetlands Trust is leading the Jerrabomberra Creek restoration project, which will deliver a range of on-ground and outreach activities to enhance the condition of the riparian zone, promote education and awareness of the values of riparian systems and enhance the quality of engagement with nature for users of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve.

# Threatened Species Management

## Talking points

- A large number of ACT species are threatened with extinction. Key threats are habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation (driven primarily by urban and infrastructure growth; invasive plants and animals; and increased bushfire severity and frequency driven by climate change).
- EPSDD collaborates with research institutions, government agencies, and citizen science groups on threatened species conservation.
- While the work contributes significantly to averting decline, the number of listed species continues to increase in the ACT.
- There are currently 68 ACT native species and three ecological communities threatened with extinction, as well as two key threatening processes, listed under the *ACT Nature Conservation Act 2014*.
- Recent additions to the threatened species list on 16 June 2025 include the Alpine Water Skink, and four migratory species: Latham's Snipe, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and Common Greenshank.
- The Murray River Crayfish (*Eustacus armatus*) is listed as Vulnerable in the ACT and is now a Matter of National Environmental Significance (MNES) due to its listing under the EPBC Act on 5 March 2025.
- A further four species are listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), and therefore, have Special Protection Status under the NC Act.
- Under the EPBC Act, the (re)assessments of three ACT species and the assessment of one new ecological community (Alpine Ash forests), are currently in progress.
- The ACT Scientific Committee is currently assessing nominations for three invertebrates endemic to the ACT region (Perunga Grasshopper, Canberra Raspy Cricket and Cold Spiny Crayfish – Murunung Naruwi) for potential listing as Endangered under the NC Act.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 08/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Dr Rosie Cooney Ext: 50023  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

## Key information

- The new Action Plan for the **Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon** (CGED) 2025-2035 was released in May 2025. The ACT Government recently announced injection of \$5 million dollars over 4 years to deliver critical recovery actions captured in the plan. This includes the building of a bespoke captive breeding facility at Melbourne Zoo to maintain genetic diversity and generate animals for wild release.
- The ACT Government has been successfully breeding CGED at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve since 2022 and has provided animals for reintroductions into suitable habitat. Early results show good survival rates and evidence of breeding.
- The Jedbinbilla Safe Haven at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve was officially opened in June 2024. A founding population of **southern Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies** (BTRWs) were released. The animals are part of a genetic rescue breeding program, providing insurance against extinction and source animals for translocations in ACT and Victoria. At least two BTRW joeys have been bred within the Safe Haven, .
- In February 2024, Critically Endangered **Northern Corroboree Frogs** (NCFs) were detected in the Ramsar listed Ginini Flats complex for the first time since 2019. The species has declined dramatically in the wild over the last 30 years, primarily due to Amphibian Chytrid Fungus.
- A captive population of NCFs was established in 2003 at Tidbinbilla, and releases of eggs and frogs into Ginini Flats occurred between 2011 and 2020 to bolster wild historic populations.
- Recent surveys of NCFs introduced into a new low elevation site in Namadgi National Park have been encouraging with more animals detected than previous surveys.
- 200 Endangered Small Purple Pea were planted in September 2024, initiating a three-year translocation project. This project is run in partnership between ACT Government and the Australian National Botanic Gardens.
- By Autumn 2026, a total of 1,000 Small Purple Pea plants will be translocated across four protected areas, enhancing the genetics of remnant populations, and establishing new populations. Initial 2023 plantings continue to thrive and have produced lots of seed.
- In late 2024, habitat for threatened **Two-spined Blackfish** was constructed in sediment-affected areas of the Cotter River. This species was seriously impacted by the 2020 bushfires. Monitoring in 2025 has found the constructed habitat to be successful, with 50% of fish captured at the structures, which cover only 4% of the sampling area.
- In Autumn 2025, genetic rescue of 23 adult male Endangered Trout Cod saw the fish translocated from the Murrumbidgee River and Cataract Dam to Bendora Dam. These fish were quarantined and tested for disease in the ACT before release into the existing population. Monitoring will be conducted by ACT Gov and University of Canberra over the coming years.

The Commonwealth is funding a partnership to conserve the Endangered Tuggeranong Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia tuggeranong*). A genetically diverse ex-situ population will be established to support future translocations and population augmentation. Partners include the ACT Gov, Australian National Botanic Gardens, University of Canberra, and Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney.

# Canberra Region Local Food Strategy

## Talking points

- The [Canberra Region Local Food Strategy 2024-2029](#) (the Strategy) will guide future planning and management of our region's agriculture production.
- The ACT Government invested \$200,000 in the 2024-25 ACT Budget for the first year of implementation of the Strategy.
- A feasibility study, investigating the options of establishing an ACT food hub to support local food production and consumption within the Territory, was recently completed.
- This feasibility study includes a market demand analysis, key functions determination and prioritisation, location examination, governance options, cost and revenue options, operational diagrams and a risk analysis. The ACT Government is currently reviewing the final report.
- Key stakeholders involved in ACT agriculture and local food production participated in project workshops in April and May 2025.
- A 12-month project is also underway to identify and address policy, planning and regulatory barriers to support ACT farmers to adapt to drought.
- Removing barriers to diversification would potentially enable landholders to explore alternative income sources such as farm tourism and value-added produce.
- This would also potentially enhance farm resilience to climate variability by diversifying income streams and reduce reliance on single commodities. This project is funded by the Australian Government Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program.

## Key information

- The Canberra Region Local Food Strategy launched on 12 June 2024.
- The ACT Government continues to work with the Canberra Region Local Food Strategy's Community Reference Group (CRG) to identify priority actions to support the implementation of the Strategy.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Rhian Jones Ext: 51839  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)



## Background information

- The ACT has rural and urban agriculture production.
- There are approximately 160 rural farms which collectively manage 15 per cent of the ACT's land area. The majority operate in sheep, wool and cattle production, horse agistment and other equestrian activities. Other enterprises include eggs, fruit, vegetables, and wine.
- In urban areas there are numerous backyard gardens, a growing number of popular community gardens, and urban farms with vegetable or seedling production.
- There are also enterprises along the food supply chain. This includes farmers markets and direct sale businesses like those offering fresh food and produce boxes, and bakeries, breweries and restaurants that use local produce.
- Although the Strategy is an ACT Government policy to set the strategic direction for the ACT, it is also intended to be used to facilitate connections and collaboration with the wider Canberra region. Despite the existing agricultural enterprises, the ACT is highly reliant on food produced elsewhere and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.

# Ainslie Phone Tower Site

## Talking points

- The Government notes that in October 2024 the then Planning and Land Authority, now the Territory Planning Authority (the Authority) in accordance with independent statutory planning processes, approved the construction of a telecommunications facility on a (9m X 10m) portion of Block 3 Section 60 Ainslie.
- The Government has no legal mechanism to intervene in this development in response to concerns raised by a community group in the media.
- The development application (DA) was subject to community consultation from 30 January to 19 February 2024. The Authority received and considered 49 submissions.
- Throughout the decision-making process, the Authority sought advice from other entities including Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS), the ACT Heritage Council and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna (the Conservator).
- The advice of the Conservator, which was based on a site inspection by a senior ecologist, confirmed that the development site on the block is dominated by exotic vegetation and not Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG), and subsequently offered no objection to the DA but suggested a range of conditions to protect some ecological values on the remainder of the block.
- The Conservator of Flora and Fauna is working with the Friends of Ainslie Volcanics Grasslands to discuss a project to undertake a deep-dive ecological assessment of the block. This process will help to identify the critical and important ecological values on the block, and the most appropriate ways to protect, conserve and enhance them. A statement of requirements to support a procurement process is under joint-development.

## Key information

- In 2023-24, a grant was awarded to Molonglo Conservation Group on behalf of the Friends of Ainslie Volcanics Grasslands for conservation activities across the entirety of Blocks 2 and 3, Section 60 Ainslie.
- On 26 November 2024, the ACT Heritage Council made a formal decision under the *Heritage Act 2004* not to provisionally register the area in question, which was nominated to the ACT Heritage Register in 2020 as the 'Ainslie Volcanics.' The decision not to provisionally register meant the assessment was concluded. The ACT Heritage Council was not satisfied the place had heritage significance to meet the criteria set out in the Heritage Act.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 09/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: Bren Burkevics Ext: 78628  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

# Canberra City Farm Licence

## Talking points

- The ACT Government is providing Canberra City Farm, located at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Block, with a one-year extension on their funding agreement for farming. This will take effect from the expiry date of the current licence, in October 2025.
- This one-year extension will allow the government to conduct a review of site use and current licence arrangements to ensure that funding is being directed to the right priorities.
- This work aligns with the government's election commitment to review how best to assist local environmental groups with their ongoing needs and activities.
- Officials met with Canberra City Farm on 16 April 2025 to discuss the arrangements for a new licence
- The ACT Government engaged an external consultant, Communication Link, to conduct a listening exercise, which gathered views and information on the best long-term use of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands block. The site is currently licenced for sustainable agricultural and educational activities.
- Consultation for the listening exercise included meeting with key stakeholders who have an on-going interest in the use of the site.
- Stakeholder meetings commenced in the first week of June. A preliminary draft of the listening report should be arriving to my office soon.
- A summary listening report, which will be circulated to participating stakeholders in the coming weeks, is being prepared by the consultant. Community environmental groups play an important role in community education and engagement to help Canberrans take action to help build a climate ready city and support the delivery of key environmental programs.
- Separately, the government is providing a one-year extension of funding agreements for 8 community environmental groups that work with government to assist with environment, wildlife rescue, farming, climate change and energy program delivery and community education, while a review is being undertaken.
- The government is confident that, following this review, government funded programs will continue to have a positive impact on our environment and community into the future and represent high value for money.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 30/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager Ext: 71831  
Contact Officer name: Rhian Jones Ext: 51839  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

# Electricity and Gas Prices

## Talking points

### ICRC regulated Standing Offer

- **Electricity consumers in the ACT can save hundreds of dollars a year by switching from the regulated standing offer to the lowest market offer. Consumers should shop around to find the offer that is best for them.**
- Each year the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC), in its annual price determination, sets the maximum % increase in the Standing Offer that may be applied. The ICRC made its determination for 2025-26 prices in May this year.
- The regulated Standing Offer price in the ACT for 2025-26 increased by 10.11% in nominal terms, or 7.05% excluding the impact of inflation.
- This translates to **an annual bill increase of \$214 for an average residential customer** consuming 6,500kWh of electricity per year.
  - For an average non-residential customer consuming 25,000kWh, the increase in the annual bill will be \$825.
- The Australian Government has also announced that further energy bill relief of \$150 will be made available to households and small businesses from 1 July this year until December 2025.
  - This rebate will bring further relief to families and small business owners who have been paying more of their weekly budget to cover increasing energy prices in recent years.
- Compared with other jurisdictions, based on equivalent electricity consumption by a household, the ACT's regulated standing offer price for 2025-26 is amongst the lowest in the national electricity market.
- A typical ACT household will be \$503 per year better off than their counterparts in NSW who use the same amount of electricity and remain on the standing offer.
- Further, a typical ACT small business will be \$1357 per year better off than their counterparts in NSW who use the same amount of electricity and remain on the standing offer.
- We recognise that it is important that essential services like energy remain affordable, and that people have equitable access.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 04/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: James Priestley  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- We still know that compared to a dual-fuel household with gas, an all-electric household will save Canberrans hundreds of dollars in their energy bills every year.
- The AER's Default Market Offer (DMO) does not apply to customers in the ACT. The DMO is the equivalent of the ICRC's regulated standing offer. It is the maximum price that retailers can charge electricity customers on default contracts known as standing offer contracts in other jurisdictions. (NSW, SA and SE Qld).

