

Portfolio: Heritage

Supporting our Heritage – funding for National Trust and Heritage Database

Talking points:

National Trust Funding

- The 10th Assembly Parliamentary Agreement committed to provide ongoing funding of \$525,000 through a multi-year funding agreement with the National Trust (ACT), to enable it to effectively promote the conservation of, and foster public knowledge about, places, objects and issues that are significant to the heritage of the ACT.
- \$75,000 was allocated in the 2020-2021 Territory Budget to commence this project. A further \$150,000 per annum has been budgeted for the 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 financial years.
- To date, \$150,000 has been received by the National Trust. A Deed of Grant between the Territory and National Trust has been signed including an agreed annual work program for 2021-22.
- Conditions of the Deed include that the National Trust prepare an annual work program to be agreed by the Territory, for each year of the funding. This will allow them to develop an improved website for their communications, and increase capacity to deliver more events, including an enhanced annual ACT National Trust Heritage Awards.
- A key project will be a comparative research project on Canberra's mid-century modernist residential architecture. Work on this project for 2021-22 will include developing the research methodology and Communications Plan.

Heritage Register Database and Website

- The 10th Assembly Parliamentary Agreement committed to provide funding to the Heritage Council to upgrade the Heritage Register Database and Website. \$253,000 has been allocated for the 2021-2022 financial year to scope and design an upgraded Heritage Register database and website. In October a contract was awarded to Nous Group for the discovery and design phase of the project. This is due for completion in March 2022. A further \$247,000 is available in the 2022-23 financial year.
- The Heritage database is challenging to navigate and not readily searchable. This adversely impacts the efficiency of Heritage Council and ACT Heritage, and limits the accessibility, effectiveness and efficiency of systems for planners, property owners, development proponents, researchers and the general community.
- The Heritage Council website has limited functionality and is not an effective platform for informing and engaging with the community. A fully functional geo-spatial database for the ACT's Heritage Register is critical to ensuring conservation of our heritage places and objects and their appropriate consideration in planning and development for our city.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 21/02/2022

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Lead Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

- A contemporary, interactive Heritage website, linked to the Heritage Register database, will enable the Heritage Council to proactively work on promoting our heritage, protecting broader heritage values that the whole community can connect to, and improving heritage protection processes.

Key Information

National Trust Funding

- The three key objectives of the National Trust ACT Grant funding are:
 - Effectively promote conservation of ACT's heritage places and objects.
 - Foster public knowledge about places, objects and issues.
 - National Trust has secure funding to attract and retain appropriate staff to continue advocacy and engagement work on heritage conservation.

Heritage Register Database and Website

The project is to be completed in three phases, 1) discovery and design, 2) development and build, and 3) implementation and transition to business as usual.

- The discovery and design phase will deliver:
 - User centred research to support the development and improvement of the ACT Heritage register database and website.
 - Stakeholder engagement to understand the complete requirements from all stakeholders, including the Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs) and Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians.
 - Static process maps and interactive website prototype Technical assessment to develop current and future state designs
 - High level description of system requirements for a solution/vendor-agnostic future state
- The final report will inform business case development for phases 2 and 3.

Background Information

- Under the Heritage Act 2004 (the Act) it is mandatory for the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) to maintain a Heritage Register, which may include an approved internet site.
- The Heritage Register must include details of nominated, provisionally registered, and registered places/objects.
- As secretariat for the Council, ACT Heritage also maintains records on all Aboriginal places and objects reported to the Council under Section 51 of the Heritage Act.

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Lead Directorate:	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	



Protecting Canberra's unique environment - Managing invasive species (EPSDD C18CB)	Environment and climate				
	2021-22 \$'000	2022-23 \$'000	2023-24 \$'000	2024-25 \$'000	Total \$'000
Expenses	414	839	851	864	2,968

Initiative description (as per budget papers)

The Government will establish an Invasive Species Rapid Response Biosecurity Team to undertake early containment of invasive plants, animals, and diseases to reduce the biosecurity risk in the ACT. This initiative builds on the activity funded in the 2020-21 Budget.

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

Parliamentary and Governing Agreement (PaGA) alignment

PaGA, Appendix 4 ACT Greens Policy Platform for 10th Assembly, 17.4:

“Increase funding for weeds and invasive species management (\$7.5 million over 4 years).”

This initiative will align with the Parliamentary Agreement (17.4) by focusing funds to establish a dedicated biosecurity response unit specifically to identify and address high priority invasive species (plants and animals) that may impact the natural environment, urban areas and productive agricultural land within the ACT.

With a changing climate and under the current La Nina weather pattern (which is favourable to invasive species establishment), it is expected that biosecurity incursions will increase and therefore the early identification and response to these early invaders is critical to ensuring that they do not establish and impact identified values.

The project is focused on critical on ground works to reduce threats from invasive species and build response capability of the ACT Government to biosecurity incursions.

Previous Funding Provided / Project development details

2020-21 Budget initiative Biosecurity response to the La Nina weather pattern in 2020-21 provided a one-off funding of \$626,000 in 2020-21 for management of significant invasive species growth resulting from the La Nina weather pattern experienced in the ACT (2020-21 Budget Outlook, page 85).

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Key deliverables and timetable

Task		Responsible	Timing	Comments
IMMEDIATE				
1	Recruitment of dedicated invasive species rapid response unit to bolster current biosecurity response capability within EPSDD	EPSDD	Dec 2021	Complete. Rapid response team established and functional.
SHORT-TERM				
2	Prioritise new and emerging biosecurity threats that have been exacerbated due to La Nina weather patten.	EPSDD	Dec 2021	Complete. A revised mapping layer has been developed that provides classification according to understorey condition and hence a framework for prioritisation.
	Develop a monitoring and reporting framework to ensure consistency in reporting project outputs and outcomes across all invasive species managed.	EPSDD	June 2022	In progress. Tracking to be complete by June 22
MEDIUM and LONG-TERM				
3	Develop the ACT government's ability, through skilled staff and proactive management and response procedures, to protect the natural environment and productive agricultural land within the ACT from biosecurity incursions in a changing climate.	EPSDD	June 2025	Ongoing Appropriate governance structures have been established to manage Rapid Response team ensuring that they have the tools for response planning and the training and expertise for efficient implementation
	Biosecurity threats identified in Step 2 above managed and impacts on the environment and agricultural production mitigated.	EPSDD	June 2025	Ongoing. Monitoring and reporting framework mentioned above is on track to report on environment and agricultural production outcomes achieved.

Talking Points

- The ACT Government recognises the growing biosecurity threat to the environment, the economy (agricultural and tourism impacts) and indeed to human health (many invasive species carry zoonoses - diseases that can transfer from animals to humans).
- These threats are escalating due to the impacts of a changing climate and are reflected by the current conditions facing the Territory – recovery from recent bushfires and drought combined with a La Nina event very favourable to excessive vegetation growth.
- The ACT Government has responded by the establishment a Rapid Response Team to treat invasive species in the earlier stages of incursions rather than when the species are established

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(in language borrowed from the current pandemic “flattening the curve”) and are more expensive to eradicate.

- The ACT Government has allocated \$2.9 million over the next four years in line with the Parliamentary Agreement (17.4) and is working closely with the Australian Government to seek additional resourcing for the control of invasive species.

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Portfolio/s: Environment

Statement of Performance - EPSDD

Talking points:

- The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) achieved 65 percent of performance measures for the year (24 of 37 indicators).
- This compares to 59 percent of performance measures achieved for 2019-20 (23 of 39 indicators).
- The statement of performance is on page 293 to 307 of the annual report.
- The Audit Office issued one audit finding in relation to the statement of performance relating to Expenses on Behalf of the Territory (Office of the Commissioner for Sustainable and the Environment). The two indicators were:
 - Undertake Ministerial initiated investigations in accordance with the Minister's direction
 - Undertake complaints generated investigations in accordance with the Terms of Reference
- EPSDD is working at establishing new indicators which will replace these.
- The second part of the finding related to EPSDD not having a performance indicator for Public Housing Renewal Taskforce. Under the *Financial Management Act* it is implied that each reported output must have a performance indicator. This output related to a program which would be completed during the year, and therefore no performance measures were identified in the budget.

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**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 1:	PLANNING			
Output 1.1:	PLANNING DELIVERY			
Description:	Facilitate and manage growth and change within the ACT through development assessment and leasehold management, with the overarching objective of promoting and facilitating economically productive, sustainable, attractive, safe and well-designed urban and rural environments in the ACT.			
	2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)
TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$21,608	\$17,593	(19%)	The variance resulted from a review of the allocations of support activities required to undertake the outcome.
CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$17,282	\$13,337	(23%)	The variance is primarily related to the expenditure variance above.
Accountability Indicator				
	Development application processing times:			
a.	- average processing time in working days	45	61	(36%) Average and median timeframes were impacted due to the determination of a large number of older development applications.
	- median processing time in working days	30	42	(40%) Timeframes may be extended while awaiting further information from an applicant, or where an applicant decides to amend a proposal. Significant proposals also often require additional time to resolve complex assessment matters.
b.	Percentage of development application decisions made within statutory deadlines	75%	55%	(27%) During the reporting period the Directorate determined a number development applications where applicants did not provide further information in a timely manner or had complex assessment issues to resolve. The Directorate also directed resources to prioritise s165 applications (satisfying conditions of approval) lodged to enable current construction projects to continue or commence operations during the economic downturn. In addition, with the remaining processing capacity, there has been a significant increase (from 778 in 2019-20 to 1183 in 2020-21, 52%) for the exemption declaration applications (single dwelling approvals). 93% of these applications were determined within the statutory timeframe.
c.	Percentage of development application appeals resolved by mediation in relation to development proposals	35%	64%	83% The Directorate supports the use of mediation whenever this is offered by the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Seven (7) of the eleven (11) decisions were consented decisions through mediation. The variance reflects the small sample size but also reflects the Directorate's willingness to work with developers/applicants avoiding full hearing where possible.
d.	Percentage of ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) decisions which uphold the Directorate's original decision	85%	90%	6% Twenty (20) ACAT decisions were handed down during the reporting period. Eighteen (18) of these supported the Directorate's position.

Notes

The above Statement of Performance should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

The Total Cost and Controlled Recurrent Payments measures were not examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the *Financial Management (Statement of Performance Scrutiny) Guidelines 2019*.

The Accountability Indicators were examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1996*.

The variance is based on the Jun 2021 actual against the Jun 2021 Target.

**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 1:	PLANNING				
Output 1.2:	PLANNING AND BUILDING POLICY				
Description:	Provision of high quality professional services in strategic land planning; administering the Territory Plan; planning for land release and development; developing policies for high quality urban design; and policies for buildings, building services, equipment and appliances, and the building and construction industry. Continue the ACT Planning System Review and Reform project.				
	2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)	
TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$16,572	\$11,431	(31%)	The variance is mainly associated with delays of a number of initiative projects into the 2021-22 financial year due to the Covid-19 Pandemic response.	
CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$14,878	\$12,020	(19%)	The variance is primarily related to the expenditure variance above as the Controlled Recurrent Payments (CRP) are not drawn down until expenses are incurred.	
Accountability Indicator					
a.	Number of Environment and Planning Forums held during the year to assist in community consultations	6	7	17%	One additional meeting was held to focus on the Planning System Review and Reform Project, as part of a series of three dedicated meetings to this project.

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**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 2:	ENVIRONMENT				
Output 2.1:	ENVIRONMENT				
Description:	Help protect the ACT's natural environment through:				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the implementation of programs responding to natural resource management as part of the Commonwealth's National Landcare Program; manage, review and implement legislation/action and plans to better protect and conserve critically endangered grasslands, woodlands and associated fauna and key waterways; sustainable use of water, best practice approaches to water management through water sensitive urban design, water security and catchment management including through implementation of Striking the Balance, the ACT's Water Strategy; establish and support an ACT and region catchment management governance framework; administer the annual funding of the ACT Environment Grants Program; promotion and involvement of the community in caring for the ACT's natural environment; and develop, review and implement legislation, policies, strategies, plans and standards to protect the natural and built environment. 				
		2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)
	TOTAL COST (\$'000)¹	\$75,946	\$82,162	8%	The variance is mainly related to the increased expense of the ACT Healthy Waterways program.
	CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$15,378	\$12,389	(19%)	The variance is primarily related to the expenditure variance above as the Controlled Recurrent Payments (CRP) are not drawn until expenses are incurred.
Accountability Indicator					
a.	Submit twice yearly progress reports to the Commonwealth for the <i>National Landcare Program</i>	1	1	0%	
b.	Prepare and submit National Environment Protection Measure jurisdictional reports to the National Environment Protection Council within agreed timeframe	Sep-20	Mar-21	(100%)	The Commonwealth did not call for jurisdictions to contribute towards the 2019-20 National Environment Protection Council (NEPC) Annual report. The reports sent were therefore initiated by the Directorate.
c.	Prepare a public report on the implementation of the ACT Water Strategy	Jun-21	Jun-21	0%	
d.	The conservator of Flora and Fauna to finalise Action Plans for matters listed under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 2014</i> , within six months following public consultation	100%	N/A	N/A	During 2020-21 financial year there was no requirements to complete any Action Plans as no matters arose under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 2014</i> that required the completion of an action plan.
e.	Implementation report on the <i>Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-23</i> to be publicly released ²	Jun-21	Jun-21	0%	
f.	Prepare a public report annually on the Conservators actions to protect ACT flora and fauna ³	1	1	0%	

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1. The 2020-21 Target of the total costs has included transferring of ACT Healthy Waterway assets to TCCS for \$57,860,000.

2. The result for this indicator reports the 2019-20 implementation report that was published in the Directorate's 2019-20 annual report.

3. The result for this indicator reports the 2019-20 report that was published in the Directorate's 2019-20 annual report.

Lead Directorate:

Environment, Planning and

Sustainable Development

**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 2:	ENVIRONMENT			
Output 2.2:	Conservation and Land Management			
Description:	Planning and management of the ACT's parks, reserves, unleased public land and plantations, including associated community infrastructure. The land manager role includes management of land for recreational use; conservation management; including management of national parks, nature reserves; fire management; and pest and weed control as well as the management of the Territory's softwood plantation and oversight of rural production areas. Conservation includes partnering with Traditional Custodians to proactively manage the ACT's natural and cultural environment.			
	2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)
TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$58,113	\$73,077	26%	The variance is related to increased spending on Biosecurity/weed responses in response to recent weather patterns, as well as higher expenses for capital works projects related to planning and support activities.
CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$47,450	\$58,114	22%	The variance is mainly related to cash drawdowns associated with the actual expenditure as detailed on the total cost.
Accountability Indicator				
a.	Customer satisfaction with the Management of protected areas (Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Namadgi National Park and Canberra Nature Park)	90%	76%	(16%) The variance is mainly caused by closure of the Namadgi National Park for part of this reporting period due to fire recovery and flooding, reopening on 4 April 2021. The survey questions are interpreted by respondents in different ways. There was a 91.7% of visitor satisfaction in relation to the question "Thinking about your most recent visit, how would you rate your overall experience?"
b.	Implement fuel management activities – grazing – as identified under the approved EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan	100%	100%	0%
c.	Implement fuel management activities – physical removal – as identified under the approved EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan	100%	84%	(16%) In certain specific areas, the elimination or reduction of fire fuels through physical removal is undertaken by either hand or machinery. A combination of weather and contractor availability due to the focus on fire and storm recovery resulted in this work not being completed.
d.	Implement fuel management activities – slashing – as identified under the approved EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan	100%	100%	0%
e.	Implement fuel management activities – burning – as identified under the approved EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan	100%	90%	(10%) The 2020-21 prescribed burning program was vastly different from the 2019-20 season but still full of challenges. The spring program was hampered by high fuel moisture in all areas and weather conditions outside of the acceptable parameters. The heavy rain in August and October effectively stopped all spring prescribed burns. The restrictions that COVID-19 placed on Parks and Conservation Service meant that the large gatherings of staff required to undertake prescribed burning wasn't possible. A short window of weather and fuel moisture presented itself in April.
f.	Implement access activities – as identified under the approved EPSDD Bushfire Operational Plan	100%	79%	(21%) A combination of weather and contractor availability due to the focus on fire and storm recovery contributed to lower than expected results.

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**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 2:	ENVIRONMENT			
Output 2.3:	HERITAGE			
Description:	Administration of the heritage provisions of the <i>Heritage Act 2004</i> and assistance in the conservation of the ACT's heritage assets to ensure their recognition, registration and conservation. The area provides administrative and operational support to the ACT Heritage Council and its projects, support for the National Trust in the delivery of its programs, and administers the annual funding of the ACT Heritage Grants Program, the annual Canberra and Region Heritage Festival and Capital Works projects as they relate to heritage conservation works. A key function is also the promotion and education of the community regarding heritage assets of the ACT.			
	2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)
TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$2,763	\$2,129	(23%)	The variance is mainly because Heritage related programs postponed to 2021-22 financial year as a result of reprioritisation of the business activities.
CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$2,131	\$2,041	(4%)	
Accountability Indicator				
a.	Notification on the legislation register of Heritage Council Decisions within 5 working days of the decision	100%	100%	0%
b.	Development application advice issued within 15 working days of referral by the ACT Land and Planning Authority	90%	83%	(8%)
c.	Decisions about heritage registrations by the ACT Heritage Council made within statutory timeframes	100%	100%	0%

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**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 3:	CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY				
Output 3.1:	CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY				
Description:	Develop policy and provide advice in relation to:				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ACT's climate change agenda as outlined in the ACT Climate Change Strategy and the Living Infrastructure Plan; investments in renewable electricity to achieve the government's 100% renewable electricity target and delivery of local industry development strategies; policies and programs to encourage and transition to zero emission vehicles in the ACT; frameworks to ensure the ACT's energy systems (electricity, fuel and liquid fuels) are reliable, sustainable and affordable; measures to help households, businesses, schools, and transport manage their energy better to reduce emissions and costs, including administration of the Actsmart programs; the ACT Zero Emissions Government framework; and administration of the Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Scheme. 				
		2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)
	TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$114,467	\$185,412	62%	The variance is primarily due to the creation of a provision for Large-Scale Generation Certificates and the revaluation of the current certificates downwards.
	CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$18,306	\$16,073	(12%)	The variance is due to technical issues, with electric vehicles charging program that led to delays in expenditure. There was also lower consultancy costs and higher staff vacancies during the year.
Accountability Indicator					
a.	Number of households assisted by the Household Low Income Program	1,100	1,214	10%	The number of households supported through community information sessions exceeded expectations, despite the presumed impact from COVID-19. This was achieved through digital delivery and new opportunities within public housing complexes.
b.	Number of businesses supported by energy, water and waste programs	750	554	(26%)	During 2020-21 COVID-19 has reduced the number of businesses seeking support, and also impacted the teams accessibility to some businesses. During the pandemic, virtual energy and water assessments and re/accreditations were conducted where possible.
c.	Oversee the actions of the ACT's Climate Strategy to a Net Zero Emissions Territory:				
	- publish an annual greenhouse gas inventory for the ACT	Dec-20	Dec-20	0%	
	- publish an annual report on actions to achieve the ACT Government's target of net zero carbon emissions in the ACT by 2050, at the latest and in Government operations by 2020	Dec-20	Dec-20	0%	

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**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
 STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 4:	LAND STRATEGY AND URBAN RENEWAL				
Output 4.1:	LAND STRATEGY				
Description:	Provide strategic, policy and planning direction and support, including preparation of the four-year Indicative Land Release Program (ILRP). The ILRP sets out the Government's intended program for land release and seeks to facilitate housing diversity, provide affordable housing, stimulate economic activity, and meet the demand for land in the Territory and support a competitive land development and construction market. An element of this includes undertaking due diligence for land that contributes to the ILRP.				
	2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)	
TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$2,581	\$4,570	77%	The variance is due to work required for the Indicative Land Release Program.	
CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$2,426	\$4,902	102%	The variance is primarily related to the expenditure variance above.	
Accountability Indicator					
a.	4-year Indicative Land Release Program published	1	0	(100%)	Ordinarily, the 4-year ILRP is published for the full 4-year period. Due to Covid, the Government decided to publish a single year (2020-21) of the 4-year ILRP and to publish as part of the August EFU.
b.	Publish the annual affordable, community and public housing targets	1	1	0%	

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**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
 STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 4:	LAND STRATEGY AND URBAN RENEWAL				
Output 4.2:	URBAN RENEWAL				
Description:	Urban renewal delivers projects that involve multiple policy outcomes. This work includes the identification of key precincts and individual projects, prioritisation of projects based on community need, undertaking feasibility studies and due diligence, and project delivery including demolition and minor works. This work seeks to integrate urban renewal opportunities across Government around defined urban renewal precincts, including within town and group centres and within pockets of established suburbs, such as local centres.				
		2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)
	TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$16,556	\$16,424	(1%)	
	CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$15,903	\$9,987	(37%)	The amount of Controlled Recurrent Payments (CRP) recognises the work undertaken during the year. A number of expenses did not require cash during the period, leading to a lower CRP requirement.
Accountability Indicator					
a.	Demolish and remediate the former Woden Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT)	Sep-20	Sep-20	0%	

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**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 5:	LOOSE-FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION ERADICATION				
Output 5.1:	LOOSE-FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION ERADICATION Scheme				
Description:	The Asbestos Response Taskforce delivers the Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme safely, compassionately and efficiently. It provides support and advice to affected homeowners, the Canberra community, industry and Government.				
	2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)	
TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$31,026	\$27,395	(12%)	Variance relates to the timing for Cost of Goods sold for properties that were remediated and held ready for sale during the period. This includes properties transferred to Housing ACT. Further settlements were delayed due to the impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic.	
CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$14,287	\$5,528	(61%)	The Asbestos Response Taskforce used Controlled Recurrent Payments (CRP) as required to complete the activities. Based on the properties and the work required a lower amount of CRP was requested during the period, with larger sales funding available to pay for expenses.	
Accountability Indicator					
Buy-Back and Demolition Program:					
a.	Purchase affected dwellings	6	8	33%	The variance from the target is primarily due to the easing of COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions in the ACT, resulting in removal of external barriers to remaining homeowners engaging in the property market that existed in the initial period following the declared public health emergency. This allowed homeowners more freedom to interact with the property market and transition to new living arrangements, resulting in some homeowners bringing forward their planned surrender date to the 2020-21 financial year.
b.	Demolish affected dwellings	10	8	(20%)	Many variables can impact the timing of completion of demolitions, including the number and timing of property surrenders, receipt of all necessary authorisations and resolution of complexities associated with non-standard properties. The 2020-21 year saw good progress in preparing a number of properties for demolition, but only resulted in the actual demolition of eight affected dwellings.
c.	Deregister affected properties post demolition and soil validation	16	13	(19%)	The deregistration of affected properties can only occur following demolition and soil validation. As the timing of the demolition is subject to change for a range of reasons, such as delay in property surrender, changes in private demolition arrangements, or delays in resolving authorisation for complex properties, the deregistration target will be subject to variance each year.
Sales Program:					
d.	Sale of remediated and deregistered blocks	63	65	3%	

Notes

The above Statement of Performance should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

The Total Cost and Controlled Recurrent Payments measures were not examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the *Financial Management (Statement of Performance Scrutiny) Guidelines 2019*.

The Accountability Indicators were examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1996*.

The variance is based on the Jun 2021 actual against the Jun 2021 Target.

**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Output Class 6:	PUBLIC HOUSING RENEWAL TASKFORCE			
Output 6.1:	PUBLIC HOUSING RENEWAL TASKFORCE			
Description:	The Public Housing Renewal Taskforce is delivering 1,288 replacement public housing dwellings that will better meet the needs of tenants, now and into the future, as part of the ACT Government's public housing renewal program. This program supports the renewal of Canberra's urban areas as the Public Housing Renewal Taskforce works with Urban Renewal, the City Renewal Authority and Housing ACT, to support the sale of older multi-unit public housing properties that are no longer fit for purpose.			
	2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)
TOTAL COST (\$'000)	\$5,319	\$4,687	(12%)	The program ceased during the year, with expenses reflective of cost of completion.
CONTROLLED RECURRENT PAYMENTS (\$'000)	\$5,321	\$5,321	0%	
Accountability Indicator				
Nil				

Notes

The above Statement of Performance should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

The Total Cost and Controlled Recurrent Payments measures were not examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the *Financial Management (Statement of Performance Scrutiny) Guidelines 2019*.

The Accountability Indicators were examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1996*.

The delivery of Public Housing renewal was completed in 2019-20. As the renewals were completed all accountability indicators were discontinued. The output was continued to finalise the programs outcomes in 2020-21.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 21/02/2022
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 76322
 Contact Officer name: Kate Chambers Ext: 49428
 Lead Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

EBT:	OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT				
EBT 1:	OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT				
Description:	Publication of the State of the Environment Report, investigation of complaints by Ministerial direction, or where a Territory agency's actions may have a substantial impact on the environment.				
		2020-21 Targets	2020-21 Result	% Variance	Explanation of Material Variances (+/- 5%)
	TOTAL COST (\$'000)¹	\$1,552	\$1,515	(2%)	
	PAYMENTS FOR EXPENSES ON BEHALF OF THE TERRITORY (\$'000)¹	\$1,535	\$1,160	(24%)	Payments on behalf of territory is recognised when cash is required. During the year there was an increase in the unpaid liabilities compared to budget. Less cash was drawn and future payments will be required when liabilities are paid.
Accountability Indicator					
a.	Report on the uptake of recommendations on the ACT State of the Environment and special reports as part of the annual report	Dec-20	Dec-20	0%	
b.	Undertake Ministerial initiated investigations in accordance with the Minister's direction	100%	100%	0%	
c.	Undertake Commissioner initiated investigations in accordance with the Terms of Reference	100%	N/A	N/A	There have been no Commissioner initiated investigations raised or active in the reporting period.
d.	Undertake complaints generated investigations in accordance with the Terms of Reference	100%	100%	0%	
e.	Report on complaints about the management of the environment by the Territory or a Territory agency as part of the annual report	Dec-20	Dec-20	0%	

Notes:

The above Statement of Performance should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

The Total Cost and Controlled Recurrent Payments measures were not examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the *Financial Management (Statement of Performance Scrutiny) Guidelines 2019*.

The Accountability Indicators were examined by the ACT Audit Office in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1996*.

The variance is based on the Jun 2021 actual against the Jun 2021 Target.