#### Large-scale Feed-in Tariff scheme

- Wholesale electricity prices affect the costs of the Territory's large-scale feed-in tariff (LFIT) scheme, due to our 'contract for difference' arrangements.
- When wholesale prices increase, the costs of the scheme reduce and when wholesale prices decrease, the cost of the scheme rises.
- The Reasonable Costs Determination sets the maximum amount that the ACT electricity distributor, Evoenergy, can recover from ACT electricity consumers to administer the LFIT scheme.
- In February 2025, Evoenergy submitted its final application for a Reasonable Costs Determination for the 2025-26 period. In its application, Evoenergy applied for an RCD of \$48 million to be recovered from ACT electricity consumers for the operation and administration of the LFIT scheme. I have agreed to the RCD amount for 2025-26.
- This equates to a cost to ACT electricity consumers of \$16.11/MWh, or \$104.72 a year for an average household consuming 6.5MWh a year.
- The increase in costs compared to the 2024-25 RCD reflects the relatively low closing balance for 2024-25 together with forecast electricity spot prices for 2025-26 that are projected to be lower than scheme contract prices.
- The ACT Government will continue to monitor electricity price movements and their impact on ACT consumers and businesses.

#### Cost of Living Relief

- The effect of the Large-scale Renewable Energy contracts, in combination with the Commonwealth Energy Bill Relief and the increased Government Utilities Concession, means that most Canberrans have been insulated from wholesale electricity price rises in 2024-25.

#### Gas prices

- ActewAGL Retail's published fossil fuel gas prices which came into effect on 1 July 2024.
- From 1 July 2024 a typical ACT residential household will see an increase of approximately \$3.50 per week. This is an increase of around 9%.
  - A typical ACT small business will see an increase of approximately \$61 per week.
- Fossil gas prices in the ACT are not regulated by the ACT Government and retailers are able to set their own prices.
- As with electricity retailers, the ACT Government recommends that gas consumers shop-around among retailers to find the best priced plan that suits their needs.

## Electricity Gas and Water Rebate

- The Electricity Gas and Water Rebate is expected to support around 41,000 eligible low-income households with a \$800 contribution toward their energy and water bills in 2025-26.
  - The 2023-24 ACT Budget included expanding the Electricity, Gas and Water Rebate eligibility criteria to include anyone with a Commonwealth Health Care Card, meaning 12,000 more households will benefit from this support.
  - The rebate permanently increased by \$50 for 2025-26, raising the amount of the concession from \$750 to \$800, to help further relieve cost of living pressures.

## Background information

- ACT energy consumers can receive free advice on energy efficiency through the Sustainable Home Advice Program. Call 1300 141 777 or email [SustainableHomeAdviceProgram@act.gov.au](mailto:SustainableHomeAdviceProgram@act.gov.au).
- A range of rebates and energy efficiency programs are also available for households and businesses to save on energy bills. Information is available at <https://www.climatechoices.act.gov.au>.
- Analysis by the Australian Energy Market Commission indicates households can save hundreds of dollars through switching to different pricing plans. So, shopping around for retailers and asking retailers for better deals is important.

# Embedded Energy Networks

## Talking points

- The ACT Government is aware of community concern over embedded electricity networks and what is perceived as anti-competitive behaviour by embedded network operators.
- An embedded network is where the estate, village or building is in effect, a single energy user, with individual residents unable to choose their own retailer.
- In recent years, the residential apartment market has been the primary driver of a significant increase in the number and scale of embedded networks.

### ACT Government's Review of Embedded Networks

- In 2023, the ACT Government engaged a consultant to undertake a review of embedded networks in the ACT. The Review was presented to the Legislative Assembly in June 2023.
- The ACT Government has released a response to the issues raised in the Review. It will be important that the recommendations are fully investigated to ensure any changes to existing legislation benefit customers in embedded networks.
- As an immediate first step, we have developed a dedicated web page on the Everyday Climate Choices site to help community members understand how embedded networks work, the implications for consumers, and how to make sure they are getting a fair price.
- The Justice and Community Safety Directorate has also made legislative changes to the *Unit Titles (Management) Act 2011* that require an owner's corporation to disclose more prescribed information about their unit plan, including information about whether the unit plan is part of an embedded network.
- Other recommended reforms are complex and will take time to achieve.
- We acknowledge there is a case for better regulation and consumer protections and will investigate and implement options for making improvements through the existing framework.
- Any required legislative amendments will only be made following extensive consultation with the ACT community and stakeholders.

### Australian Energy Regulator review of the exemption framework for embedded networks

- In response to several jurisdictions undertaking reviews of embedded networks in their respective jurisdictions, the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) also announced that they will undertake a review of its exemption framework for embedded networks.
  - This review commenced in December 2023 and the Draft Decision was released March 2025.
- The AER's draft decision compliments the recommendations of the ACT's review, with a focus on issues that fall within national rules, such as consumer protections and billing. The AER's draft decision

Cleared as complete and accurate: 04/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
Contact Officer name: James Priestly  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

notes many of the findings of the ACT's review but finds that addressing those issues falls within the remit of the jurisdictions.

### **ACCC Inquiry into the National Electricity Market**

- In June 2024, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) released the report on its Inquiry into the National Electricity Market. It is important to note the ACT is not included in the analysis.
- The report presents the key billing outcomes and effective prices faced by residential and small business electricity customers across NSW, South Australia, South-East Queensland, and Victoria up to the third quarter of 2023.
- The report indicates that customers in embedded networks are paying less than customers on default market offers when compared on the same usage assumptions.
- The report also shows that customers in embedded networks had lower bills than customers on market offers in NSW (7% lower), Victoria (5% lower) and South-east Queensland (21% lower).
- The report also indicates that residential embedded network customers typically have lower usage than regular customers with residential median usage around 48% lower than regular customers in NSW.


## **Key information**

- In October 2022, the ACT Legislative Assembly passed a motion which called on the ACT Government to conduct a review of embedded networks in the ACT.
- Recommendations from the review include:
  - amending current legislation to remove the exemption status of embedded network providers. Currently, embedded networks are an exempt class of utility service under the *Utilities Act 2000* which means they are not subject to the codes or practices set by the Act;
  - introducing pricing reform for embedded networks;
  - strengthening the visibility and understanding of embedded networks for residents; and
  - engaging with national bodies on national review and reform processes.
- The review investigated electricity and gas networks only, and by extension gas hot water networks.

## **Background information**

- Embedded networks are private utility networks that are owned, controlled or operated by exempt network service providers or an Authorised Retailer (an Authorised Retailer is an electricity retailer that has been licensed by the Australian Energy Regulator). They are connected to a distribution or transmission network through a parent connection point and serve multiple customers at child connection points.
- The ACT's regulated standing offer is already effectively applied in most embedded networks. Section 152 (4) of the *National Energy Retail Rules* stipulates that embedded network customers cannot be charged more than the standing offer price of the local area retailer. This requirement is also reflected in the Australian Energy Regulator's *Retail Exempt Selling Guideline*.
- The standing offer does not apply to embedded network customers supplied by an Authorised Retailer, as Section 152 (4), only applies to retailers who are exempt from being Authorised Retailers.

[Return to Index](#)



This creates a situation where if an embedded network customer in the ACT is supplied by an Authorised Retailer other than ActewAGL Retail, the standing offer may not apply. Despite this, the review found no evidence of anti-competitive pricing as a consequence.

[Return to Index](#)

# Emergency Solar Backstop

## Talking points

- Around 38% of ACT households are estimated to have rooftop solar systems<sup>1</sup>. Rooftop solar systems save households money on their energy bills, as the electricity generated can be used within the home to run appliances. Renewables also lower daytime wholesale energy prices as solar energy is cheap to produce and abundant during the day.
- When electricity generation from rooftop solar is high, and electricity demand from the grid is low, it can be challenging to operate the electricity grid in a secure manner as the grid is most stable when electricity supply matches demand.
- In certain conditions high volumes of rooftop solar can reduce the need for electricity from grid-scale generators that provide essential system services that keep the grid stable. These conditions are known as Minimum System Load events, and pose risks to grid security. These events can lead to power system security challenges that could result in blackouts if not addressed.
- In recent years, the number of rooftop solar systems in the grid has grown substantially; and this is changing patterns of electricity supply and demand.
- While the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) can operate the grid with high levels of rooftop solar most of the time, it is important to ensure last resort tools are in place to operate the power system in a secure, stable, and reliable manner.
- Emergency backstop capability refers to operational measures to reduce aggregate distributed solar photovoltaic generation if required for system security, when other options have been exhausted.
- Establishing this capability for the ACT will allow rooftop solar to be temporarily dialled down or disconnected in emergency situations to maintain grid security. This capability already exists in other jurisdictions.
- The ACT Government has consulted with the public to inform the design of a local regulatory framework for emergency backstop capability in the ACT. The consultation commenced on 17 March and closed on 28 April 2025.
- The community and technical stakeholder feedback received through this process is helping to inform the ACT's strategy for managing high levels of rooftop solar, so that we can continue to benefit from this clean, affordable, and abundant power source.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://pv-map.apvi.org.au/historical>

Cleared as complete and accurate: 16/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
Contact Officer name: Lucinda Berrie  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

- The feedback is being used to shape the final regulatory design, and support the development of communication materials for energy consumers and local solar installers. A Listening Report, which will outline what we heard from our consultation and next steps, is in development and intended for release Q3 2025.
- The ACT Government is also working with the New South Wales (NSW) Government to ensure that emergency backstop processes across our two jurisdictions are aligned and consistent to the appropriate extent.
- In July 2024, the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council endorsed the National Consumer Energy Resources (CER) Roadmap (Roadmap).
- The Roadmap recognises the need to implement technical capabilities to support the continued security of the power system, including implementation of emergency backstop by end of 2025.
- In December 2024, AEMO emphasised the immediate need for emergency backstop capabilities to mitigate system collapse risks in their 'Supporting Secure Operation with High Levels of Distributed Resources' report.
- Emergency backstop capability will be used only when required, and only for as long as needed. The Roadmap also includes several priority reforms to better integrate CER into the power system to ensure the need for emergency backstop is minimised.
- CER can play an important role in helping to balance energy supply and demand. The Sustainable Household Scheme supports households to install batteries, which can help homes maximise the use of the solar energy they generate, cut the cost of electricity bills, make the grid more reliable and stable.
- Keeping the system secure by having emergency backstop capability means more rooftop solar can be installed in the future, allowing more households and businesses to enjoy the benefits of rooftop solar.