1. Total cost (\$1.552 million) and payments for expenses on behalf of the Territory (\$1.535 million) are in relation to the Office of The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. The costs and payments for expenses on behalf of the Territory in the Statement of Income and Expenses on Behalf of the Territory also includes Environment Grants and Heritage Grants in addition to the Office of The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 21/02/2022
 Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 76322
 Contact Officer name: Kate Chambers Ext: 49428
 Lead Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

Portfolio: Environment

RED HILL INTEGRATED PLAN – ENVIRONMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Talking points:

- The ACT Government endorsed the final Integrated Plan for Red Hill Nature Reserve and Surrounds on 9 June 2021.
- The Red Hill Integrated Plan is strongly supported by local stakeholder groups including: the ACT Conservation Council, Red Hill Regenerators, Friends of Grassland, the Hughes Woodland Group, Garran and Hughes Residents Action Group and the Deakin Residents Association.
- A key recommendation is to investigate options to incorporate woodland areas of high ecological values in the northern section at Deakin Section 66 and at the Federal Golf Club into the adjoining Nature Reserve.
- There is consensus amongst experts that the high ecological values are concentrated in the northern section of the Federal golf course.
- The Red Hill Integrated Plan provides the best way forward by protecting the key environmental values for this area by limiting the scale and location of any development to a small scale, low density retirement village on the southern section.
- It strikes the balance between the important need to provide strong protection for biodiversity both inside and outside of the Red Hill Nature Reserve, protecting the amenity of residents and allowing for some limited development activity on the southern end of the golf course.

Plan Variations

- Two Territory Plan variations are currently being prepared as part of the implementation:
 - DV280 Deakin Office Park and open space expansions applies to land at Deakin sections 66 and 78 and includes land proposed to be zoned for open space and incorporated into Red Hill Reserve – consistent with recommendation 6 of the Integrated Plan; and
 - DV384 relates to enabling development for a retirement village at the southern part of the Federal Golf Course – consistent with recommendation 7 of the Plan.

Petition

- The Garran Resident’s Association and Hughes Residents Association lodged a petition in the Legislative Assembly via Guilia Jones MLA against recommendation 7 of the Integrated Plan (for the retirement village at the Federal Golf Course).

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Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 59027
Contact Officer name: Michaela Watts Ext: 71831
Lead Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

- The Garran Residents Association and Hughes Residents Association have also published a petition flyer that states *Keep Federal for Birdies and Birds*. The flyer states “the Federal Golf Course and surrounding green spaces are home to up to 12 species of parrots and cockatoos, some listed vulnerable, as well as 2,000 other native species. It is also part of the second largest remnant of Yellow Box-Blakely’s Red Gum Woodland in Australia, with 95 percent already destroyed”.

Potential Environmental Impacts

- The following concerns were raised about potential impacts of development of a retirement village at the golf course during the engagement process for the draft Plan in 2019-2020:
 - the potential impacts on ecological values at the southern end of the Golf Course
 - potential impacts on amenity of low-density residential areas surrounding the Golf course; and
 - traffic impacts on Kitchener Street
- The ecological features identified by Ecologists from the Environment, Heritage and Water Division, EPSDD who have undertaken a rapid site assessment are:
 - areas of native vegetation (approximately 12 hectares)
 - two significant bird species (superb parrot and gang gang cockatoo).
- Some key features of the Federal Golf Course site include mature native trees, many of which are hundreds of years old and are breeding sites for gang gang cockatoos. There are also known nesting trees across the Deakin sites, which is at the northern end of the site and are protected.
- RT1027-Group Deakin is a group registration of trees under the Tree Protection Act 2005 on account of their high habitat value. The Tree Advisory Panel and the Conservator have agreed to the registration due to their significance for habitat and the scientific importance of being part of the Yellow Box-Red Gum Grassy Woodland community. The registration can be found at:
https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/trees-and-nature/trees/act_tree_register/registered_trees
- The final Red Hill Integrated Plan was amended to stipulate 50 metre wide buffers between development at the golf course and surrounding residential. The buffers are intended to:
 - Retain and enhance ecological values and corridors at the golf course and to maintain connectivity to the surrounding open space network and the Hughes woodland; and
 - Minimise potential impacts on the amenity of surrounding residential areas.

- A detailed site assessment and habitat assessment will be required to be undertaken by the proponent to address the requirements of environmental assessment and approvals under ACT and Commonwealth legislation.
- The removal of mature native trees is listed as a Key Threatening Process under the Nature Conservation Act and must be considered as planning progresses for the retirement village at the Federal Golf Course.
- An independent traffic analysis was conducted as part of the integrated planning process. It was endorsed by Transport Canberra and City Services and found that the surrounding road network has capacity to accommodate the traffic generated by the proposed retirement village at the golf course.

Background Information

- An internal Implementation Strategy has been prepared to map out next steps associated with the Plan recommendations. Implementation involves coordination of a number of agencies, consideration of implementation timeframes, Government resources and priorities.
- The mature native trees over the Federal Golf Course may also hold cultural significance for the traditional custodians of the land and their views and advice may have influence over the development outcomes.

Portfolio: Environment

MULTIPLE THREATENED SPECIES ON LAWSON GRASSLANDS

Talking points:

- ACT Government Conservation Officers undertook a site visit on 30 June 2020 to discuss a proposed development in Lawson with Defence housing Australia (DHA).
- The site is known to have conservation values including Natural Temperate Grassland and Box Gum Woodland threatened ecological communities which were confirmed on site at this time.
- Lawson is also a habitat for threatened species 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 present.
- There is also a known population of Ginninderra Peppergrass (an endangered plant under the Nature Conservation Act and EPBC Act) occurring adjacent to the proposed development area.

Key Information

- Future development within parts of Lawson North will be subject to environmental approval by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and planning approval by the National Capital Authority (NCA) consistent with Development Control Plan (DCP) No. 12/09 (Belconnen Naval Transmission Station).
- The project timeline on the website (www.dha.gov.au/development/residential/lawson-act) states that construction will commence in 2023 and be completed in 2024.
- The land is likely to remain National Land as the website states that applications will be lodged with DAWE and the NCA.
- The referral (DAWE) will be sent to EPSDD for comment, however, a bilateral agreement would not be available as it is National Land. As such, the NCA is the decision maker on all aspects of the proposed development. The ACT Government has no specific approval role.
- The DCP 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.

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Lead Directorate:	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	

- Following approval of the concept plan by the NCA, a works approval (development) application will be lodged with the NCA for assessment and determination. Further public notification will occur at this stage.

Background Information

- Lawson North is declared National Land and is administered by the National Capital Authority (NCA) on behalf of the Commonwealth Government.
- The proposal is for Defense Housing Australia (DHA) to cater for a 570 dwelling estate, north of the existing Lawson estate.
- The Conservation Council Act Region requested a meeting with the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and representatives of the Conservator met with the Conservation Council to discuss ecological and environmental issues related to the proposed development at Lawson North on Wednesday 21 July 2021. It was noted that there is little information available about the development proposal from the DHA and that any publicly available information that either group is made aware of will be shared.

Portfolio: Environment

STATUS OF THE EPBC ACT REVIEW AND REFORMS

Talking points

- A concern that I have raised repeatedly over the last 18 months is that the Commonwealth Government is taking the lead on devolution of environmental protections by way of Commonwealth legislation without putting in place the suite of reforms recommended in Professor Samuel’s review and without addressing the ACT’s concerns about the process.
- The Samuel report made it quite clear that the Commonwealth Government can’t “cherry pick’ from the suite of recommendations”. The Commonwealth Government should respond to all 38 recommendations of the Samuel report prior to enacting Commonwealth legislation.
- The ACT Government has seen a Commonwealth document outlining timeframes for some proposed EPBC Act reforms but is yet to see detail on how the new system would operate, and how the ACT Government would be compensated for the potential ‘cost shift’ that could come from devolution of regulatory responsibilities and associated enhanced assessments and data requirements.
- It is unlikely now that this Commonwealth Government will be able to pass the relevant legislation underlying some of the reforms in their current term of government.

The Samuel Report

- On 30 October 2020, Professor Graeme Samuel provided the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, the Hon Sussan Ley, with his final report comprising his independent review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). It was released publicly on 28 January 2021.
- The review paints an alarming picture of the rate of environmental and biodiversity decline in Australia.

Key Information

- In July 2020 and reaffirmed in December 2020, National Cabinet agreed in principle to support ‘single touch’ environmental approvals through negotiation of approval bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and states and territories.
- The benefits of the ACT entering into an approval bilateral agreement potentially include reducing regulatory duplication, increasing certainty for developers, quicker regulatory timeframes, a reduction in unnecessary costs for business, and more streamlined assessment and approval processes.
- The Standards and Assurance Bill enables the establishment of legally enforceable National Environmental Standards (NES) and an Environment Assurance Commissioner to independently monitor and audit environmental approval systems.

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Lead Directorate:	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	

- NES, which are less strong and comprehensive than those recommended by Prof. Samuel, are a critical factor in whether the reforms can address the serious environmental challenges outlined in the review report.
- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) officials have indicated that resourcing will be dealt with during negotiation of the bilateral agreement. The ACT's concerns about resourcing have been included on a Commonwealth issues register.
- In 2021, senior officials (ACT/Commonwealth) workshopped the development of an approval bilateral agreement including benchmarking of ACT approvals processes. A benchmarking template and accreditation criteria were used for accrediting ACT processes. The most recent workshop was on 25 August 2021. Discussions and accreditation are on hold pending the legislative reforms.
- The Commonwealth was aiming to sign bilateral agreements with all jurisdictions by the end of 2021.
- A parallel process under the reforms is the development of a national Digital Environmental Assessment Program including a Biodiversity Data Repository. A contract between the Commonwealth and ACT was agreed in late 2021 with provision of \$300,000 funding to the ACT for preliminary work associated with the repository.

Background Information

- Independent review of the operation and effectiveness of the Commonwealth EPBC Act is a statutory requirement. It must be completed at least once every 10 years. The Terms of Reference for the Review encompass the operation of the EPBC Act and the extent to which the objects of the EPBC Act have been achieved.
- The ACT Government provided input into the EPBC Act Review in various official forums. These include:
 - in May 2020 a preliminary submission on the 2020 EPBC Act Review
 - in September 2020 a submission relating to the Interim Report on the EPBC Act Review
 - in November 2020 a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Streamlining Bill
 - in December 2020 correspondence to Minister Ley with preliminary feedback on the NES.
- Official responses from the Commonwealth to this feedback have not been received.



QUESTION TIME BRIEF

Portfolio: Environment

AIR QUALITY

Talking points:

- The ACT Government released the Smoke and Air Quality Strategy 2021-25 on 11 November 2021 which outlines the ACT's current initiatives and future actions to address smoke from bushfire events and domestic wood heaters for the benefit of the community.
- On 15 April 2021 Environment Ministers agreed to a variation to the Ambient Air Quality National Environment Protection Measure to strengthen air quality standards for ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide. This is the conclusion of an extensive process, including community and stakeholder engagement, to strengthen and modernise ambient air quality standards to reflect the latest scientific understanding of the health effects of air pollution.
- Air quality monitoring is undertaken by ACT Health at three locations; Monash, Civic and Florey in accordance with the Ambient Air Quality National Environment Protection Measure made under the *National Environment Protection Council Act 1994*.
- The Environment Protection Authority within Access Canberra reports annually on the air quality in Canberra in accordance with the Ambient Air Quality National Environment Protection Measure.
- ACT Health provides hourly advice to the public on the levels of these pollutant above the national ambient air quality standards through the online Air Quality Index and AirRater App.
- Smoke from bushfires is likely to become an increasingly significant issue due to climate change, resulting in increased fire frequency, fire intensity, drought and extreme weather events and decreased suitable prescribed burning days.

Wood Heater Replacement Program (WHRP)

- The Wood Heater Replacement Program (WHRP) aims to improve the ACT's air quality by offering financial incentives for the removal and disposal of domestic wood burning heaters and their replacement with efficient electric heating systems.
- The following rebates are currently offered:
 - \$250 for the removal of a wood heater
 - \$750 for the removal of a wood heater and installation of an electric reverse cycle system (minimum of 3 stars)
 - \$1,250 for the removal of a wood heater and installation of an electric ducted reverse cycle system.

Key Information

Cleared as complete and accurate:	21/02/2022	
Cleared for public release by:	Executive Group Manager	Ext: 59027
Contact Officer name:	Daniel Walters	Ext: 76334
Lead Directorate:	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	



QUESTION TIME BRIEF

- EPSSD is responsible for the Ambient Air Quality National Environment Protection Measure (AAQ NEPM) and *National Environment Protection Council Act 1994* (NEPC Act). The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is responsible for implementation of the AAQ NEPM and annual reporting, and ACT Health operates the AAQ NEPM monitoring stations and is responsible for live reporting of data and public health messaging.
- The ACT Air Quality Report 2020 (published June 2021) presents the results of ambient air quality monitoring in the ACT for the 2020 calendar year.
- The ACT Government has a range of programs to address emissions from domestic wood heaters. These include regulation of commercial firewood to ensure it is sold in a seasoned condition, the Wood Heater Replacement Program to remove old inefficient heaters, and the Burn Right Tonight public education campaign on how to correctly operate a wood heater.
- The ACT Government has also recently announced the Sustainable Household Scheme which will offer zero-interest loans of between \$2,000 to \$15,000 to support eligible ACT households to live more comfortably, reduce emissions and their energy costs. This scheme will complement the Wood Heater Replacement Program to assist with covering the additional cost of replacing a wood heater with an energy efficient electric system for eligible households.
- The ACT Health Directorate, in consultation with the Environment Protection Authority and the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, has engaged the Centre for Air Pollution, Energy and Health Research, a cooperative research centre funded by the National Health Medical Research Council, to undertake more detailed research into the health impacts and costs associated with wood smoke pollution in the ACT. This work will inform future policy direction.
- 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 in the last decade. Information about these initiatives and copies of the ACT Annual Air Quality Reports, can be found at www.accesscanberra.gov.au.