## Key information

- Australia's world-leading uptake of rooftop solar has changed the way the National Electricity Market (NEM) power system operates.
- The NEM power system was originally designed to handle one-way power flow from large-scale generators to consumers. Electricity flow is reversing as homes with rooftop solar are sending excess electricity back to the grid for use by other consumers.
- As more CER are installed, power system operation is becoming more complex, but is providing greater opportunities and lowering the electricity costs for consumers. There is a urgent need to adapt the way the power system currently operates to maintain secure and reliable power supply.
- Emergency backstop capability to curtail or disconnect rooftop solar is already in place in South Australia, Victoria, Queensland, and Western Australia. Emergency backstop is currently being planned in other jurisdictions, including NSW and the ACT.



---

## Background information

- AEMO manages the NEM grid in the eastern and south-eastern states. It operates the power system that allows electricity to be generated, transmitted and distributed, and the financial markets that allow electricity to be sold and bought.
- AEMO have advised that all NEM mainland regions are beyond or close to thresholds where action may be required to maintain power system security during high rooftop solar generation and minimum system load conditions.

# Integrated Energy Plan - Implementation

## Talking points

- On 19 June 2024, the ACT Government released its first Integrated Energy Plan (IEP) outlining our approach to phasing out fossil fuel energy by 2045.
- The IEP outlines several new actions that build on efforts to date. Some of these new actions include:
  - A commitment to electrify all feasible public and community housing by 2030,
  - \$5.2 million for a pilot to electrify the appliances of households that most need support,
  - Interest-free loans for multi-unit buildings to become Electric Vehicle (EV) ready,
  - A new program to help multi-unit buildings develop a plan to electrify,
  - Rebates for fleet operators to install EV chargers,
  - Support for new, fast EV charging hubs,
  - Support for skills development, including a scoping study for a Future Energy Skills Hub at CIT, and targeted training subsidies for priority trades,
  - Exploring potential regulatory interventions to support electrification, and
  - Developing policy and regulatory frameworks to support safe, efficient and equitable decommissioning of the gas network.
- Five priorities will guide government decision making and government action as the IEP is implemented:
  - Ensuring a **clear and implementable pathway** with long-term clarity and a stable policy environment,
  - **Enabling Canberrans to act** through information, education and resources, made available for all parts of the community,
  - **Prioritising support for those who need it most** and cannot transition themselves,
  - Ensuring **secure and reliable energy systems** as the population grows, consumer energy resources increase, fossil fuel gas is phased out and zero emissions vehicles become the norm, and

Cleared as complete and accurate: 04/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: Bethel Sendaba  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- **Removing barriers to the energy transition** through collaboration to remove technical, regulatory and workforce barriers to transition.

Programs include:

#### Access to Electric Program

- The Access to Electric program delivers on the IEP action of a \$5.2 million pilot to electrify the appliances of households that most need support.
- The pilot commenced in August 2024. It will fully fund gas to electric appliance upgrades, ceiling insulation and gas disconnection for up to 350 homeowners who are experiencing sustained and extreme financial hardship.
- As part of the 2025-26 budget, \$1.695 million was reprofiled to 2026-27 to extend delivery of the pilot program through to June 2027 allowing for three-years delivery. Underspend in 2024-25 was a result of slower than anticipated uptake of the pilot by eligible households in the first six months of delivery.
- The ACT Government has significantly expanded its referral base and introduced targeted promotional activities to boost referrals to the program. This is in addition to existing referral partners, such as community support organisations and energy retailer hardship programs.
- Care Financial Counselling, as a trusted community partner with financial hardship counselling experience, has been engaged to conduct eligibility assessments.
- As of 16 July 2025, 46 households have been assessed as eligible. A further 35 households are undergoing eligibility assessments.
- Contractor ActewAGL has completed upgrade works in 30 eligible households.

#### Electrification of feasible public and community housing by 2030

- The electrification of public and community housing is underway through the Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme. The ACT Government has committed a further \$21.776 million over three years from 2025-26 to ensure all feasible public and community housing in the ACT is electrified by 2030.

#### Exploring potential regulatory interventions to support electrification

- The IEP committed to investigating whether current regulatory frameworks supporting the ACT's gas network remain fit-for-purpose when considering the ACT's transition to electrification.
- A gas meter disconnection policy is being developed in collaboration with Evoenergy and the Utilities Technical Regulator. In February 2025, a Gas Connection Decommissioning (Abolishment) Technical Review was completed. Ongoing work is focused on a comprehensive review of the regulatory framework and policy settings.
- Another commitment in the IEP also focussed on undertaking an 'initial assessment of measures to maximise replacement of gas appliances with electric appliances at end-of-life'. CED Climate Change Energy & Water is working closely with Access Canberra to improve data collection and reporting capabilities on appliance installation rates, to better understand transition activities and trends related to gas appliance installation.


- Community consultation on the IEP demonstrated that providing information on the transition to consumers who are considering purchasing gas appliances was strongly supported by the community and considered an effective way of disincentivising the installation of new gas appliances.
  - CED has engaged with a range of stakeholders, including appliance retailers, plumbers, gas fitters, and electricians to better understand views, preferences, and potential barriers for businesses in providing information that the ACT is transitioning off gas when they sell or install gas appliances. These engagements are informing design of materials to support policy objectives.
- This work will be used to assist with policy analysis and the development of potential options to maximise future gas appliance replacement with electric alternatives at end of life.

## Key information

- Canberra is electrifying. In 2020, we were the first Australian jurisdiction to shift to 100% renewable electricity and we have legislated this in perpetuity. Transport and gas emissions are now the largest contributors to the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions.
- We need our community to play their part in transitioning our city's future energy use. The ACT Government offers advice and assistance to help households and businesses in the transition from gas to electric, including support for those in community who need it most.
- The Integrated Energy Plan (IEP) 2024–2030 focusses on establishing conditions that allow ACT households and businesses to capture the benefits of electrification.
- Household electrification, coupled with energy efficiency, is the best choice for lower energy bills and emissions while improving the thermal comfort of a house to help adapt to a changing climate.
- An average household could save about \$735 a year in energy bills if they electrify all their gas water, heating and cooking appliances. The savings are even greater if coupled with a solar PV system and an electric vehicle.

## Background information

- In 2023-24 more than 87% of the ACT's emissions came from ground transport (65.5%) and fossil fuel gas combustion [including LPG] (21.7%). The best approach to achieve our emissions reduction targets is for the ACT to electrify most fossil fuel uses with renewable electricity, including heating and cooling systems, hot water, cooking, vehicles and much of our transport network.
- The ACT Government developed the IEP in consultation with industry, community and other stakeholders:
  - In August 2022, the ACT Government released a Position Paper announcing the transition away from fossil fuel gas will be through electrification, with renewable gases for specific purposes only where electric solutions are not feasible.

- 
- Consultation on a second Position Paper to inform the IEP ran from 1 August to 12 September 2023. A listening report was published on 17 October 2023 on the YourSay Conversations website, with detailed consultation reports released in March 2024.
  - The majority of organisations were generally supportive of the IEP and prioritising a fair and equitable transition. The community also showed majority support with almost 60% participants very or somewhat supportive of the ACT's intention to transition to a 100% renewable energy supply; however, there remains a significant proportion with concerns, with 28% very unsupportive.

# Regulation preventing new gas connections (including exemption requests and gas disconnection data)

## Talking points

- In December 2023, the ACT Government introduced a regulation under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act*, restricting access to new fossil fuel gas network connections.
- The regulation prevents new connections to the gas network in all residential, commercial and community facility land planning zones.
- The regulation also prevents new connections for all residential (class 1-4) buildings in any Territory planning zone. Connections are still permitted in industrial, transport and services, parks and recreation and non-urban planning zones.
- The regulation does not impact existing meters and connections. This means that a business or household can seek gas supply at premises where a connection and gas meter is already in place.
- A transition period for properties designed with gas that had actively commenced planning to lodge development and building approval applications ended on 1 March 2024. Connections for buildings approved and developments lodged before the end of the transition period can proceed with their connections, provided they seek their connection within 5 years (December 2028).
- The Regulation includes an exemptions framework that allows proponents in Commercial and Community facility Territory land planning zones to apply for an exemption.
- If an exemption from the Regulation is sought, the process requires applicants to contact CED's Sustainable Business Team for advice, prior to submitting an application.
  - This process ensures businesses have access to information about electrification options, as well as providing broader advice and information on a range of efficiency and sustainable business matters, including access to rebates and other resources.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 16/07/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: Cath Collins  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- The Suburban Land Agency is delivering all-electric suburbs at new sites in accordance with its published Sustainability Strategy that was released in 2021 through to 2025 inclusive. This document aligns with a number of other key strategy documents around sustainable planning in the ACT including the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025.

## Key information

- To date, the Sustainable Business Team in EPSDD has had 19 businesses register for advice (3 in 2023-24, 15 in 2024-25 and 1 in 2025-26) that relate to potential future exemption requests. After receiving electrification advice from the team, the majority have not proceeded with a request for an exemption.
- Six businesses (all restaurants) have applied for an exemption. Four of these were not approved, as it was found that electric alternatives were available and that the potential benefits to the community did not outweigh the costs. The other 2 are still being assessed.
  - For context, there were more than 400 new food businesses registered in 2024-25. This demonstrates that the regulation is relatively well known within the community.
- The rate of disconnection of gas in the ACT is now outstripping new connections, and the average amount of gas being used by connections across the Territory is falling.
  - There are large numbers of customers using a process called 'disconnection' rather than decommissioning or 'abolishing' their gas connection. As of March 2025, there were 15,275 connections that had not reported any gas use for more than 12 months.
  - Disconnected services where a meter is still in place, are not captured by the Regulation and gas services can be resumed in the future.
  - The ACT Government is currently working with Evoenergy, the Utilities Technical Regulator and the Australian Energy Regulator, on gas meter abolishment policy options and ways to reduce the cost of leaving the gas network.
- Since the announcement of the intention to regulate, the gas connection rate has declined significantly. Historically gas connections grew by an average of 3% per annum. In 2021-22 Evoenergy reported 0% growth in connections and the following 2 reporting years record declines in connections, with a 2% (-2,705) decline in 2022-23 and a further 1% (- 1,106) decline in 2023-24.

## Background information

- Fossil fuel gas (including LPG) currently accounts for around 21% of the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions.
- In the *ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-25*, the Government committed to develop a plan for achieving zero emissions from gas use by 2045, including setting timelines with appropriate transition periods for phasing out new and existing gas connections.
- The ACT Government signalled a change to the availability of gas connections in new properties in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement in 2020, and again in late 2022 with the announcement of the Electrification Pathway announcement.

- The Integrated Energy Plan released in 2024 also highlights actions that work towards preventing new gas connections. These actions include:
  - Developing policy and regulatory frameworks to support safe, efficient and equitable decommissioning of the gas network,
  - The electrification of public and community housing where the cost of gas abolishment will be covered under the National Social Housing Energy Efficiency program funded in partnership by the Australian Government.
- A variation to the Territory Plan to remove the mandatory requirement for gas connections to new suburbs was implemented on 28 August 2020.

### **Sensitivities**

- Master Plumbers ACT (MPA) have published a media release and social media posts on the topic of “*ACT Government Energy Plan deepens inequality, disregards community concerns*”, which raises concerns about the Regulation not applying to ‘designated land’ under the planning control of the National Capital Authority (NCA). Recent engagement with MPA in April 2025 has been significantly more positive, with MPA assisting with advice regarding advice on provision of information regarding gas transition.
- Whilst the NCA has planning oversight for ‘designated areas’ of land within the Territory, the majority of land is not able to be developed, such as Lake Burley Griffin, Black Mountain and green corridors. The key areas where development may occur are within the parliamentary triangle, on embassy land, the Australian National University and some areas of the city.
- The National Capital Authority can impose restrictions on proposed developments within its planning control, this could include restrictions on the use of gas.

The National Capital Authority has recently released its new sustainability plan. The Regulation is aligned with the intent of this plan. Officers at the NCA have indicated they will work with the ACT Government on options to include designated land areas when the Regulation is subject to review in 2026-27.

# Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River

## Talking points

- The ACT community have long advocated for better protections in the upper Murrumbidgee River.
- The upper Murrumbidgee River is the 320km stretch of the Murrumbidgee River (a major tributary of the Murray-Darling system) that lies between its headwaters in the Kosciuszko National Park and the Burrinjuck Dam.
- Funding provided under agreement with the Australian Government is supporting an expansion of current river health science and monitoring programs, involvement in a review of the water management arrangements for Snowy Hydro, on ground river restoration activities and First Nations engagement in program delivery.
- This is a great opportunity to deliver tangible on-ground outcomes that will better protect the environmental, cultural, social and critical human water needs that our region relies on.
- The work also has potential to benefit the river well beyond the 5-year timeframe of the program.
- Knowledge gained through research and monitoring of immediate works can help build a more effective, longer-term plan for the whole upper Murrumbidgee catchment. Empowering the community and First Nations people to continue their advocacy for the river will be key to the long-term success of the program.

## Key information

### The upper Murrumbidgee River

- The upper Murrumbidgee River supports a wide range of values including water supply (domestic, urban and agricultural), critical ecosystem functions (e.g. fish population connectivity, biodiversity, threatened species), and social and cultural (Aboriginal culture, swimming and recreation).
- Water quality is fundamental to maintaining these values, and this is dependent on maintaining clean river flows from high in the catchment.
- The river is home to several threatened native fish (including natural, self-sustaining populations of Macquarie Perch and Murray Cod). However, only 6 of the 9 native fish that were historically known to occur within the reach continue to be found in the river.

### A note on Snowy Hydro

- The ACT understands that Tantangara Dam, and in turn Snowy Hydro operations, play a critical role in Australia meeting its 82 percent renewable energy target.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 06/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
Contact Officer name: Woo O'Reilly  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- While supportive of a renewable energy target, we are conscious that the achievement of this target should not come at a broader ecological cost. This is particularly important when the impacts of climate change are already being felt.

#### Funding the Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River Program

- The ACT entered into a Federation Funding Agreement schedule 'Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River 2024-25 – 2028-29' with the Australian Government on 12 September 2024.
- Contingent on meeting each milestone outlined within the schedule, the agreement provides the ACT with \$7.58 million over 5 years to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River.
- The ACT Project Work Plan for implementing the \$7.58 million was submitted to the Australian Government at the end of March 2025. Once approved, this will be published on the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water website at the end of June 2025.

## Background information

- In November 2023, the Australian Government committed more than \$50m to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River.
- This included:
  - \$15m over 3 years to address river health, water quality and habitat
  - \$5m over 5 years for new science and monitoring
  - \$5.3m over 5 years to support the review of the Snowy Water Deed
  - \$30m for additional river flows during extreme drought conditions
  - improved annual reporting to improve transparency in Snowy Hydro water management.

# CAB2024/539 Murray-Darling Basin FFA schedule – Funding profiles

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	780	655	390	0	1,825
Revenue	-780	-655	-390	0	-1,825
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

The Government will support the continued implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan by investing in water reform activities that will contribute to water recovery, environmental water accounting data and information, and water market improvements.

This initiative will be funded through the Federation Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth for 'Implementing Water Reform in the Murray-Darling Basin'.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate.

## Talking points

- The ACT entered into a new Federation Funding Agreement 'Implementing Reforms in the Murray-Darling Basin 2024-25 – 2027-28' with the Australian Government on 12 September 2024.
- Contingent on meeting each milestone outlined within the schedule, the agreement provides the ACT with up to \$2,605,000 over four years to continue implementing Murray-Darling Basin reforms in the ACT.
- ACT officials have been informed that full payment will be provided for 2024-25. An assessment report confirming milestone and payment outcomes will be published on the Australian Government website in the 2025/26 financial year.

## Key information

- Under the schedule, priority actions for the ACT over the four year program are:
  - Contributing to activities that will inform reviews of the Basin Plan 2012 and the *Water Act 2007*;

Cleared as complete and accurate: 17/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
Contact Officer name: Hannah Evans  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- Continuing to progress discussions on interstate water trade arrangements consistent with requirements under the Basin Plan;
- Supporting implementation of Commonwealth initiatives to improve outcomes for First Nations people in relation to holding water entitlements; and
- Progressing long-term environmental watering plans for the ACT and improving the ACT's water accounting framework.

## Background information

### Previous Federation Funding Agreement

- During 2021-2024, the Australian Government provided approximately \$2.6 million to support the implementation of MDB water reforms within the ACT. Funding provided to the ACT for MDB reforms supported:
  - Long-term environmental water planning;
  - Basin Plan implementation monitoring, evaluation, and reporting;
  - Climate vulnerability and water security planning to build resilience in the environment and community of the ACT and surrounding region, and
  - Investigating options to deliver water for the environment by returning at least 4.9 GL to the basin.
- In 2022-23 and 2023-24, a portion of funding against the Implementing *Water Reform in the Murray–Darling Basin schedule (30 June 2024)* was withheld by the Australian Government in relation to specific trade milestones that required coordination between the ACT and NSW governments.
  - Australian Government officials had previously agreed to revised deliverables during implementation of the FFA schedule, however, in the absence of a formal variation, the evidence provided to receive payment was not accepted by Australian Government Treasury.
- The ACT entered into a contract variation signed by the previous Commonwealth Water Minister, Minister Plibersek which would provide the ACT with an opportunity to receive the \$67,800 payment in 2024-25. Under the variation, the ACT and NSW Governments were required to establish two-way entitlement and allocation trade between the two jurisdictions, to ensure protection of future environmental water downstream from the ACT. This milestone was met as required.

# CAB2024/539 Upper Murrumbidgee FFA schedules – Funding profile

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	2,580	2,200	500	500	5,780
Offset – Expenses	-2,580	-2,200	-500	-500	-5,780
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

The Government will support planning and delivery of on-ground works, communications, science and monitoring projects to improve the health of the upper Murrumbidgee River.

This initiative will be funded through the Federation Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth for 'Restoring the upper Murrumbidgee River Program'.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate.

## Talking points

- The ACT entered into a Federation Funding Agreement (FFA) schedule 'Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River 2024-25 – 2028-29' with the Australian Government on 12 September 2024.
- Contingent on meeting each milestone outlined within the schedule, the agreement provides the ACT with \$7.58 million over five years for a range of measures to improve the health of the upper Murrumbidgee River.
- Fulfillment of milestone 1 (2024-2025) against the FFA was completed in March 2025 including the development of the ACT Project Work Plan as well as Joint Program Plans between NSW and ACT for First Nation Engagement and Participation, Science and Monitoring and Communications and Engagement.
- ACT officials have been informed that full payment will be provided for 2024-25. The Project Work Plan, outlining the projects, will be published on the Australian Government website in the 2025/26 financial year.

## Key information

- The ACT Restoring the upper Murrumbidgee River Program will invest in:

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
 Contact Officer name:  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- On ground works to improve water quality, riparian condition, connectivity, instream habitat and fish passage, as well as reduce the impact of threats such as invasive woody weeds and erosion.
- Monitoring projects that measure the impacts of interventions and track riparian and river condition.
- Science projects that fill critical knowledge gaps to establish an evidence based toolkit to support future water and river management decision-making.
- Looking for opportunities to support ongoing community stewardship and participation and engagement of the Ngunnawal Community is a priority across all projects.

## Background information

- The ACT community have long advocated for better protections in the upper Murrumbidgee River.
- The upper Murrumbidgee River supports a wide range of values including water supply (domestic, urban and agricultural), critical ecosystem functions (e.g. refuge and connectivity for aquatic biodiversity and threatened species), social (recreation, swimming) and Cultural values.
- Water quality and ecological condition is fundamental to maintaining the River's values, yet the health of the river is in decline. Safeguarding river health is dependent on maintaining clean and adequate river flows from high in the catchment.
- In November 2023, the Australian Government committed more than \$50m to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River. This includes:
  - \$20m over five years for on-ground and science and monitoring projects via the *Restoring the upper Murrumbidgee River Program* across ACT and NSW;
  - \$5.3m over 5 years to support the review of the Snowy Water Deed;
  - \$30m for additional river flows during extreme drought conditions; and
  - improved annual reporting to improve transparency in Snowy Hydro water management.