Background Information

- The ACT monitors four of the six NEPM pollutants: Carbon monoxide (CO); nitrogen dioxide (NO₂); photochemical oxidants as ozone (O₃); particulate matter PM₁₀; and particulate matter PM_{2.5}.
- The ACT has never monitored sulfur dioxide (SO₂) 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.

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Portfolio: Environment

BIODIVERSITY IN THE ACT

Talking points:

- The ACT Government is committed to conserving and managing our environment. Approximately 70 percent of the ACT is conserved in parks and reserves; exceeding the Aichi Biodiversity Target of 17 percent.
- The ACT has legislative and policy frameworks to conserve, maintain and enhance biodiversity across the ACT and within protected areas. Our parks and reserves are undoubtedly among Canberra's greatest assets and contribute to our high quality of life.
- A community stakeholder forum was established in late 2021 to discuss biodiversity conservation issues in the ACT. It is co-chaired by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and the ACT Conservation Council.
- A new panel of expert scientists was formed in 2021 as the next ACT Scientific Committee, to provide advice on nature conservation to the ACT Government.
- Funding from the Australian Government was agreed for several new initiatives relevant to biodiversity conservation in the ACT:
 - \$1.2 million for further bushfire recovery work to protect biodiversity.
 - \$78,000 for research on habitat supplementation to protect threatened species.
 - \$125,000 to establish and coordinate a national working group to identify priority recovery actions for the Gang-gang Cockatoo.
 - \$300,000 to support scoping activities that will facilitate the future establishment and interoperability of biodiversity data repository systems and/or exchange of biodiversity data between the Commonwealth and the ACT.
 - \$247,000 through the National Gang-gang Working Group to undertake strategic conservation monitoring of Gang-gang Cockatoos across three fire-affected regions, including the ACT, the Blue Mountains local government area, and the south-east coast of New South Wales.
- A new initiative to pilot approaches to climate change adaptation for threatened species is currently under implementation in partnership with the University of Queensland.
- Considerable efforts and resources have gone into biodiversity conservation in 2020-2021 through our Bushfire Recovery Program, including:
 - \$232,800 into monitoring and protecting threatened species of plants, frogs and fauna such as the Broad-toothed Rat and the Reik's Crayfish.

- \$318,289 to increase natural regeneration of native flora species and communities through invasive plant control.
- \$206,088 to allow sensitive vegetation communities and species recover through feral herbivore control.
- \$678,698 to minimise hillslope and bank erosion, protect riparian vegetation and improve water filtration functions by implementing erosion control and stabilisation measures.
- \$155,000 to prevent degradation and loss of the ACT's Alpine Bogs and Fens communities through a range of on-ground stabilisation and protective actions.
- Other biodiversity conservation projects are progressing through delivery of funding under the National Landcare Program Phase 2 (2018-2023):
 - Protecting and connecting endangered woodlands in the ACT program which is funded at \$1,505,997 over five years.
 - Safe haven for Quolls and Bettongs in the ACT program which is funded at \$803,470 over five years.
 - Reducing the impacts of Sambar Deer in the ACT's Ramsar site - the Ginini Flats Wetlands Complex program which is funded at \$604,500 over four years.
 - Restoring riparian areas along the Naas river which is funded at \$305,000 over one year.
- Biodiversity conservation support is available to community and other stakeholders through: ACT Environment Grants and Nature in the City Grants
- As well as these specific projects, ACT Government carries out a wide range of ongoing biodiversity conservation programs, including monitoring and research to track our threatened species and ecosystems and generate key knowledge to shape our approaches and strategies, including on prescribed burning, feral animal control, kangaroo management, and aquatic ecosystem conservation and restoration.

Key Information

- The ACT contains a diverse range of species and ecosystems with some of national significance. This includes six threatened endemic species that occur nowhere else, and significant remnants of nationally threatened ecosystems such as Natural Temperate Grassland and Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland.
- The ACT contains some of the most intact woodlands in Australia, including the Critically Endangered Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland. In terms of size, connectivity, diversity and habitat for threatened species, ACT's woodlands are exceptional. Our extensive areas of Critically Endangered Natural Temperate Grassland are also significant with a high proportion of the community protected within the ACT's reserve system.

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Lead Directorate:	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	

- The ACT Government is responsible under the Commonwealth’s *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* for protection of a range of Matters of National Environmental Significance. These include Ramsar wetlands (Ginini Flats Wetland Complex Ramsar Site), migratory species (27 birds), threatened species and ecological communities (42 of 52 threatened ACT species and three ecological communities are nationally listed), and national heritage (the ACT portion of the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves).

Background Information

- The *Nature Conservation Act 2014* is the chief legislation for the protection of biodiversity in the ACT and for the management of the conservation reserve network. The Act protects native plants and animals, and provides management authority for conservation lands. It provides the legal underpinning of nature conservation policy, management and action across the Territory.
- Underpinning the Act is the Nature Conservation Strategy 2013 – 2023 (the Strategy) which sets the direction for the integrated conservation management of the natural environment, across nature reserves, and rural and urban areas in the ACT. The ACT has made significant progress towards protecting and enhancing the ACT’s natural environment since the introduction of the Strategy in 2013.
- The Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Program is a notifiable instrument under the Nature Conservation Act 2014, and establishes biodiversity research and monitoring priorities for a two-year period. The requirements of the BRAMP are currently met by the EPSDD. Science Plan 2020-2025, which establishes a broad strategic framework for the EPSDD’s research and monitoring, and establishes a set of 11 priority themes for this period. See https://www.environment.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1675233/science-plan-2020-25.pdf

Portfolio: Environment

WOMBAT MANGE

Talking points:

- Since September 2019, the Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) has been leading a collaborative effort involving community groups and the University of Tasmania (UTAS), in developing a wholistic approach to addressing the issue of sarcoptic mange in wombats in the ACT.
- EPSDD currently convenes the internal Wombat Management Working Group (initiated September 2019), involving scientists, policy, communications, PCS Area Managers, the Chief Veterinary Officer and wildlife experts from across EPSDD.
- EPSDD also convenes the Wombat Stakeholder Working Group (initiated March 2021). Members include rural leaseholders (representing the Rural Lands Association), two community wildlife care groups, UTAS and EPSDD staff. The objective of this group is to bring community and external stakeholder input into decision making on wombat management in the ACT.
- A sub-group of the Wombat Stakeholder Working Group, known as the Wombat Mange Stakeholder Sub-group, has been developed specifically to coordinate activities of the community and ACT Government for a more collaborative approach to addressing the issue of wombat mange.
- Current activities of these groups include:
 - Trialling the use of an alternative veterinary chemical, Bravecto, as a potentially longer-lasting, more effective, and target-specific treatment for mange.
 - EPSDD and UTAS are working together to develop a new method for remote delivery of Bravecto. Concept trials were undertaken in April 2021 and were successful. The first pilot studies on wild populations in the ACT are to commence in March 2022. The trial will treat a small number of wild wombats and assess the effectiveness of the technique as a tool for future management.
 - The Wombat Mange Stakeholder Sub-group is developing a collaborative monitoring program to provide information on mange prevalence and distribution across the ACT. An Honours student from the University of Canberra, commencing study in 2022, will be assisting this project by looking at using new technologies such as drones and LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging, a remote sensing technique) to detect burrows.
 - The monitoring program will be supported by a spatial resource (map and data gathering application) that will be shared between stakeholders, including EPSDD, community groups and universities, to help coordinate mange treatment.

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Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: 59027
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Lead Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

- A web-based communications portal on wombat mange for the wider community has been developed by the Conservation Research and Evaluation spatial team in collaboration with wildlife carer groups and PCS. While still in early stages of use, wildlife carers have already reported a significant increase in wombat sightings, leading to more timely mange treatment.
- A standardised protocol for mange identification in wombats, including thresholds for euthanasia of mangy wombats, for both rangers and wildlife carers, has been produced.
- EPSDD staff and carer groups have collaborated to develop an approach to enable mange treatment in public reserves while minimising risks associated with using Cydenctin near waterways. It allows for interim treatment of mange-affected animals while other techniques are being developed and further research is undertaken.
- The ACT Wombat Management Working Group, with input from the Wombat Stakeholder Working Group, will continue to guide development of strategy and approaches to wombat management in the ACT.
- To date, ACT Government wombat mange initiatives have been funded from recurrent base funding. In the 2021 grant rounds, the community groups of ACT Wildlife and Wombat Rescue, in addition to UTAS, were successful in their application for a \$10,000 ACT Environment Grant to continue work on addressing wombat mange in the ACT.
- Implementation of a strategy, presuming initial Bravecto trials in 2021-2022 are promising, will involve approximately \$30,000 annually.

Key Information

- The recent 10th Legislative Assembly PAGA Appendix 5 included the following item (1.1) related to wombat mange:
Secure long-term funding for wildlife carer groups and fund an ACT Wildlife Wombat Mange Management Program.
- In June 2020 and again in September 2021, representatives from EPSDD partook in a national roundtable on sarcoptic mange in wombats, with the purpose of developing a national framework for wombat mange management in collaboration with other jurisdictions, universities and Wildlife Health Australia.

Background Information

- Wombat sarcoptic mange is a disease caused by a parasitic mite, which burrows into the skin causing thick, crusty skin, and hair loss. Wombat mange has significant health and welfare impacts for individual wombats. If left untreated, mange can result in the death of affected individuals. Little systematic information is currently available on mange prevalence, distribution and severity in the ACT.
- Current treatment of mange in wombats is limited to use of the veterinary chemical Cydectin, which has limited efficacy and known adverse impacts on aquatic life.

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Cydectin will continue to be used for mange treatment in appropriate areas while alternatives are under development, as part of a coordinated approach.

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Portfolio/s: Planning & Land Management
Environment

KANGAROO MANAGEMENT

Talking points:

Background

- Kangaroos are recognised as an important part of healthy, functioning grassy ecosystems in the ACT. In our highly fragmented urban reserves, however, and in the absence of natural predation (e.g. from dingoes), their numbers can increase above sustainable densities. This results in over-grazing and significant negative impacts on the grassy habitat required by kangaroos and other native plant and animal species.
- Kangaroos are managed in the ACT in accordance with the ACT Kangaroo Management Plan (2010), and the Eastern Grey Kangaroo: Controlled Native Species Management Plan (EGK: CNSMP, 2017; the latter being an instrument under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*) to mitigate their environmental, economic and social impacts across public and private land.
- Kangaroos have been culled annually in the ACT since 2009 for the purposes of protecting flora and fauna communities.
- As a custodian of public lands, the Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) has a legislative responsibility under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* to ensure that the risks to protected ecological communities are mitigated.
- The ACT Government has shown its commitment to protecting threatened flora and fauna from the effects of overgrazing by allocation of funding to continue the macropod management program in the recently announced 2021-22 Budget.

Evidence base

- The ACT government relies on annual scientific monitoring to inform management decisions including current kangaroo densities in priority habitats; the level of grass biomass and habitat condition; and sustainable kangaroo densities based on site-specific circumstances.
- Above average rainfall throughout 2021 and into 2022 has allowed the recovery of grassy habitat across many areas of Canberra Nature Park, particularly where kangaroo numbers have been managed to sustainable levels in previous years. These improvements in ecosystem condition resulted in a reduced need to cull kangaroos in many sites in 2021. As such, the overall number of kangaroos culled in 2021 was lower than it has been in recent years, this is likely to be the case again in 2022.

2021 Kangaroo Management Program

- 1505 Eastern Grey Kangaroos were removed from several priority reserves within Canberra Nature Park during the 2021 management program.

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- This figure represents 96 percent of the target quota from Canberra Nature Park. Wet conditions prevented access to some reserves later in the program, hindering efforts to achieve 100 percent.

2022 Kangaroo Management Program

- The ACT government is currently collecting data (kangaroo densities at priority habitats, grass biomass and habitat condition, and sustainable kangaroo densities based on site-specific circumstances) to inform the 2022 Eastern Grey Kangaroo Conservation Management Advice.
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo Conservation Management Advice will be finalised by early March and will inform the 2022 kangaroo management program.
- The continued above average rainfall will likely result in a reduced need to cull kangaroos in many sites in 2022, as was the case in 2021.

Welfare considerations

- All shooters involved in culling in the ACT are required to complete a rigorous Shooter Proficiency Test that examines their ability to accurately identify kangaroos, their awareness of animal welfare obligations pertaining to kangaroos, and their marksmanship ability.
- Restrictions to the timing of culls in the ACT are also enforced to reduce the risk of orphaning dependent young.

Carcass use

- At present, the ACT does not support commercial use of kangaroo carcasses for meat or skins.
- Up to 720 kangaroo carcasses from the 2021 conservation culling program were donated to an endangered native species breeding program. This initiative supports conservation of an endangered species and reduces waste produced by the conservation cull.
- A small number (approximately 20) carcasses and skins have been supplied for cultural purposes.
- The kangaroo management team will continue to identify and pursue suitable carcass utilisation options in 2022.

Fertility Control

- Delivery of the fertility control program is being planned for implementation this in 2022 at priority sites pending available resources.
- More detail on the kangaroo cull can be found at www.environment.act.gov.au.