# EPSDD C03 – Integrated Energy Plan: Public Housing Electrification (VHESS)

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Capital	13,423	5,688	514	0	19,625
Offset – Capital – Provision	0	0	0	-10,000	-10,000
<b>Net capital</b>	<b>13,423</b>	<b>5,688</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>-10,000</b>	<b>9,625</b>
Expenses	193	975	571	412	2,151
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>2,151</b>

The Government will accelerate funding to upgrade gas appliances to appropriate electric alternatives in 1,600 public housing properties, including make-good requirements, associated ancillary electrical works and gas connection abolishment charges by 2028. This initiative is fully offset against existing provisioned funding over time, under the 2024-25 Budget initiative *Climate action - Improving the energy efficiency of Canberra's public housing*.

To expedite the completion of this initiative, an additional allocation of \$18.1 million, originally provisioned for fiscal years 2029-30 and 2030-31, has been drawn forward to facilitate completion by 2028. This initiative builds on recent Government actions including the 2024-25 Budget initiative *Climate action - Improving the energy efficiency of Canberra's public housing*.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domains of Housing and home, and Environment and climate.

## Talking points

- This initiative expedites \$21.776 million of previously provisioned funding to facilitate the early delivery of upgrades to public housing properties.
- Funding will be used to upgrade gas appliances to appropriate electric alternatives in 1,600 public housing properties, including make-good requirements, associated ancillary electrical works and gas connection abolishment by 2028. Funding also covers the continuation of a selection of staff positions, and auditing, compliance and evaluation work associated with the project.
- This initiative will ensure that ACT residents living in public housing properties are not left behind, and are gas free by 2045.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
 Contact Officer name: Ros Malouf Ext: 75335  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- It allows the ACT Government to continue to electrify its housing stock while benefiting tenants through improved thermal comfort and reduced energy bills. All upgrades are fully funded at no cost to the tenant.
- The early allocation of funding will provide long-term savings to the ACT Government and its tenants.

## Key information

- Up to 1,600 public housing households will receive upgrades through this initiative. These properties include free standing and other non-complex dwellings such as townhouses and duplexes.
- Approximately 1,200 hot water systems, 700 heating systems and 500 cooktops and/or stoves are expected to be replaced.
- An average household could save up to \$735 a year in energy bills if they electrify all of their gas water, heating and cooking appliances.

## Background information

- The ACT Government's commitment to the electrification of all feasible public and community housing properties by 2030 is the centrepiece of the Integrated Energy Plan (IEP) released in 2024. It is expected that this commitment will be met ahead of schedule, by 2028.
- This Budget initiative will build on the ceiling insulation and electrification work underway in community and public housing through the Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme (VHESS). The VHESS is due to complete upgrades ahead of schedule in early 2026. As of 16 July 2025, over 3,100 properties have been upgraded under the VHESS, with a further 600 estimated to be upgraded this calendar year.
- This IEP initiative will use established delivery mechanisms and governance structures from the VHESS to ensure the program of works are delivered efficiently.

# EPSDD E06 – Maintaining the ACT’s Biosecurity Capabilities

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	965	0	0	0	965
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>965</b>

The Government will continue to maintain a specialised biosecurity response capability to address biosecurity threats entering or establishing in the Territory and ensure the ACT meets its obligations under the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity* (IGAB).

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2023-24 Budget initiative *Strengthening our biosecurity and nature conservation programs* and the 2021-22 Budget initiative *Protecting Canberra's unique environment - Better managing invasive species*.

## Talking points

- The ACT Government is investing \$965,000 over the coming year to maintain its biosecurity capabilities to prepare and respond in the event of a biosecurity threat entering the Territory.
- \$840,000 of this funding will maintain a complement of 6 staff dedicated to coordinating and delivering the government’s response in the event of a biosecurity incursion.
- \$45,000 has been allocated to engage spraying contractors to eradicate weed species. This supplements existing on-going funding for weed control.
- \$79,000 has been included in this year’s budget to fund one year of the ACT’s agreed contribution to the National Electric Ant Eradication Program (NEAEP).

## Key information

- EPSDD works closely with a range of agencies to ensure biosecurity incidents can be responded to quickly and efficiently including the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, ACT Health Directorate, Emergency Services Agency within the Justice and Community Services Directorate, Environment Protection Authority, Access Canberra, the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. EPSDD also maintains strong relationships with relevant industry and organisations.
- Funding this initiative ensures the government delivers on the ACT’s national obligations to minimise the risk of biosecurity incidents.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 23/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 78628  
 Contact Officer name: Tegan Liston / Daniel Walters Ext: 57325/76334  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)



## Background information

- This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2023-24 Budget initiative *Strengthening our biosecurity and nature conservation programs* and the 2021-22 Budget initiative *Protecting Canberra's unique environment - Better managing invasive species*.
- The ACT Government established the Biosecurity Team in 2022 to ensure the ACT has a specialised biosecurity response capability to address biosecurity threats entering or establishing in the ACT and ensure the ACT meets its obligations under the [Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity](#) (IGAB).
- Biosecurity threats to the ACT and Australia are increasing in frequency and complexity. In 2024, the Biosecurity Team responded to 33 suspect biosecurity incursions and have contributed to national biosecurity surveillance programs. In addition, the team was critical in the emergency response to the Avian Influenza H7N8 outbreak in the ACT in 2024.
- The Biosecurity Team in the ACT Government provides the only biosecurity prevention, preparedness, response and recovery capability within the ACT and its services are an obligation under the IGAB. Prevention and early intervention are proven to be the most effective and low-cost solutions for managing biosecurity threats.
- New outbreaks of biodiversity threats are anticipated to occur including Avian Influenza H5N1 which has caused mass wildlife deaths globally. Experts have indicated that it is a case of when, not if, H5N1 will reach Australia. As a result of training, planning and emergency response experience, the Biosecurity Team is best placed to respond to the threat of H5N1 and other new outbreaks. Should funding for the Biosecurity Team cease the ACT will be unable to respond to new biosecurity outbreaks and will fail to meet its obligations under the IGAB.

# EPSDD E07 – Maintaining core climate change and energy functions

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	4,500	3,540	1,448	1,375	<b>10,863</b>
Offset – Expenses – Provision	-1,185	-1,200	-1,230	-1,230	<b>-4,845</b>
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>3,315</b>	<b>2,340</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>6,018</b>

The Government will continue actions to meet policy and statutory requirements in the Climate Change and Energy Portfolio.

The ACT has a commitment to reach net zero by 2045. This initiative ensures the Government can continue to meet its statutory and policy obligations in the Climate Change and Energy Portfolio and reaffirms the Government's commitment to undertake action to reach net zero and meet interim emissions reduction targets.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate. Other domains which this initiative significantly contributed to are Governance and institutions and Health.

## Talking points

- This initiative supports climate change statutory and reporting and ongoing policy work over the next 4 years:
  - to continue emission reductions and improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of the ACT.
  - to maintain secure, reliable and renewable energy through the net zero transition and support ACT interests in national reforms.
- This initiative will support policy development for the government's next ACT Climate Change Strategy and strengthen the Territory's adaptation response. This will be critical for preparing the path to an adaptive and resilient city and net-zero emissions future.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name: Mark Shorter  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

Ext: 78805

[Return to Index](#)

# Key information

This broad initiative will support a range of activities in the climate change and energy portfolio. This includes:

Climate change mitigation statutory and reporting obligations and ongoing policy work.

- Greenhouse gas inventory, Minister's Annual Report on Climate Change and responding to the five-yearly external review of government climate change action.
- New ACT climate change strategy.
- Ongoing policy work to unlock further emissions abatement.

Adaptation and resilience reporting and policy.

- Communicating climate projections and future scenarios to inform risk management, adaptation planning and decision making, such as NARCLiM 2.0.
- Embedding climate considerations across government and preparing for a 2 to 4°C warmer world.
- Supporting the community to improve their own resilience.

Energy Policy

- Ensuring ongoing energy affordability and reliability, mitigating the potential costs associated with the transition away from gas while ensuring the energy needs of the Territory are met in a cost-effective manner.
- Maintaining ACT's 100% renewables target. Delivering a review of electricity network resilience measures.

ACT Climate Change Council and central strategic policy coordination

- Secretariat support for the Council, including sitting fees.
- Maintaining alliances and memberships, including reporting and management requirements for the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council (ECMC) and leveraging work with jurisdictional counterparts.

Gas transition policy

- Regulatory framework to support fossil gas transition, including analysis, public education and awareness campaigns.

Community Zero Emissions grants

- Continuation of existing grant program - \$300,000 over two years.
- Community projects that encourage achievable actions to reduce emissions from transport and fossil fuel gas will continue to be prioritised

Consumer Energy Resources

- Supporting the timely and cost-effective installation and operation of Consumer Energy Resources, enhancing energy resilience and fostering electrification.

Unit titles reform to facilitate electrification

- Review of unit titles management legislation to help ensure this legislation facilitates electrification.
- Review and develop options to mitigate the barriers surrounding sustainable energy infrastructure.

## Background information

- The ACT has a longstanding commitment to positive action on climate change. This initiative ensures Government continuity in meeting statutory and policy obligations in the Climate Change and Energy Portfolio. It reaffirms the Government's commitment to reach net zero and meet interim emissions reduction targets.
- This initiative helps to deliver and build on existing policies such as the Integrated Energy Plan and the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025.

# EPSDD E08 – Preventing the Extinction of the Canberra Earless Dragon

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	1,834	1,043	1,062	1,080	<b>5,018</b>
Offset – Expenses	-545	-187	-125	-127	<b>-983</b>
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>4,035</b>

The Government will continue to support the critically endangered Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon (CGED) by maintaining a local breeding colony and expanding a second breeding colony through a partnership with Melbourne Zoo.

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including, the 2024-25 Budget initiative *Environmental Volunteers and Emergency action to preserve the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon*, the 2023-24 Budget initiative *Protecting Canberra's unique environment – Continuing the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon program*, the 2022-23 Budget initiative *Protecting Canberra's unique environment – Securing offset values along the Eastern Broadacre employment corridor*, and the 2019-20 Budget initiative *Protecting grasslands and conservation areas*.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and Climate. Other domains which this initiative significantly contributes to are Education and lifelong learning and Health.

## Talking points

- The ACT Government has committed to preventing the extinction of Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon (CGED) and has committed \$5.018 million over the next 4 years.
- The ACT Government is investing \$1.998 million to expand the captive colony at Melbourne Zoo to hold up to 200 CGED breeding individuals. Funding will cover facility expansion, technical staff and running costs.
- \$2.780 million funding will also support a program coordinator and a project officer for monitoring populations and undertaking captive to wild releases, and two technical officers to run the captive colony at Tidbinbilla. This will be partially offset by existing initiative funding and Commonwealth funding with a total value of \$887,000.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 23/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 78628  
 Contact Officer name: Dr Ben Croak  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- A total of \$96,000 will enable field research and support operational releases of captive bred CGED into the wild, fully offset by Commonwealth funding.
- \$144,000 will fund running costs for the maintenance of the current captive colony at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

## Key information

- The CGED is only found in and around the ACT, in the Jerrabomberra and Majura Valleys of the ACT and nearby NSW.
- Monitoring of wild CGED populations has shown a dramatic decline in numbers since the millennium drought (1996-2010) and the subsequent drought of 2017-2019.
- In the event of the extinction of CGED, it would be the first documented extinction of a reptile on the mainland of Australia since European settlement.
- Population viability analyses show that 500 breeding individuals are required in a captive population to maintain genetic diversity and evolutionary potential.
- To maintain genetic diversity and ensure persistence in the wild, captive to wild releases are needed. A total of 500 breeding individuals in captivity will allow up to 100 individuals to be produced for release annually.
- Two captive colonies of CGED currently exist for conservation purposes and translocations. These are located at Melbourne Zoo and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.
- Pending the outcomes of the program over the next two years, the ACT government will assess the appropriateness of a third colony at Taronga Zoo to bring the total number of captive breeding individuals up to 500.

## Background information

- CGED is the only vertebrate endemic to the ACT region.
- Habitat fragmentation has led to isolated populations of CGED.
- Genetic studies show that the isolated populations of CGED have high levels of inbreeding, which reduces their ability to successfully reproduce.
- Isolated populations with high levels of inbreeding are characteristic of an extinction vortex. This means that without careful management of remaining genetic variation this species will go extinct.
- Melbourne Zoo have pioneered husbandry and breeding of CGED in captivity.

# EPSDD E10 – Delivering offset commitments under the Gungahlin Strategic Assessment

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	429	0	0	0	429
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>429</b>

The Government will undertake preparation activities to best position itself for future works to meet the offset commitments required under the Gungahlin Strategic Assessment (GSA).

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate. Other domains which this initiative significantly contributes to are Housing and home, Health and Education and life-long learning.

## Talking points

- The ACT Government has a legal obligation under the EPBC Act to manage and report on the environmental offset sites that enabled the development of suburbs in Gungahlin.
- This funding will finance critical planning and preparation activities for the Parks and Conservation Service to meet restoration obligations associated with the GSA, on behalf of the ACT Government.

## Key information

- Funding in 2025-26 will enable planning for future restoration works required for the ACT Government to remain compliant with its obligations under the EPBC Act.
- This funding will also enable the continuation of:
  - monitoring and compliance reporting capabilities across all offset sites;

Cleared as complete and accurate: 24/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name:  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- spatial data expertise to inform on-ground operations; and
- some native seed production for future restoration works.
- Priority restoration planning activities include:
  - threat management, primarily of intensive weed loads;
  - plant community type and Golden Sun Moth mapping; and
  - applied research to address superb parrot predation.

## Background information

- The development of Gungahlin and its suburbs were made possible via legal approval for the GSA (which includes a grouping of environmental offsets) under the EPBC Act, due to the impact to nationally-listed species (Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES)).
  - MNES impacted include:
    - Box-gum woodland
    - Golden sun moth habitat
    - Superb parrot breeding habitat
    - Pink-tailed worm lizards
    - Striped legless lizards
- The GSA Biodiversity Plan 2013 sets out the 38 commitments the ACT Government agreed to with the Commonwealth. These commitments span planning, conservation, management, reporting and financial requirements.
- The ACT Government is obligated to implement these commitments through to 2033.

# EPSDD E11 – Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme including delivery programs for low-income household and small businesses

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	4,148	3,920	3,339	3,406	14,813
Revenue	-3,600	-3,800	-4,000	-4,150	-15,550
Offset – Expenses	-176	0	0	0	-176
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>-661</b>	<b>-744</b>	<b>-913</b>

The Government will continue the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme; the Home Energy Efficiency Program to deliver free in-home energy assessments; the Sustainable Business Program to offer free energy assessment for small businesses; the First Nations Home Energy Support program to provide free support to First Nations households; and support for apartment buildings to electrify. This funding will also see the commencement of the Commercial Building Electrification pilot program to transition commercial buildings off gas. This initiative is offset against revenue from the Energy Saving Contribution Fund and existing resourcing within the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2021-22 Budget initiative *Climate action – Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme – continuation* which provided funding to support emissions reductions and lower household and small-to-medium business energy use and cost.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate. Other domains which this initiative significantly contributes to are Living standards and Access and connectivity.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
 Contact Officer name: Ros Malouf Ext: 75335  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

## Talking points

- Through the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme (EEIS), electricity retailers operating in the ACT are required to help households and small-to-medium businesses save energy and reduce emissions under the [Energy Efficiency \(Cost of Living\) Improvement Act 2012](#) (the Act).
- Some retailers meet their Scheme obligations by contributing to the Energy Saving Contribution (ESC) Fund. This provides ongoing revenue for the ACT Government to support energy efficiency programs aimed at households and small-to-medium businesses. The ACT Government is responsible for managing and administering the Fund.
- As part of the 2025-26 Budget, \$14.813 million will be allocated from the ESC Fund over four years for programs that assist vulnerable and low-income households, First Nations households and small-to-medium businesses to reduce energy costs and support the transition to net zero.
- This includes:
  - **\$4.198 million** to continue the Home Energy Efficiency Program (HEEP) and deliver 700 free in-home energy assessments per year;
  - **\$1.2 million** to support small to medium businesses with energy assessments and rebates for equipment upgrades through the Sustainable Business Program.;
  - **\$1.022 million** for the administration of the EEIS;
  - **\$766,000** to expand the current First Nation Home Energy Support program to continue delivering culturally appropriate energy efficiency support to First Nation households;
  - **\$200,000** to commence the Commercial Buildings Electrification Pilot supporting commercial landlords and tenants to electrify.
  - **\$100,000** to support apartment buildings in navigating their pathway to electrify through the Sustainable Apartments Program; and
  - **\$7.327 million** towards staffing to support the operation of these programs over the four years.
- Through the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme (EEIS), electricity retailers operating in the ACT are required to help households and small-to-medium businesses save energy and reduce emissions under the [Energy Efficiency \(Cost of Living\) Improvement Act 2012](#) (the Act).
- Some retailers meet their Scheme obligations by contributing to the Energy Saving Contribution (ESC) Fund. This provides ongoing revenue for the ACT Government to support energy efficiency programs aimed at households and small-to-medium businesses. The ACT Government is responsible for managing and administering the Fund.
- As part of the 2025-26 Budget, \$14.813 million will be allocated from the ESC Fund over four years for programs that assist vulnerable and low-income households, First Nations

households and small-to-medium businesses to reduce energy costs and support the transition to net zero.

- This includes:
  - **\$4.198 million** to continue the Home Energy Efficiency Program (HEEP) and deliver 700 free in-home energy assessments per year;
  - **\$1.2 million** to support small to medium businesses with energy assessments and rebates for equipment upgrades through the Sustainable Business Program.;
  - **\$1.022 million** for the administration of the EEIS;
  - **\$766,000** to expand the current First Nation Home Energy Support program to continue delivering culturally appropriate energy efficiency support to First Nation households;
  - **\$200,000** to commence the Commercial Buildings Electrification Pilot supporting commercial landlords and tenants to electrify.
  - **\$100,000** to support apartment buildings in navigating their pathway to electrify through the Sustainable Apartments Program; and
  - **\$7.327 million** towards staffing to support the operation of these programs over the four years.

## Key information

- Over 1.4 million energy saving items have been installed across ACT Households and small to medium businesses since the scheme commenced in 2013.
- Administering energy saving activities under the EEIS has helped address energy related cost of living pressures (especially for vulnerable Canberrans and small business) and supported the transition to net zero emissions in the ACT.
- The EEIS adds approximately \$23 per year to ACT household electricity bills in pass-through costs (for an average household that uses 6,370 kWh). This equates to about 1-2% of an average energy bill and is included as an input to the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC) annual determination of the ActewAGL standing offer price.
- The key outcomes of the EEIS are improved energy efficiency and lower energy bills for ACT households and small-to-medium businesses, along with bulk emissions reduction and electrification. These outcomes support achievement of the ACT's 2045 net zero emissions target and the phase-out of fossil fuel gas use.
- Government is considering the findings from the 2024 EEIS Review to inform potential amendment pathways and ensure the Scheme can continue to effectively drive energy efficiency and emissions reduction activity, especially for vulnerable households.
- Any substantial changes to the scheme will involve stakeholder consultation and will require changes to legislation, which would take several years to implement.



## Background information

- The EEIS was established under the Act in 2013 and has the following four key objectives:
  - encourage the efficient use of energy;
  - reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy use;
  - reduce energy costs; and
  - assist priority households to reduce energy use and associated costs.
- The EEIS requires all electricity retailers operating in the ACT to meet an annual energy saving target (EST) to support the above objectives of the Act.
- While tier 1 retailers (retailers that have at least 500,000 MWh of annual electricity sales and 5,000 customers) must deliver eligible energy saving activities, tier 2 retailers (all other retailers) can either deliver energy savings activities or pay a financial contribution to meet their EEIS obligations.
- In the 2024 Compliance year, there was 1 tier 1 retailer (ActewAGL) and 27 tier 2 retailers operating in the ACT.
- The EEIS supports vulnerable households through the Priority Household Target (PHT), which requires retailers delivering activities to ensure at least 40% of all energy savings are delivered in priority households. This helps ensure opportunities for vulnerable households and contributes to a just energy transition in the ACT.
- The EEIS is currently legislated to run until 2030 and is a key mechanism for delivering on priority actions agreed under the Integrated Energy Plan (IEP).

-

# EPSDD E12 – ZEV action plan to continue to deliver on the ZEV Strategy

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Capital	1,650	2,000	0	0	3,650
Offset – Capital	-1,650	-2,000	0	0	-3,650
<b>Net capital</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Depreciation	0	66	146	146	358
Expenses	385	105	0	0	490
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>848</b>

The Government will continue to deliver a range of actions under the ACT's *Zero Emissions Vehicles Strategy 2022-30* to promote the uptake of electric vehicles (EVs) across the ACT including further rollout of charging infrastructure for the Government's commercial EV fleet and investigating the feasibility of Direct Current fast charging hubs across the ACT.