QUESTION TIME BRIEF

Portfolio: Environment

BANNING AND REDUCTION OF PESTICIDES

Talking points:

- The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is the Australian government authority responsible for the assessment and registration of agricultural and veterinary (agvet) chemicals in Australia.
- A formal reconsideration process is initiated by the APVMA when new scientific information raises concerns relating to the safety or effectiveness of the agvet chemical.
- Glyphosate was subject to consideration in 2016 with the AVPMA concluding glyphosate can continue to be used safely in Australia according to label directions.
- In November 2019, the APVMA decided to commence a chemical reconsideration of neonicotinoid insecticides to reconsider approved active constituents, registrations of selected products containing neonicotinoids, and all associated label approvals on the basis of risks to the environment, including bees. This assessment is ongoing with the outcomes to inform any restrictions on use when completed.

Key Information

- The APVMA is the authority responsible for the assessment and registration of agricultural and veterinary (agvet) chemicals in Australia up to the point of retail sale. The states and territories are responsible for regulating the use of agvet chemicals in accordance with the APVMA registration.
- The APVMA uses a scientific, evidence-based approach and aligns its regulatory efforts with the risks associated with each active constituent or product. Risks are considered in terms of both the likelihood of exposure and the potential effects of exposure.
- The APVMA regulates agvet chemicals in line with responsibilities described in the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Act 1992* and the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994 up to and including the point of sale*.
- A formal reconsideration process is initiated by the APVMA when new scientific information raises concerns relating to the safety or effectiveness of the agvet chemical.
- The reconsideration process incorporates legislative, administrative and scientific elements that contribute to the final decision to affirm, vary, suspend or cancel an

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QUESTION TIME BRIEF

approval or registration. A reconsideration must be completed within a maximum timeframe of 57 months.

- The APVMA continues to monitor and assess new information and credible scientific reports as they become available.

AVPMA Assessments and Reconsiderations for:

Glyphosate (Roundup)

- Glyphosate is a broad-spectrum herbicide that works by inhibiting an enzyme found in plants; this enzyme is not found in humans. There are around 500 products containing glyphosate registered for use in Australia. Glyphosate has been registered for use in Australia for over 40 years.
- In 2016, following the 2015 International Agency for Research on Cancer assessment, the APVMA considered glyphosate and found no grounds to place it under formal reconsideration again.

Neonicotinoid insecticides

- There have been scientific studies published that suggest a link between the use of neonicotinoids and the declining health of honey bees in some regions.
- In November 2019, the APVMA decided to commence a chemical reconsideration of neonicotinoid insecticides to reconsider approved active constituents, registrations of selected products containing neonicotinoids, and all associated label approvals on the basis of risks to the environment.

Anticoagulant rodenticide products

- Products considered anticoagulant rodenticides have been prioritised for reconsideration by the APVMA on the basis of concerns for worker exposure, public health and environmental safety.
- The use of these products in domestic premises, animal production facilities and food production facilities is currently allowed.
- International jurisdictions (including the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the European Chemicals Agency) have taken action to limit access to these products by non-professional users, and to restrict the product formulations available and the situations in which these products may be used.
- The APVMA consulted with the states and territories and relevant holders regarding the registered particulars and conditions of use for anticoagulant rodenticide products. Consultation closed on 17 July 2020 with 3,391 submissions received. This assessment is ongoing with the outcomes to inform any restrictions on use when completed.

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Pindone

- Pindone is a first generation anticoagulant poison commonly used to manage rabbits in the ACT where alternative poisons (nominally 1080) are considered to pose too great a risk to domestic pets, particularly dogs.
- Pindone has been considered for some time to be a possible threatening process for native predatory species including the Little Eagle. To quantify the risk of using this compound, the ACT Government Environment Division is currently undertaking research in partnership with researchers at Edith Cowan University to assess the prevalence of secondary poisoning by Pindone and other anticoagulant compounds in a range of predatory wildlife species.
- To date, 83 liver samples collected opportunistically from deceased predatory animals across Australia have been tested for anticoagulant compounds. None of these samples have demonstrated evidence of exposure to Pindone. However, 80.7% of samples tested positive to second generation compounds including Brodifacoum, the common active compound in many over-the-counter rodent poisons used ubiquitously in both commercial and domestic settings across the country.
- In light of these findings, Pindone is still used by ACT Government to manage rabbits in the ACT in accordance with best practice approaches which minimise the risk of secondary poisoning of non-target species.
- Data from this study was submitted to the AVPMA to aid in the current review of anticoagulant rodenticide product usage in Australia.

Chlorpyrifos

- Chlorpyrifos is an insecticide used to control different kinds of pests, including ants, termites and mosquitos. Products containing chlorpyrifos are used in and around the home, in home gardens, in public spaces, and in agriculture.
- On 25 July 2019, the AVPMA suspended the labels of chlorpyrifos products for use in both domestic and home garden, and agricultural uses. On 25 September 2019, we cancelled the registration of chlorpyrifos in domestic and home garden products, and in certain public spaces such as parks and footpaths.
- On 24 July 2020, the AVPMA cancelled the remaining product registrations and label approvals of products for use in both home garden and agriculture after allowing 12 months for holders to vary their labels to remove domestic and home garden uses.

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QUESTION TIME BRIEF

Background Information

- The use of APVMA approved agvet chemicals is regulated in the ACT under the *Environment Protection Act 1997* (the EP Act) and Environment Protection Regulation 2005.
- Agvet chemicals must be used in accordance with Part 6 of the Environment Protection Regulation 2005 which specifies they must be used in accordance with their AVPMA approved label or off label permit. It is an offence to use a chemical which is not registered by the APVMA.
- The commercial use of agvet chemicals is a Class A activity under the *Environment Protection Act 1997* (the EP Act) and a person must not undertake his activity unless they hold an environmental authorisation issued by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Access Canberra.
- ACT Government's approach to pesticide regulation aligns with national best practice. Commercial operators (including government agencies) licensed by the EPA are required to hold nationally accredited competencies delivered by registered training organisations and it is a requirement for all users, both commercial and non-commercial, to use agvet chemicals in accordance with their conditions of registration which are set by the national regulator the APVMA.

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INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Invasive Species budget initiative 2021-2025

Recent budget allocations in line with the Parliamentary Agreement (17.4) has seen an additional \$2.9 million over the next 4 years being allocated to increase management of new and emerging invasive species within the ACT. These funds will employ 5 new invasive species staff as a dedicated Biosecurity rapid response team. They will enhance the capacity of the Biosecurity and Rural Service Unit, to coordinate, respond to and manage biosecurity threats. The new team will adopt a 'go-hard – go early' approach to biosecurity incursions, to stop today's new and emerging invaders becoming tomorrow's widespread invaders.

Invasive plants:

Talking points

- The 'go hard – go early' biosecurity approach utilises Citizen Science to report invasive plants. Everyone can be involved by signing up to Canberra Nature Map or the Atlas of Living Australia - iNaturalist.
- The rapid response approach to early invaders gives a rate of return on expenditure of 1:19. That is the cost savings from preventing early invaders becoming widespread.
- Sites of significance, such as wildflower sites, are vulnerable to invasive plant spread. A new 'bush regeneration' mapping layer has been developed that classifies reserves according to understorey condition (green – native dominant, yellow – native/exotic co-dominant, red – exotic dominant). This provides a framework for prioritisation by focusing attention on looking after the 'green' areas first, as these have a higher conservation value, and readily regenerate after removal of the invasive plants.
- Integrated control of invasive plants uses a range of control methods: biocontrol, prescribed burning, herbicide application, manual removal, grazing, slashing, mulching and revegetation. Combining methods leads to less herbicide use than would otherwise be the case.

Key Information

- 'Invasive plants' are introduced plants that threaten biodiversity. 'Weeds' are plants growing where they are not wanted.
- Most of the invasive plant control is undertaken by contractors supervised by Rangers and Invasive Species staff. Volunteers and staff also undertake control work.
- 5,442 hectares of control work has been completed this financial year (to date):
 - Top five widespread invasive plants controlled: St John's wort, African lovegrass, pine wildings, serrated tussock and nodding thistle

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- Top five new and emerging invasive plants controlled: fireweed, rose campion, sweet vernal grass, bridal creeper and Orgeon grape.

Background Information

- Full details of the control work can be viewed on the Operations Dashboard: <https://actgov.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/c6083d9db4f240c7a93f39dcb06244e2>
- 2020-25 Invasive Plants Control Plan (Implementation Plan): <https://actgov.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=cd59d70662c94c75a0492635f7925384#>
- 2020-21 Annual Report: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/90c4936a79e74a9fbe77cd877baadc50>

Invasive animals (ie. high risk 'pest animals'):

Rabbits

- Rabbits impact on natural and rural systems by causing a loss of vegetation cover which can result in unusable grazing land. They exacerbate erosion and weed colonisation and threaten the survival of native birds, small mammals and insects that rely on groundcover plants for food and shelter.
- Monitoring to understand population trends and to allow targeted management is regularly conducted across the conservation estate.
- Annual control programs to keep rabbit numbers at levels where impacts are minimised are conducted in Canberra Nature Park and Namadgi National Park.

Wild Dogs

- Namadgi National Park and adjacent areas of timbered land in the ACT and surrounding NSW support populations of wild dogs (dingoes and 'dingo like' dogs which are dingoes with a small proportion of domestic dog genes).
- Wild dogs, if unmanaged, can inflict significant stock losses on sheep graziers. The objective for management of wild dogs is to minimise the negative impacts on agricultural production (sheep graziers) in the ACT and nearby NSW.
- In addition to controlling wild dogs to protect livestock on ACT rural lands, the ACT Government is also signatory to three cooperative Wild Dog Management Plans with New South Wales authorities which are aimed at protecting livestock from wild dogs originating from Namadgi National Park. These efforts have resulted in no increase in the number of sheep killed in the ACT in recent years and minimal losses in the last seven years in the Shannon's Flat area in neighbouring NSW.
- Wild dog control programs have been largely unaffected and have continued to be conducted within COVID safe guidelines during the lockdown period.

Feral Horses

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- Feral horses pose a significant potential threat to the natural values of the Namadgi National Park. Of particular concern is the potential for damage to the sensitive sub-alpine wetlands of the Cotter River catchment in the ACT border region with NSW.
- Feral Horses are managed in accordance with the recently revised Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan (2020) which provides the basis for feral horse management in Namadgi National Park and has a zero tolerance policy towards feral horses in Namadgi National Park.
- Significant feral horse populations are present in neighbouring Kosciuszko National Park and regular monitoring is conducted by EPSDD to ensure early detection of new incursions.
- The ACT Government regularly contributes to the discussion on the management of feral horses right across the Australian Alps through its involvement on the Australian Alps Feral Horse working group and continues to communicate regularly with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service on feral horse management issues in northern Kosciuszko National Park.
- During a recent aerial control program targeting feral ungulates in the upper cotter catchment area of Namadgi national Park, one horse was shot.
- A small group of horses (approx. 10) originating from straying stock from NSW freehold land on the eastern border of Namadi have taken up residence in the park. A management response in accordance with the *Namadgi National Park Feral Horse management plan* to remove these animals from the park is underway, with one horse removed by ground shooting in this area to date.

Feral Pigs

- Feral pigs are widely distributed throughout the non-urban parks and reserves managed by the Parks and Conservation Service. Ground disturbance by pigs creates bare ground, contributing to erosion and weed invasion as well as causing loss of visual amenity for park visitors. Pigs have a varied diet including small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, bird's eggs, soil invertebrates and roots and tubers of native plants. On rural land they plough up pasture, kill lambs, damage fencing and are a potential vector for several serious endemic and exotic livestock diseases.
- The objectives for management of feral pigs are to maintain feral pig populations and resulting impacts on public land at current low levels and to assist the rural community and other land managers to manage impacts on primary production by encouraging coordinated pig control programs across land tenures.
- An aerial control program using cutting edge thermal camera technology to detect animals has recently been undertaken in Namadgi National Park during, resulted in the culling of 53 pigs.

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Foxes

- Foxes are ubiquitous in the ACT but effective management over large areas is constrained by restrictions in the use of 1080 poison. In special cases fox baiting is sometimes performed under tight restrictions to reduce predation of native species.
- EPSDD also provides 1080 baits to rural land holders under tight restrictions to aid in fox control during lambing season.

Deer

- Feral deer are an increasing environmental and agricultural threat in the ACT with populations of fallow, red and sambar deer across Namadgi and Canberra Nature Parks.
- Ground and aerial shooting programs are conducted in conservation reserves and at times cooperatively with neighbouring rural landholders.
- A multi year project focussed on the threat that Sambar deer pose to threatened subalpine Sphagnum bogs is underway in Namadgi national Park. A component of this program is trialling newly developed thermal camera technology to assist in detection of sambar deer at low densities. This technique is proving to be highly successful.

Indian Mynas

- Indian Mynas compete with native species for tree hollows and are a significant urban nuisance.
- No cost-effective, broad-scale control available. Trapping is labour intensive but can be effective at the small scale if effort is maintained. No control programs are conducted by the ACT Government.
- A community group, the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG), assist with trapping of mynas in back yards.
- A declaration under section 16 of the *Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005* has been made declaring the Indian Myna species as a pest animal. DI2021-133 was notified on the Legislation Register on 21 June 2021 signed by yourself as Minister for the Environment.

Background

- EPSDD manages the impact of invasive pest animals through the control of rabbits, feral horses, wild dogs, feral pigs, foxes and feral deer in cooperation with neighbouring land managers to minimise their negative impacts on conservation reserves and agricultural land in the ACT.
- Management of Invasive Pest Animals is guided by the ACT Pest Animal Management Strategy, which details a strategic approach aimed at a reduction of impacts caused by pest animals.

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THREATENED SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Overview:

- There are currently 53 ACT species and three ecological communities listed as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* and a further three species with Special Protection Status due to their listing under the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC). This means that all these species have been assessed as likely to become extinct in the foreseeable future. This includes a new species for the ACT, the Bathurst (Purple) Copper Butterfly (listed as Vulnerable), that was recently found in Namadgi National Park in 2021. There are 22 EPBC assessments of species relevant to the ACT underway. The Commonwealth Minister for the Environment made the decision to:
 - transfer the Koala (QLD/NSW/ACT population) from Vulnerable to Endangered under the EPBC Act (11 Feb 2022) because this population has been negatively impacted by both acute and chronic stressors, including ongoing habitat loss, the 2019-20 bushfires, climate-induced drought and temperature stress. A National Koala Recovery Plan is almost finalised.
 - transfer the Golden Sun Moth from Critically Endangered to Vulnerable under the EPBC Act (7 December 2021) due to an increased survey effort and improved understanding of the species distribution but still subject to habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation and other threats. A national recovery plan for this species is no longer required by the Commonwealth with direction provided in the recent [Commonwealth conservation advice](#).
 - retain the Hoary Sunray in the Endangered category (20 December 2021) due to significant declines in Victoria and Tasmania (while still locally common in the ACT and NSW) but not prepare a national recovery plan for the species as the [Commonwealth conservation advice](#) provides sufficient direction.

The ACT is encouraged to align these changes in category on the Threatened Native Species List under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* for these species and the ACT Scientific Committee will provide recommendations to that effect.

- Key threats facing these species and communities include the loss of mature native trees and habitat fragmentation caused by Canberra's urban expansion/intensification and land clearing; invasive plants and animals; disease; lack of river flows in dry times; water pollution; and increasingly, climate change.
- Threatened species and ecological communities are important for the roles they play in ecosystem processes and services, as well as for their intrinsic value and their contribution to our natural and cultural heritage.

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- EPSDD currently runs over 20 threatened species programs working in strong collaborative partnerships with a range of universities, zoos, botanic gardens, state and federal government agencies, and community conservation organisations.
- The development of an ACT Government Threatened Species strategy is in early stages of planning, to identify ACT Government priorities for threatened species management and research over coming years.

Postfire Recovery Actions for Threatened Species

- The Orroral Valley bushfire severely impacted a range of species and communities. A suite of ecological recovery actions and research programs to benefit impacted species and communities and to inform future bushfire recovery are underway. A [story-map](#) update on these projects is available online.
- The EPBC listing status of several ACT species is currently being re-assessed. This includes some grassland-dependant species, species affected by the 2019-2020 bushfires in eastern Australia and some migratory and woodland birds.
- The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) is leading the National coordination of the Gang-gang Cockatoo recovery having secured \$125,000 from the Australian Government to provide this work.
- EPSDD successfully secured \$572,000 from the Australian Government for additional recovery actions for Gang-gang Cockatoos (\$247,000), Southern Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies (\$175,000) and Greater and Yellow-bellied Gliders in the ACT (\$150,000). Projects will be delivered in collaboration with community groups, conservation organisations and research partners.
- EPSDD in collaboration with NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (NSW DPIE) and the University of Canberra (UC), are currently undertaking research into the bushfire impacts, genetic diversity and post-fire recolonisation of burnt areas by the threatened Broad-toothed Rat.
- Recent research has found a major range reduction of the Alpine Spiny Crayfish to a small area within and adjacent to the ACT. This dramatically increases the conservation significance of this species in the ACT. Investigations by the Conservation, Research and Evaluation branch (CRE) have determined the range of both species of Montane spiny crayfish in the ACT and documented major reductions in populations in bog and creek habitats following the Orroral Valley Fire.

Captive breeding of Threatened Species and Reintroductions

- The breeding of genetically more robust southern Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies is progressing according to plan. The animals produced are destined for the Jedbinbilla safe haven, a 120ha predator-proof enclosure at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (TNR) that will provide insurance for this critically endangered population and a source of animals for reintroductions. The Jedbinbilla safe haven fence incurred extensive damage due to an extreme rainfall event in March 2021. The Commonwealth Bushfire Recovery program for priority species and ACT Government is funding the

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repairs and future-proofing the fence. The fence and associated earthworks are expected to be completed by August 2022.

- In late 2020, 540 Northern Corroboree Frog from the captive breeding program at TNR were released at a new, carefully chosen trial release site in Namadgi National Park, in a collaboration with the Australian National University (ANU). Monitoring a few months after release indicated that frogs are persisting. A further 309 frogs were released in late 2021 with follow-up monitoring beginning late February 2022.
- Novel methods of releasing Northern Corroboree Frogs are being trialled that may facilitate future releases of this critically endangered species.
- A breeding colony of Canberra Grassland Earless Dragons was established at TNR during May 2021. The first breeding season was successful with 30 baby dragons hatching. The total number in the colony at TNR has increased to 56 dragons.
- EPSDD in collaboration with NSW DPIE and UC, have successfully established a captive breeding colony of the endangered Smoky Mouse at UC. Individuals bred at the colony will be used to trial soft release methods for the species at TNR.
- Seeds from threatened orchids are being “banked” in an ongoing collaboration with the Australian National Botanic Garden, and planning for translocation of the Canberra Spider Orchid is underway.
- A collaborative project is underway to analyse the genetics of the few remaining individuals of the endemic Tuggeranong Lignum, to inform future in situ and ex situ population management and enhancement.
- A number of threatened species have been successfully reintroduced into Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary. Please see the Mulligans Flat Sanctuary brief for details.

Threatened Species Habitat Restoration

- EPSDD has restored five hectares of Pink-tailed Worm-lizard habitat across the Molonglo Valley and restoration of a further two hectares is underway. Works have included the placement of approximately one million habitat rocks and extensive native grass and wildflower plantings.
- EPSDD has commenced experimental habitat restoration at Jarramlee for the Golden Sun Moth. During the 2020 monitoring season presence of the species was confirmed at two new offset sites.

Threatened Species monitoring and research

- Assessment of Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon populations was undertaken in 2020-2021, as part of a long-term monitoring program run by CRE and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. Capture rates of wild animals have declined substantially in recent years, with drought and urbanisation likely contributors to the decline.
- EPSDD undertakes annual monitoring of Striped Legless Lizard population and distribution. One of our newest reserves, Budjan Galindji, has recorded the highest population density in the ACT for three consecutive years of monitoring.

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- Little Eagles have been monitored in the ACT and nearby NSW since 2016 by EPSDD in collaboration with CSIRO, ANU and Ginninderry. Sixteen birds have had backpack GPS transmitters attached, and breeding pairs are monitored annually. We have discovered these birds travel great distances interstate during their winter migration.
- Research into the Superb Parrot is underway, including monitoring breeding at two known colonies, containing 43 nest trees and 60 nesting hollows. GPS trackers have been attached to four birds and genetic analysis of populations has commenced.
- EPSDD undertakes annual monitoring of threatened Two-spined Blackfish and Macquarie Perch in conjunction with Icon Water and UC. These monitoring programs have additional importance following impacts from the Orroral Valley fire.
- Monitoring of ACT Government fish habitat improvements in the Murrumbidgee River found the new habitats are supporting Murray Cod adults and juveniles.
- For ACT flora, EPSDD conduct annual monitoring of threatened species populations. Monitored species include the Small Purple Pea, Ginninderra Peppercross, Hoary Sunray, Tarengo Leek Orchid, Button Wrinklewort and Tuggeranong Lignum.

Community engagement

- The ACT Government is a key partner in the innovative citizen science platform Canberra Nature Map. Over the last year alone, over 700 new rare and threatened flora and fauna records were added to the platform. The ACT Government's ACTMAPi online spatial platform makes data on threatened species and communities from a range of sources available to inform conservation and planning stakeholders both within and beyond government. These two resources provide critical data to inform land management, planning, and conservation.

Portfolio/s: Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction
Environment

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT GROUPS AND VOLUNTEERING

Talking points:

- The ACT Government strongly supports the Catchment Groups and our community volunteers and is delivering on its commitment to volunteering made in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement.
- The ACT Government oversees a range of volunteer programs including ParkCare and Waterwatch, that support successful environmental initiatives through significant community effort.
- Volunteers provide in excess of 50,000 volunteer hours a year to assist with the implementation of key environment and conservation objectives.
- The Ginninderra Catchment Group, Southern ACT Catchment Group, and the Molonglo Conservation Group are peak community groups that play a key role in volunteer coordination and provide critical services to the ACT.
- The Catchment Groups will be receiving significant funding for the 21-22 financial year:
 - \$395,000 for community engagement in relation to:
 - Strong community stewardship of urban waterways
 - Measurable improvement in community ‘stormwater literacy’
 - Reducing stormwater pollution, especially nutrient pollution, coming from suburbs
 - A more resilient and nature-connected community
 - Ecological and social fire recovery.
 - \$270,000 for coordination of community Waterwatch volunteers.
 - \$87,000 for coordination of community Frogwatch volunteers.
 - \$220,000 in successful 2021-22 ACT Environment Grants.
- In the 2019-20 midyear budget review and the 2021-22 budget, the ACT Government provided additional ongoing support to community volunteers through increased funding for the ParkCare Ranger Program.
- In the 2021-22 budget, the ACT Government provided:
 - \$103,000 to ACT Wildlife to support the rescue and care of injured wildlife;
 - A \$115,000 increase in the ACT Environment Grant funding to bring the total grant funding to \$315,000; and
 - An additional ParkCare Officer position to support community volunteers.

- The Waterwatch program is a successful citizen science program which has significant community support and provides vital water quality monitoring information. It was funded for \$539,000 per annum, of which a large portion of the funding goes directly to the Catchment Groups for volunteer coordination.

Background Information

- In the lead up to the 2020 ACT Election, election commitments were made to fund a number of initiatives undertaken by the three Catchment Groups. This included base funding to the three groups, Waterwatch and Frogwatch funding, increases to the ACT Environment Grant funding pool and increased support to ParkCare.
- The Parliamentary and Governing Agreement offers an increase in funding for local environmental volunteer-based organisations of \$3.2 million over 4-years at item 17.5, however, it does not provide the details of which organisations will be funded.
- EPSDD is currently developing a new environment volunteering policy and supporting IT system that will significantly assist in managing and supporting environmental volunteers.

Portfolios: Planning & Land Management

Environment

MULLIGANS FLAT CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES AND LEARNING CENTRE

Talking points:

- The Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary sits within the largest tract of critically endangered Box-Gum Grassy Woodland in public management within the ACT.
- In 2009, a 11.4 kilometre predator-proof fence enclosing 484 hectares of Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve was completed. In 2019, another 11.4 kilometres of predator proof fence was erected enclosing an additional 794 hectares within the Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve. The total area of the Sanctuary is 1,278 hectares.
- Significant work has been undertaken to remove foxes, feral cats, rabbits and hares within the Sanctuary. Foxes and cats were eradicated from the original Sanctuary in 2010 and feral animal control in the new Sanctuary is nearing completion.
- The fence, along with the feral animal control, has allowed the reintroduction of locally extinct native animals – Eastern Bettong, Eastern Quoll, Bush Stone-curlew, and New Holland Mouse – which are vulnerable to predation by foxes and cats. These reintroductions are informed by research undertaken by the Australian National University (ANU).
- The trial introduction of Spotted-tail Quolls into the Sanctuary was undertaken during summer 2022. The introduction of this apex predator is an important step in recreating the foodweb and will allow us to test how these predators behave.
- The partnership is constructing a Woodland Learning Centre in Throsby (WildBark) that is due to open late April 2022. This facility will be a hub for environmental and cultural education, research, innovation, and community wellbeing.
- The Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary is a partnership between the ACT Government, the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust and the ANU. The public comment period on the Mulligans Flat draft strategy has closed and feedback is being considered by the partners before the strategy is finalised.

Key Information

Research and projects

- There is a new research agreement under development between the ACT Government and the ANU to facilitate further research in the Sanctuary.
- Eastern Bettongs, Eastern Quolls, Spotted-tailed Quolls, Bush-stone Curlews, and New Holland Mice have been reintroduced to the Sanctuary. A number of other species have been identified for reintroduction; however, no timeframes have been put on any future releases.

Learning centre – “Wildbark”

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Lead Directorate:	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	

- The construction progress for the Woodland Learning Centre, named “Wildbark” in Throsby has been impacted by COVID-19 and wet weather. The estimated completion timeframe is now April 2022.

Rabbits and foxes in Mulligans Flat and Gorooyaroo

- Rabbits were eradicated from the original Sanctuary in 2016 and from the extended Sanctuary in 2020.
- Rangers are in the final fox eradication phase within the extended sanctuary in Gorooyaroo Nature Reserve. The final few foxes have proven extremely difficult to remove, and prolific grass growth and bountiful prey availability has made the traditional removal methods ineffective. Staff are currently exploring the use of drone technology in a final attempt to remove foxes and if this is unsuccessful, control works may need to be paused.

Kangaroo management program

- Kangaroo populations are controlled in Mulligans Flat and Gorooyaroo Nature Reserves to relieve grazing pressure on the critically endangered Box-Gum Grassy Woodland. The number of kangaroos culled for conservation purposes in each location is assessed annually by EPSDD Conservation Research and Evaluation branch ecologists on a location-by-location basis using a series of scientific assessments.