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2022-23 Budget Initiative *Zero Emissions Vehicles Strategy*, 2023-24 Budget initiative *Climate action – Continuing to deliver the Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy 2022-30* and the 2024-25 Budget initiative *Zero Emissions Vehicles Strategy* which provided support for the implementation of the Zero Emissions Vehicles Strategy.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate. The other domain which this initiative significantly contributes to is Economy.

## Talking points

- There are now more than 12,000 Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEVs) registered in the ACT.
- The ACT Government has met its target of a public charging network with 180 EV chargers by the end of 2025. There are now 198 EV chargers servicing 274 bays across 86 sites.
- The ACT Government currently has over 600 EV chargers installed across its government sites. The additional funding in this years budget will allow for another 100 chargers across 18 government sites over the next two years. This charging infrastructure is vital to ensure continued success transitioning the Government's fleet vehicles to ZEV options. Funding is

Cleared as complete and accurate: 17/06/2025

Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager

Contact Officer name:

Ros Malouf

Ext: 75335

Lead Directorate:

City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

offset from the Zero Emissions Government fund, which supports Directorates across government to reduce emissions.

- DC fast charging hubs were identified in the Integrated Energy Plan 2024-30 as important enabling infrastructure for the transition to electric vehicles. Work is ongoing to identify viable locations for the development of DC fast charging hubs.

## Key information

- To provide support for unit owners to transition to EVs, \$2.2 million was allocated in the 2024-25 Budget for an EV Ready Apartments loans program. The program will launch shortly and will offer interest free loans to owners' corporations to install backbone charging infrastructure. Residents can then purchase their own EV charger when they are ready to transition.
- Government support, including grant funding and rebates, has delivered 62 chargers to date with another 58 to be installed under the Public EV Charging Infrastructure Fund. Government-supported projects fund EV chargers at new locations across the Territory, targeting gaps in the network, tourist destinations, shopping centres, and areas with high-density residential buildings.
- The ACT is a signatory to the Global MOU on Zero Emission Medium and Heavy Duty Vehicles (ZE-MHDV). The MOU sets a target of ZE-MHDVs to reach 30% of sales of new MHDVs by 2030, as well as enable a full transition to ZE-MHDVs in new fleets by 2040.

## Background information

- At 65.5% of our total emissions, transport is the ACT's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, and a priority for emissions reduction action.
- The Strategy released in July 2022 sets out a range of commitments and targets including a sales target of 80-90% of all light vehicle sales being zero-emission by 2030.
- Current Government commitments include:
  - exploring the phase-out of new internal combustion engine vehicles by 2035.
  - a target to prohibit new internal combustion engine vehicles onboarding into taxi and ride-share fleets by 2030.
  - financial incentives for ZEV purchases such as lower cost motor vehicle duty, lower cost registration for new and used ZEVs, as well as low interest loans of up to \$15,000.
  - changes to the Territory Plan to make new builds electric vehicle ready.
  - continued action to ensure that 100% of all newly leased Government vehicles are ZEVs where fit for purpose and explore opportunities to replace ACT Government heavy fleet vehicles with ZEVs.
- The ACT Government non-passenger fleet includes an electric van, electric ride-on mowers, electric forklifts and a hybrid-electric fire truck.

# EPSDD E13 – Community outreach program for household energy support (CO2025/25)

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	479	486	0	0	965
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>965</b>

The Government will deliver a community outreach program to continue to assist low-income and vulnerable households in understanding how to reduce their energy bills and access energy efficiency supports to help mitigate cost of living pressures.

This initiative will be partially offset from a rollover of unused funding under the 2021-22 Budget Initiative *2021-22 Tax Settings - Expanding concessions and assistance measures*.

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2021-22 Budget Initiative *2021-22 Tax Settings - Expanding concessions and assistance measures* and provided funding will combine the Utilities Hardship Fund and Energy Assistance Community Partnerships programs into a streamlined community outreach program.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Living standards. The other domain which this initiative significantly contributes to is Access and connectivity.

## Talking points

- This initiative will support the delivery of a two-year program for low-income and vulnerable Canberrans experiencing energy hardship through community outreach activities and energy wallet payments to support cost of living pressures.
- Access to information, supports and services to assist with energy hardship are key to ensuring a just transition and help mitigate the cost-of-living pressures.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
 Contact Officer name: Ros Malouf Ext: 75335  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)


- The program will be delivered in partnership with a contracted community organisation with trusted relationships with smaller community organisations who support hard-to-reach, low-income and vulnerable households.
- The program will:
  - provide community outreach activities to improve referral pathways to energy support and energy literacy;
  - provide 1,785 \$100 energy wallet payments per annum as an incentive for households to engage with support and provide immediate energy bill relief;
  - build stronger networks between community organisations, energy retailers and government-funded energy support.
- An open market tender process is underway to engage a community organisation to deliver the program. The tender opened on 17 July 2025 and will close 14 August 2025. It is expected that a contract will be in place by 1 October 2025.

## Key information

- The ACT Government's Integrated Energy Plan prioritises support to those in our community who need the most assistance. The government has committed to consider a range of funding mechanisms and support measures including concessions and rebates.
- Energy Consumers Australia's annual Consumer Energy Report Card, published in December 2024, showed that 35 per cent of ACT respondents were finding it difficult to pay energy bills in the previous six months.

## Background information

- This initiative seeks to continue support measures provided by the former Utilities Hardship Fund (UHF) which ceased 30 June 2025; and the Energy Assistance Community Partnership (EACP) program which Care Financial and St Vincent de Paul are contracted to deliver community outreach services until 30 September 2025.
- From 2021-22, participating energy retailers administered energy vouchers of \$100 initially then \$300 in 2024-25 under the UHF. Vouchers helped initiate conversations with households facing energy hardship and connected them to relevant support. In 2024–25, four community organisations received a combined \$150,000 to support retailers in engaging households and promoting voucher access.
- A review of the UHF and EACP programs was completed in January 2025, with input from various external stakeholders. The review highlighted the value of both programs in educating and connecting vulnerable households to energy hardship support. It also recognised an opportunity for more cost-efficient delivery and more equitable access to vouchers as incentives.
- Insights from the review informed the 2025–26 business case, leading to a streamlined and consolidated program. The new approach maintains cost-of-living support while



delivering it more efficiently, offering both immediate and long-term assistance for energy bills.

- Energy wallet payments will continue as an incentive, similar to the UHF. However, these payments will now be administered by the contracted community organisation, rather than energy retailers to allow for more equitable access. The payment amount will revert to \$100, based on review findings that this level of support was sufficient to encourage engagement among vulnerable households.

# EPSDD E14 – Water Efficiency Program (CO2025/26)

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Capital	673	0	0	0	673
Offset – Capital – Provision	-3,000	0	0	0	-3,000
<b>Net capital</b>	<b>-2,327</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-2,327</b>
Expenses	2,370	0	0	0	2,370
Offset – Expenses – Provision	-3,000	0	0	0	-3,000
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>-630</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-630</b>

The Government will continue to design and implement various initiatives under the Water Efficiency Program (WEP) to recover water equivalent to 6.36 GL/year granted to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. This program will be funded from the one-off payment of \$58.830 million by the Commonwealth to the Territory in 2023-24.

Funding of \$250,000 in expense and \$100,000 in capital against this initiative will be from a rollover of unused funding under the 2024-25 Budget initiative *Safeguarding the Territory's Water Resources – Water Efficiency Program*.

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2024-25 Budget initiative *Safeguarding the Territory's Water Resources – Water Efficiency Program* which provided funding to design various initiatives under the WEP.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate. The other domain which this initiative significantly contributes to is Economy.

## Talking points

- The objective of the WEP is to improve the ACT's drought and climate resilience and support the ACT's long term water security.
- This will be achieved by improving the water efficiency of ACT households, businesses, schools, and government facilities.
- This budget measure will support design and planning of:

Cleared as complete and accurate: 17/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
 Contact Officer name: Cameron Knight Ext: 52978  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- Water efficiency programs for households, businesses and schools (both public and private)
- A community water efficiency education initiative
- A review of legislative and regulatory settings to improve water efficiency outcomes in our built environment.
- This budget will also support water efficiency upgrades of public sites, including:
  - ACT Government facilities
  - ACT sports grounds.
- The City and Environment Directorate is working closely with water utility Icon Water to design the program. This will help ensure that the program is consistent with Icon Water's own water security activities.

## Key information

- The ACT Government received \$58.8 million for granting a 6.36 GL/year in water entitlement to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. These funds were provisioned in the Budget to fund the WEP.
- The WEP is designed to achieve water efficiency savings of 6.36 GL/year to offset the entitlement granted to the Commonwealth.

## Background information

- This budget measure continues funding for the WEP, originally established in the 2024-25 ACT Budget.
- During 2024-25 the WEP has:
  - Audited 143 ACT Government facilities to assess the extent and use of water efficient fittings and adherence to existing codes and standards;
  - Audited and commenced preliminary irrigation infrastructure upgrades for ACT sports grounds; and

Established a monitoring framework to measure progress of the WEP against the 6.36 GL/year water recovery target.

# EPSDD E15 – Establishment of the Office of the ACT Landscape Architect and works supporting a Canberra Landscape

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	2,943	981	0	0	3,924
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>2,943</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,924</b>

The Government will appoint a Government Landscape Architect and office to deliver the ACT's first Landscape Plan and undertake conservation and restoration works to support the Canberra landscape. The Government will undertake critical conservation and invasive plant and animal control actions, enhance natural and urban climate adaptation and preparedness, and develop environmental and urban adaptation policy, along with supporting data and spatial mapping.

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2023-24 Budget initiative *Conserving Canberra and Strengthening the ACT's biosecurity*, the 2023-24 Budget Initiative *Action on Climate Change*, and the 2021-22 Budget initiative *Climate action – adaptation and resilience*.

This initiative contributes primarily to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate. The other domains which this initiative significantly contributes to are Access and connectivity and Health.

## Talking points

This initiative will deliver an election commitment to establish a **Government Landscape Architect** and develop the ACT's **first Landscape Plan**. The Landscape Plan aims to take a long-term strategic approach to improve landscape outcomes, taking into consideration urban growth, climate adaptation and nature conservation objectives across the landscape.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 23/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Deputy Director-General  
Contact Officer name: Geoffrey Rutledge Ext: 75001  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

The Landscape Architect and office will coordinate across a broad range of areas to deliver integrated landscape planning that will support urban planning, climate adaptation, nature conservation, and heritage. This work will be informed by design, biodiversity, science and spatial data expertise and evidence. It will link with continuing work on living infrastructure and urban heat mitigation, as well work on mapping the natural infrastructure of Canberra.