Portfolio/s: Environment

Planning and Land Management

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON CORE ENVIRONMENTAL WORK

Talking points:

- Parks and reserves outside of the urban area such as Namadgi National Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the Cotter Precinct had been closed to support health directives that restrict travel to within regions and limit the time permitted for outdoor recreation.
- All parks re-opened to the public on 1 October 2021 and the Tidbinbilla and Namadgi National Park Visitor Centres also reopened in 17 November 2021.
- In September 2021, high priority fire mitigation activities recommenced in preparation for the 2021-22 fire season. High priority invasive plant and vertebrate pest tasks have also recommenced.
- All community based ParkCare activities have recommenced with volunteers working to a COVID Safe Plan.

Key Information

- While most components of our invasive plant, vertebrate pest and species recovery programs have recommenced, there will be a reduction in on-ground delivery, attributable to the lost time during lockdown.
- The exact detail of this reduction in program delivery will not be known for some months, noting that some programs will require a lead in time before they can once again commence.
- The Bushfire Operations Program (BOP) continues to be a challenge not only due to time lost to lockdowns, but more recently due to persistent wet weather. It is now doubtful that the full BOP will be able to be delivered, with the exact nature of the shortfall yet to be determined.
- A large component of the threatened species monitoring program is undertaken in spring each year. The health restrictions at the time have seen this program reviewed with only high priority monitoring completed. This will result in some commitments, such as those associated with environmental offsets, being delayed until next year.
- A detailed COVID Safety Plan has been developed to guide all operational activities.

Background Information

- When parks and reserves were reopened following the lockdown in 2020, the public responded with high levels of visitation to parks and reserves. This was the case again this year, with very high visitation reported at Tidbinbilla and Namadgi National Park. Carparks were full, although there were no major incidents.

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Portfolio/s: Environment
Planning and Land Management

PFAS IN THE ACT

Minister for Emergency Services may take the question if asked as it is a cross-portfolio matter

PFAS Remediation at Charnwood

Please see separate QTB on PFAS remediation at Charnwood.

PFAS at the Forrest Fire Museum and Residence and Telopea High School

Talking points:

- In 2020, the ACT Government appointed environmental consultants, GHD, to assess current and former Fire and Rescue Station sites that may be impacted by PFAS. The Forrest Fire Museum and Residence at 14 Empire Circuit was included in this proactive testing program as the site was used as a fire station until 1984.
- The investigation at the Forrest site found that there is a low risk to visitors, workers and people undertaking maintenance at the Forrest Fire Museum and Residence from PFAS in the soil. The results suggest low volumes of firefighting foam were used across the site with no single source area identified.
- GHD recommended that further studies be done to determine the extent of PFAS impacts on areas that may have been subject to run-off from the site or movement through the underlying aquifer, including the Telopea Park School overflow playing field.
- Given current investigations, the health risk to children, school students and others who use or access the playground is considered low.
- A sign at the museum advises visitors about PFAS on the site.
- In May 2021, the Chair of the Barton and Kingston Residents Association was informed about the investigations and plan for further testing.
- The school community was advised in May, about the investigations and plans for further testing through the school newsletter. A fact sheet is available for parents.

Other current and former Fire and Rescue stations

Talking points:

- The ESA has undertaken testing for PFAS contamination at other current and former ACT Fire and Rescue stations.
- Preliminary testing identified contamination in the soil and/or groundwater at all eight sites that exceeds either or both human health and ecological levels.
- Temporary management measures such as fencing and signage have been put in

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place at these sites to protect staff and the community.

- Major Projects Canberra has engaged a qualified and experienced environmental consultant (GHD Pty Ltd) on behalf of JACS to facilitate further Human Health and Ecological risk assessments at the ESA and identified adjacent sites.
- These assessments are scheduled to be completed by 31 December 2022 with advice to be issued to affected adjacent land custodians by March 2022.
- Although the EPA have not issued any formal directions at this stage, JACS are proactively facilitating further assessments in advance of possible future EPA orders and to provide assurance to ACT Fire and Rescue and affected stakeholders.

Emergency Services Agency (ESA) — worker’s compensation claim

Talking points:

- ESA can confirm that the Government insurer, EML, have reviewed a workers compensation claim relating to a claim by an ACT firefighter for a cancer related illness.
- In that case, the insurer has accepted that the disease in question was substantially contributed to by their work and assessed the claim under presumptive legislation in the Safety and Rehabilitation Compensation Act.
- In coming to that decision, the insurer took into account:
 - the firefighter’s length of service; and
 - the accepted view that firefighting duties involve exposure to a range of harmful chemicals and conditions which increase the risk of several types of cancer and that these risks increase with the length of service.
- ESA will not be commenting on the case due to medical privacy issues.

Emergency Services Agency—Vehicles:

Talking points:

- ESA has tested all frontline ACT Fire & Rescue fire trucks for PFAS contamination levels. The tests have returned a negative result on all vehicles and have classified the vehicles to drinking water standards.
- The Firefighters Union has been consulted and agree this is a good outcome for firefighters.

Background Information

- Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are manufactured chemicals used in products that resist heat, oil, stains and water. PFAS was a commonly used substance in firefighting foam in NSW and the ACT. This foam is understood to have been used for training purposes at ACTFR sites.

Portfolios: Police and Emergency Services

Education and Youth Affairs

Environment

Planning and Land

Management

PFAS REMEDIATION AT CHARNWOOD

Talking points:

- The St Thomas Aquinas school community and people walking past the school oval right now will see there is construction work being undertaken at the moment.
- This remediation work being carried out by the Catholic Education Office will see remediation of the school oval as part of upgrades at the same time which includes a new early learning centre (ELC) and upgrades to the playing fields.
- The ACT Government is providing a contribution for the remediation component of the upgrade works currently underway.
- Remediation works will involve taking out potentially contaminated soil from the ELC construction site. The fields will be 'capped' with a geotextile fabric, 300mm of soil and turf, and additionally a geosynthetic clay liner layer in an area with higher PFAS concentrations in soil. This will prevent potentially contaminated soil being accessible to the school community and the public. This work would form the basis of the school's upgrade to the playgrounds.
- Remediation works are well underway and are scheduled to be completed by March 2022.
- The proposed upgrades on the affected sites have been incorporated into the independently audited and endorsed Remediation Action Plan, by the Environment Protection Approved auditor - Ramboll Pty Ltd. This RAP was finalised and endorsed in November 2021.
- I am pleased that the work is proceeding, perhaps it took a little longer than the school community would have liked, however the development of an appropriate remediation plan for the site, and having it audited and endorsed, was a necessary step to ensure an effective outcome for the school community.
- The school community has been kept updated through the school newsletter, fact sheets and an information session for parents.
- The ACT Government and GHD will continue to keep the community informed about the contamination and steps to further protect the community.

Background to the Charnwood site

- On 2 December 2019, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) issued an order to investigate PFAS soil and water contamination at the former ACT Fire and Rescue (ACTFR) West Belconnen (Charnwood) fire station. The investigation was to determine the offsite environmental impacts of the adjacent sites.
- Environmental consultant GHD conducted testing and found that three sites in Charnwood have higher levels of PFAS than recommended and people at or working on these sites may be exposed to elevated PFAS concentrations if they eat or drink contaminated soil or water. Elevated concentrations were found:
 - in soil, surface water and groundwater on and adjacent to the St Thomas Aquinas Primary School oval
 - in soil at the Ginninderra Christian Church
 - in the drainage channel south of the church which ultimately drains to Ginninderra Creek.
- These findings triggered a Human Health Risk Assessment, which was tailored to the people who use the contaminated area. This assessment found the presence of PFAS in the soil represents a low risk to the people attending the school, church and childcare centre and the levels of PFAS exposure were well below the safe doses published by Australian regulatory agencies.
- An interim management plan is in place while an approved Remedial Action Plan (RAP) is being implemented under the supervision of the consultant (GHD Pty Ltd) engaged by Major Projects Canberra on behalf of JACS to ensure ongoing EPA compliance.
- At present, the former Charnwood fire station site is privately owned and operated by the Ducklings Early Education Childcare Centre. There are already long-term management measures in place for the Ducklings Early Education childcare centre. GHD's report recommends no change to the centre.

Background Information on PFAS

- Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are manufactured chemicals used in products that resist heat, oil, stains and water. PFAS was a commonly used substance in firefighting foam in NSW and the ACT. This foam is understood to have been used for training purposes at ACTFR sites.

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Portfolio/s: Planning and Land Management
Environment

PARKCARE

Talking points:

- As of 10 February 2022, ParkCare has 1,736 registered volunteers, from a diverse range of demographics.
- Despite the challenges due to COVID, more than 24,000 hours were still logged by our ParkCare volunteers in 2020/21 at an estimated contribution of \$1,034,280 worth of value to the ACT environment.
- ParkCare is comprised of 4 streams each supporting the work of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) in a range of ways, including:
 - ParkCare Patch – where volunteers take stewardship of a ‘Patch’ of land and work in line with Rangers to conduct weeding, planting and other land management projects
 - RangerAssist – where volunteers work with a Ranger across the PCS Estate to undertake important land management works
 - VisitorAssist – where volunteers engage with the public at Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, in the role of guides or interpreters demonstrating the value and importance of the park spaces
 - WildlifeAssist – where volunteers support the Threatened Species team to care for native wildlife, through projects including food preparation.
- The ACT Government provided further ongoing support to the ParkCare volunteering program by funding a new position to coordinate the growing RangerAssist stream, and announced, in the 2021-22 Budget, funding for an additional ParkCare Patch Ranger for Canberra Nature Park North. Recruitment for this position will be commenced in the first quarter of 2022. This will allow for the ParkCare volunteering program to grow and extend support to the ACT environment.

Key Information

- Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) is updating the environment volunteering policy, and this will encompass all volunteering groups inclusive of the Catchment Groups, WaterWatch, and ParkCare.
- ParkCare volunteers work alongside staff from PCS to protect, enhance and promote ACT parks and reserves.
- All volunteering activities associated with EPSDD were paused during COVID-19 lockdown periods, and volunteers were able to return to volunteering once restrictions allowed.

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Lead Directorate:	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	

- From 15 October 2021, ParkCare Patch and RangerAssist volunteering recommenced consistent with revised health directions and a COVID-safe plan.
- VisitorAssist and WildlifeAssist volunteering recommenced from 1 November 2021.
- ParkCare volunteer involvement and risk management has, and continues to be, consistently revised in line with updated health directions from both federal and territory government.

Background Information

- The ParkCare initiative has been a flagship community volunteer program hosted by PCS since 1989. In that time nature reserves have been transformed as weeds have been removed and native vegetation allowed to recover, and the community has been further engaged in the work of PCS.
- ParkCare Volunteers provide in excess of 29,000 hours per annum (in a standard year) to assist with the development and implementation of key environment, educational, and conservation objectives, and are vital to the work of PCS.
- The ParkCare program has undergone a variety of changes and improvements in the past few years, including:
 - Implementation of a digital platform to manage communications, opportunities for volunteering, registration, records management, and data collection/reporting.
 - Introduction of new volunteer stream and opportunities, such as RangerAssist.
 - Addition and recruitment of an ongoing full-time position to support and develop ParkCare volunteering.
- ParkCare celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2019 and is a critical asset in contributing to the management of the PCS estate.

Portfolio/s: Environment

Planning and Land Management

ENVIRONMENTAL OFFSETS MONITORING REPORTS

Talking points:

- The ACT Government is committed to the collection of ecological information for monitoring and reporting requirements for species and ecological communities that are Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). This is a requirement under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- In December 2021, the ACT Government published two Environmental Offsets Monitoring Reports covering the 2018-19 and the 2019-20 monitoring seasons across a number of sites managed or monitored by the ACT Government. Publication of these reports supports compliance requirements under the EPBC Act.
 - These reports were published together at a delayed date due to the extensive nature of the offsets monitoring and data evaluation program and resourcing issues from the beginning of COVID-19 in 2020.
- Further monitoring reports will be completed as required to support meeting compliance requirements under the EPBC Act and guide decisions under the Environmental Offsets Adaptive Management Strategy. The report will be published once data has been suitably analysed in relation to meeting commitments and conservation targets.
- The monitoring reports detail declines in ecological conditions and populations for some MNES at some sites, primarily attributed to the impacts of weather and extended dry conditions:
 - Reduction in grass height and below average rainfall during the 2018 and 2019 monitoring years are the likely reasons for the recorded declines in MNES at some sites in 2018 to 2020.
 - Declines in grass height have been attributed to the prolonged drought conditions combined with high numbers of herbivores, including stock and kangaroos, on these sites.
- Results from 2018-19 and 2019-20 for MNES were positive in a number of other areas, for example:
 - All EPBC grassland sites recorded values above Commonwealth requirements for EPBC listing, with some suggestion that EPBC grassland extent has expanded since previous mapping occurred.
 - Golden Sun Moth were recorded in increased numbers across many sites.
 - Declines in grass height also enabled improved effectiveness of weed management across the estate.

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Lead Directorate:	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	

- Offset sites are being managed by strategic grazing from stock and kangaroos, woodland enhancement, relocations or breeding of significant species, and intensive invasive plant management programs.
- Preliminary results from data collected in the 2020-2021 monitoring seasons indicate some improvements in some areas, likely due to the increase in rainfall and associated increase in grass heights, as well as changes in management to some sites.
 - Preliminary data from Spring 2020 shows improvement in vegetation condition at grassland and woodland sites across Canberra, bringing condition of plant community types to ideal conditions and above. This increase includes a need for increased management of weed incursions across the estate.
 - Following favourable Spring conditions and increases in grassland vegetation conditions in 2020, preliminary data indicates an increase in the number of striped legless lizard recorded across most monitoring sites.