This will be supported by **on ground works**. In the first year, the priority will be habitat restoration and protecting our landscape through direct intervention on invasive pest management – animals and weeds,

#### **On ground works**

- Continue vital habitat restoration by integrating cultural knowledge, supporting active ParkCare groups, reconnecting habitats for woodland birds and other species, and targeting weed threats in priority areas to rebuild biodiversity.
- Sustain efforts to manage invasive plants and animals threatening natural values, agriculture, and urban areas over the next two years.
- Key actions include: Ongoing rabbit control in urban areas and ACT parks and reserves and, thermally assisted aerial control of deer, pigs, and other vertebrate pests across Namadgi National Park, Lower Cotter Reserve, Tidbinbilla, Murrumbidgee and Molonglo River Corridors, and Googong Foreshores.
- These pests damage sensitive ecosystems like upland wetlands – they also carry disease, pose risks to peri-urban and urban environments and community safety, and harm agricultural productivity. This funding ensures their populations remain at low densities to protect these critical natural assets.
- 

## Key information

#### **Landscape Architect and Plan**

- Initial scoping and internal consultation for the Landscape Plan has commenced.
- The Landscape Architect and Office will be recruited during 2025.
- Mapping of critical habitat for threatened species and priority conservation areas for key biodiversity values, including essential connectivity corridors, has commenced.

#### **Climate ready city**

- Canberra is already feeling the impacts of climate change, including more hot weather and more severe weather events. This will worsen over time.
- Tree canopy is the best way to keep Canberra cool during hot weather. Suburbs with high tree canopy are on average much cooler than suburbs with low tree canopy.
- The Government has set a target of 30% tree canopy by 2045. Canberra had 22.5% tree canopy cover in 2020. New 2025 data is being analysed now and is expected to be available later in 2025.


#### **On ground Works**

- Canberra’s biodiversity and ecosystems – particularly threatened species and communities - have been declining due to habitat loss and fragmentation (by urban development and infrastructure), invasive species, new diseases, and other threats.
- Threatened species populations have declined by about 72 % since 2000, largely driven by loss and fragmentation of habitat due to urban and infrastructure development, as well as invasive species, bushfire, and other threats.
- Strategic, proactive habitat restoration is critical to avert declines and risky, expensive “last ditch” measures to save species from extinction.
- Weeds are increasing in native grasslands and woodlands despite control efforts, raising costs annually. Invasive species can quickly disrupt ecosystems, causing lasting harm. Early weed control is cheaper than restoring degraded ecosystems later.

## Background information

The following elements have been funded:

- Expertise on climate adaptation and urban biodiversity in order to advise the development of a Landscape Plan (1 year).
- One year’s funding for continuing on-ground ecosystem restoration with the Ngunnawal community. It is envisaged that this will continue the success of the last two year’s work focused on three priority areas: Ainslie-Majura Nature Reserve; Urambi Hills/Bullen Range Nature Park; and the grassy valleys of Namadgi National Park.
- Weeds work - Each year, around 10,000 hectares of land in the ACT are treated for weed control, supported by a base funding allocation that covers essential operations like spraying and monitoring.
- Continuation of living infrastructure and urban heat island urban climate adaptation, including conducting tree canopy modelling which is a key input to the Landscape Plan (1 year)
- Ceasing work from *Conserving Canberra and Strengthening Canberra’s Biosecurity* includes:
  - Recently established Fisheries Compliance function in ACT Government, working to address the known problem of noncompliance with fisheries regulation and engage and educate the angling community. This function will cease June 30<sup>th</sup> (last patrol has already taken place).
  - Work to provide restoration ecology expertise into the building of an online restoration platform to prioritise, guide and inform cross-tenure restoration efforts and track impacts for multiple government agencies and the community.
  - Work to guide government in adapting to climate change in the domain of land management and nature conservation, including preparing for increased bushfire risk, drought, movements of species and new invasives threats.
  - Work to enable the use of citizen science, support robust spatial planning, and translate biodiversity into decision support tools for prioritised and effective decision making.



The invasive plant and plant pests team will have its personnel resourcing cut by 33% reducing its ability to respond to the threat of invasives across Government lands and the support it is able to provide to volunteers and government officers.

[Return to Index](#)

# EPSDD E16 - Healthy Waterways – Improving Lake Tuggeranong

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses	327	0	0	0	327
Offset – Expenses	-150	0	0	0	-150
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>177</b>

The Government will continue the Healthy Waterways program to improve waterway health and water quality. This initiative is partially offset against existing funding and resourcing within the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

This initiative builds on recent Government actions in this area including the 2023-24 Budget initiative *Protecting Canberra's unique environment – Expanding the Healthy Waterways project* which provided funding to reduce nutrient load and algal blooms in urban lakes and ponds.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Environment and climate. Other domains which this initiative significantly contributes to are Health, Social connection, Economy and Governance and institutions.

## Talking points

- A Government priority is to deliver a 10-year plan for a healthier Lake Tuggeranong, work for which is well underway.
- This priority builds on a significant investment of new ponds, wetlands and raingardens in Tuggeranong in the last ten years, most recently with a 500m section of Tuggeranong Creek concrete stormwater channel renaturalised in Calwell.
- The program continues to investigate additional options to restore the water quality of Lake Tuggeranong. Behaviour change in our community and in our city operations are key to addressing nutrient pollution at the source, and reducing the frequency of lake closures because of blue-green algae events.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 18/06/2025  
Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager  
Contact Officer name:  
Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)



## Key information

- Of the three broad options – prevent, reduce or remediate pollution – the most cost effective solution is to prevent pollution entering water.
- Based on rigorous scientific research and modelling, a 700kg/year reduction of phosphorus nutrients would improve water quality and reduce the number and duration of lake closures to acceptable levels.

## Background information

- Since 2014, the ACT Government has invested around \$44 million in Tuggeranong with Stage 1 and Stage 2 Healthy Waterways projects.
- 8 wetland projects were delivered in Tuggeranong in Stage 1, with a further 6 wetland projects in Tuggeranong from Stage 2 completed or currently underway.
- There is a sound scientific base of research, monitoring and water quality modelling in collaboration with University of Canberra that demonstrates phosphorus nutrient pollution needs to be reduced further to improve water quality of Lake Tuggeranong.
- Impacts of climate change will continue to add pressure on water quality with increased temperatures and larger storm events.
- The nutrient pollution source is diffuse, coming from each upstream household, shopping precincts, sportsgrounds and the upstream rural area.
- Lake closures occur when there are blue-green algae events because of public health risks from primary and secondary contact with water. The persistent odour during these times is unpleasant for nearby residents, businesses and community recreation activities.

# Fees and Charges – EV Motor Vehicle Duty and Utilities Tax increase

## Talking points

### Electric Vehicle (EV) Motor Vehicle Duty (commonly known as Stamp Duty)

- Comparison of current rates and new 2025-26 stamp duty rates for EVs starting 1 September 2025:

Dutiable value	Current AAA (Zero Emissions Vehicle) Duty	New 2025-26 AAA (Zero Emissions Vehicle) Duty	Curent AA (Environment Leading Edge, PHEVS & Hybrids) Duty	New 2025-26 AA (Environment Leading Edge, PHEVS & Hybrids) Duty
\$0 to \$45,000	Nil	2.50%	Nil	2.67%
\$45,000 to \$80,000	Nil	4.00%	Nil	4.41%
Above \$80,000	Nil	8.00%	Nil	8.00%

- The stamp duty waiver for EVs has been in place for nearly 3 years and has been a successful incentive to support EV uptake. However, given the current constrained budget environment it is no longer feasible to offer the full waiver for EVs. The new EV stamp duty rates brings the ACT in line with other jurisdictions.
- The stamp duty rates are based on emissions performance categories which means that EVs will incur a lower rate compared to combustion engine vehicles of the same value.

### Utilities Tax Increase

Cleared as complete and accurate: 23/06/2025  
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Branch Manager  
 Contact Officer name: Ros Malouf Ext: 75335  
 Lead Directorate: City and Environment

[Return to Index](#)

- In 2025-26 and 2026-27, the Utilities Network Facilities Tax (UNFT) will increase by an additional 2.5 percentage points above the wage price index.
- The increase to Utility Network Facilities Tax will increase bills for everyone that uses the electricity, gas, sewage, water and telecommunications network. The tax will be recovered through increased customer bills.
- The Utility Network Facilities Tax has been raised as a significant driver of energy bills by Evoenergy. This was prior to the recent increase.

## Key information

### EV Stamp Duty

- The generous stamp duty exemption has been in place for nearly 3 years (started 1 August 2022) as well as no cost registration for 2 years which has contributed to the ACT having the highest uptake of EVs per capita in Australia.
- The stamp duty being introduced will be lower than the rates used by most other jurisdictions.
- The Government has other incentives available including the \$15,000 low-interest loans for new and 2<sup>nd</sup> hand EVs and emissions based registration fees.

### Utilities Tax Increase

- By increasing the UNFT the own-source taxation to support sustainable delivery of public services and infrastructure for the Canberra community will also increase.
- There are opportunities through electrification and water efficiency, supported by a range of ACT Government programs, to reduce consumption. This may reduce the impact of the bill increase.

## Background information

### EV Stamp Duty

- EVs are typically still more expensive than equivalent petrol or diesel vehicles, so consumers will pay more stamp duty, particularly if they are above the \$45,000 threshold. The table below provides some examples of stamp duty payable between comparable models:

Vehicle	Category	Purchase Price	Motor duty
Hyundai Kona <b>petrol</b> base model	C	\$ 35,446	\$ 1,124
Hyundai Kona <b>electric</b> base model	AAA	\$ 57,016	\$ 2,281
MG 5 <b>petrol</b> base model	B	\$ 24,990	\$ 750
MG 4 <b>electric</b> base model	AAA	\$ 37,990	\$ 950

[Return to Index](#)

- 9 out of the top 10 most popular EV models sold in the ACT in recent years are priced over \$45,000 and will now be charged 4% stamp duty.
- The table below shows the comparison stamp duty rates from other jurisdictions:

State/Territory	Vehicle Duties
NSW	No ZEV concessions. Overall <\$45,000 duty rate is \$3 per \$100 and >\$45,000 is \$1,350 + \$5 per \$100
Victoria	ZEVs of any value has a duty rate \$8.40 per \$200 or part thereof. ICE vehicle rate increases above \$80,567
Northern Territory	Free rego and stamp duty concession for ZEVs of up to \$1,500 for vehicles valued up to \$50,000 and 3% rate outside of this
QLD	ZEV/Hybrid rate of 2% for the first \$100,000 and then 4% over \$100,000 for vehicles less than 4.5 tonnes. Flat 2% rate for heavy vehicles