Key Information

- Significant MNES that are protected and monitored across the offset estate include: Striped Legless Lizard, Grassland Earless Dragon, Golden Sun Moth, Superb Parrot, Scarlet Robin, Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, Ginninderra Peppercross, Button Wrinklewort, Perunga Grasshopper, and the Box-gum Grassy Woodland and Natural Temperate Grassland ecological communities.

Background Information

- The ACT Government has made commitments to the Australian Government under the EPBC Act to establish and manage environmental offset areas associated with land development approvals. These land development approvals sit with the ACT Government as primary proponent.
- The approval conditions under the EPBC Act commit the ACT Government to the protection and ongoing management of MNES.
- Monitoring across current and proposed offset sites will continue in line with the Offsets Monitoring and Research Plan (an internal document), which supports the ACT Government in achieving its offset commitment. Monitoring informs adaptive management practices which allows offset management to be altered to achieve improved results over time.
- The ACT Parks and Conservation Service officially manages 23 Environmental Offset areas with commitments to protect these areas in perpetuity. At least 16 offset areas are currently zoned as Nature Reserves giving them full protection in perpetuity.
- The ACT Government provides ongoing funding for actions across all current offset sites, including approximately \$590,000 to the annual monitoring program (this amount excludes funding for the Molonglo Strategic Assessment).

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Lead Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

- In the 2021-22 budget, \$6.2 million was allocated to supporting new and ongoing offset projects.

Portfolio/s: Environment
Planning and Land Management

CONSERVATOR OF FLORA AND FAUNA

Talking points:

- The Conservator of Flora and Fauna provides advice, guidance and conditional support on issues that affect conservation matters.
- Input from relevant stakeholders (e.g. land custodians), agencies and experts within Government contribute to the decision making process.
- Feedback and conditions to minimise and mitigate impacts commonly include restrictions on maximum work footprint, storage areas and access; weed hygiene measures and rehabilitation to be undertaken; and restrictions on the the number and/or size of trees permitted to be felled.

Key Information

Action plans

- Action plans are being progressed for:
 - the Loss of Mature Trees—a key threatening process
 - the High Country Bogs and Fens—an ecological community
 - Grey-headed Flying-Fox.
- A plan is required for:
 - Unnatural Fragmentation of Habitats—a key threatening process.

Statutory planning obligations

- In 2020-21 The Conservator was consulted on:
 - five draft variations to the Territory Plan (s. 61)
 - four scoping requests
 - seven EIS referrals
 - two EIS exemption referrals.
- The Conservator made recommendations on four leases (s. 337) and seven licences affecting public land (s. 303).
- The Conservator also provided 29 environmental significance opinions (s. 138AD) that proposed development was unlikely to have a significant adverse environmental impact, allowing the proposals to be assessed in the merit track under the *Planning and Development Act 2007*.

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Lead Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

Licensing

- 1919 licences relating to plants, animals and fish were issued under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* during 2020-21.

Tree register

- During 2020-21, 18 tree registration nominations were received of which 10 were included in the Provisional Register. One registration was cancelled as the tree had a major failure; it is located in open space and remains in situ.

Tree protection

- During 2020-21, 2570 applications to undertake tree-damaging activities were received.
- Two decisions were changed following ACAT review. Both cases were settled during mediation. An additional case was withdrawn by the applicant.

Investigations

- Three investigations were conducted in relation to dogs in reserves, resulting in three infringement notices being issued and one formal warning.
- Five non-exempt animals (native pythons) were seized, of which two were returned and three were rehomed to a suitably licenced carer/keeper.
- Two investigations were conducted in relation to vehicles being operated in restricted areas within our reserves, resulting in two infringement notices being issued.

Background Information

- The position of Conservator of Flora and Fauna is a statutory position established by the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (NC Act) with additional responsibilities under the *Planning and Development Act 2007* (P&D Act), *the Fisheries Act 2000* and the *Tree Protection Act 2005* (Tree Act).
- The Conservator acts on issues that affect conservation matters embodied in the NC Act, in particular to protect native plants and animals. The position includes:
 - managing the nature reserve system
 - protecting and conserving threatened species and ecological communities
 - the administration of a licensing system for the taking, keeping, selling, importing, exporting, disturbing, displaying and killing of native plants and animals.
- The Conservator has statutory obligations under the P&D Act to comment on, among other things, Territory Plan variations, environmental impact statements and development applications.

- Under the Tree Act, the Conservator is the decision maker for the registration of trees of exceptional value, and on applications to undertake tree-damaging activities.

Rural Services including Landcare

Talking points:

- EPSDD's Resilient Landscapes teams (Biosecurity and Rural Services (BRS) and ACT NRM) support the ACT's 160 rural landholders to:
 - become more resilient and sustainable in the face of extreme climate events and climate change impacts and recovery from these events;
 - link to training and information on best practice farming, including regenerative methods, emerging market mechanisms and new technologies;
 - protect and enhance environmental assets on rural lands;
 - meet regulatory responsibilities including Land Management Agreements; and
 - maintain and manage viable economic and environmentally sustainable enterprises.
- This support, funded by the ACT and Australian governments was provided in many forms including grants and rebates, on-ground works, training (including field days and forums), communications, trials and demonstrations and more.
- The Directorate undertakes extensive liaison with individual farmers, members of the ACT Rural Landholders Association, Landcare ACT and the catchment groups.

Achievements in 2020-2021

- ACT Government-funded 2020-2021 ACT Rural Resilience Grants, 25 ACT rural landholders received grants of up to \$10,000 each, totalling \$200,000, to manage weeds and pest animals on ACT rural lands.
- National Landcare Program (NLP)-funded Protecting and Connecting endangered Woodlands, ACT NRM, achieved 62 hectares of revegetation of rural lands and fencing and weed control to protect and enhance box gum woodlands; conducted the very successful Landcare for Singles tree planting event on 15 May 2021 whereby 70 volunteers planted over 10 hectares of Box Gum Woodland species on an ACT farm.
- NLP-funded Better Land Management Project (\$330,000), ACT NRM established liming trials on 10 ACT farms, in partnership with NSW Department of Primary Industries to address induced soil acidity; inc a liming field day on 10 May 2021 to share project outcomes.
- NLP-funded Resilient Farming under a changing climate project (\$150,000), ACT NRM:
 - delivered a 1-day climate adaptation, drought management and carbon farming forum on 13 November 2020 attended by 97 landholders and Landcarers.
 - Co-sponsored the Food in the Capital Conference 18/19 May 2021
 - Co-delivered with the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Network and Soils For Life the "Production and Biodiversity: Landscape, Community and Resilience" forum and field day on Wednesday June 16 2021.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 21/02/2022

Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager

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Lead Directorate:

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

- Delivered the webinar "Demystifying Environmental Markets" on 29 June 2021.
- Embedded a Biosecurity/Rural Services (BRS) staff member into the Emergency Communication Centre (ECC) during the Ororral Valley bushfire to ensure there was a liaison/communication for Rural Landholders.
- Instigated and delivered multiple educational presentations to ESA, RFS and SES regarding vehicle hygiene to minimise invasive plant distribution during bushfires and other emergencies.
- Completion of repair/replacement of fire damaged boundary fence between Namadgi National Park and rural leases as a result of the Ororral Valley bushfire. Approx. 46 kilometres of boundary fence repaired/replaced; Approx. 47 kilometres of access trails repaired/rehabilitated. Total project cost approx. \$1 million.
- Provided \$18,638 of fodder relief for 10 fire effected landholders
- Provided \$18,000 for invasive plant management for containment lines constructed across six separate properties during fire suppression activities.
- Employed eight new temporary staff under the Jobs For Canberrans initiative during Covid shutdowns assisting with invasive plant management and fencing repair work and engaged 15 contractors on fencing and general civil works. This project also sourced materials and equipment from 20+ local suppliers.
- Completed 30 Land Management Agreements with ACT Landholders

Background Information

- The Territory is currently home to 159 farming families covering 183 rural leases across 40,000 hectares (15 percent) of the ACT, with approximately 25,000 hectares considered arable. Land tenure in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is exclusively leasehold.
- Agricultural land use in the ACT is predominantly used for grazing of livestock, with a small area used for egg and chicken production, and horticulture. The gross value of agricultural production in the ACT was \$34 million in 2019.
- The major primary production industries are beef cattle (over 5,500 beef cattle contribute \$2.4 million per annum through livestock sales) and sheep and wool production (approximately 38,000 sheep produce wool worth \$1.2 million and sheep sales of just under \$1 million per annum). Other agricultural enterprises include egg and chicken production; horse agistment and equestrian enterprises; alpacas and llamas; fruit orchards and vegetable market gardens; nurseries; hay and grain cropping, primarily for on-farm use; wine; and truffles.
- The ACT Government, led by EPSDD is developing a new Capital Food and Fibre Strategy to guide the future planning and management of our region's agriculture production so that it will be innovative, sustainable and enables biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. The Strategy will also incorporate the ACT Regional Drought Resilience Plan, which will build the drought and climate change resilience of the ACT farm sector by identifying and encouraging practices that best fit the region's conditions. The Directorate is currently consulting with key stakeholders, including the ACT Rural Landholders' Association, as well as the broader ACT community. The Strategy is due to be finalised by the end of 2022.

2020-2021 ACT Environment Grants

Talking points:

- The 2020-2021 Grants round has an initial total value of \$285,000:
 - a. \$185,000 available for the traditional Environment Grant stream to increase community engagement in line with the ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-2023; and
 - b. \$100,000 additional funding for the Nature in the City Grant stream, to enhance ecosystem health and function within the urban built environment to support the Government's long-term objectives of a sustainable and resilient city.
- The Grants round opened for application in mid-March 2020 and closed in mid-May 2020.
- A total of 32 applications were received totalling \$661,439.
- Applications were evaluated by an expert assessment panel.
- 15 recipients were awarded grants across the two streams:
 - a. ACT Environment Grants funded nine recipients to a value of \$202,884.
 - b. Nature in the City Grants to funded six recipients to a value of \$100,702.
- The COVID-19 health emergency heavily effected the 2020-2021 ACT Environment Grants round.

Key Information

- The 2020 COVID-19 health emergency affected the application process for the 2020-2021 ACT Environment Grants due to the restrictions that were placed on the ACT during this period. These restrictions impacted community groups' ability to work together on applications for the funding round.
- As a result of this the application period was extended by a month. EPSDD provided project extensions to applicants when requested due to exceptional circumstances.
- Funding priorities for the Environment Grants were:
 - a. Enhance condition and connectivity of woodlands, grasslands and/or aquatic ecosystems;
 - b. Help manage threats to biodiversity, such as managing weeds and/or pest animals;
 - c. Protect native plants and animals;
 - d. Enhance biodiversity in urban areas;
 - e. Engage the community in on-ground environmental work;

- f. Connect people to nature through innovative approaches; and
- g. Improve opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through 'Connecting to Country'.
- Funding priorities for the Nature and the City Grants are:
 - a. reducing urban heat and increasing access to shade;
 - b. retaining and or reusing rainwater including improving water penetration for vegetation growth and recharge of ground water; and
 - c. maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services in the city's landscape.
- The Environment Grants are funded from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) Funding Community Environmental Volunteers Initiative and delivers on the Nature Conservation Strategy.
- The Nature in the City Stream is fully funded by the EPSDD Sustainability and the Built Environment Division and Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate (TCCS) to deliver on outcomes within the ACT Living Infrastructure Strategy.
- The ranked 2020-21 Environment Grants projects determined by the assessment panel resulted in approximately a \$15,000 overspend due to the quality of the applications. The panel decided to recommend the approval of the project with the excess funded from operational budgets.

Background Information

- The ACT Environment Grants commenced in 1996 and funds community projects that support environmental activities consistent with the ACT Government's policies and priorities. Over this period, 288 projects have shared in almost \$4.5 million of funding.
- The ACT Environmental Grants Program supports and empowers the community to play an important role as stewards helping to conserve, promote and protect the environmental values of the ACT. The program achieves this by providing additional opportunities for the community to:
 - a) build capacity of the volunteer groups in the ACT;
 - b) address environmental issues that they are concerned about;
 - c) restore and conserve natural places that are special to them; and
 - d) and engage other community members to do the same.

Portfolio/s: Environment
Planning and Land Management

Fire Recovery

Talking points:

- Namadgi National Park was closed for extended periods following the 2020 fires and subsequent floods. The Park is now open to the public and experiencing unprecedented visitation. Yankee Hat remains closed due to upgrades.
- Access to Orroral Valley via Rocky Crossing on Orroral Road however remains restricted. Roads ACT have now prioritised the reconstruction of the crossing with an estimated time of completion towards the middle of this year.
- On-ground recovery works are progressing well and in line with the Government's Bushfire and Flood Recovery Plan and December 2023 timeframe. Walking trails and management roads have been made safe and improved in most areas. Weed and vertebrate pest management programs have been expanded to help respond to rapid growth conditions and incursions.
- On 14 February, the Australian Government awarded in excess of \$9.5 million towards Bushfire Recovery projects through the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants program. Funds will support a range of infrastructure and community projects.
- Max and Berts and Demanding huts were burnt to the ground during the fires. The Government has since been working with key stakeholders including the Kosciuszko Huts Association to canvas options to protect the historical and more contemporary values of the huts. An onsite meeting will be held in May, to allow for major stakeholders to attend, to progress options.
- The ongoing La Nina event and associated rains have resulted in extensive natural recovery with prolific regrowth across the catchments. Assisted environmental recovery in critical ecosystems including our alpine bogs and fens has helped stabilise the Parks catchments and secure their critical functions in providing water supply for the ACT.
- The La Nina event however continues to significantly undermine the Park's network of management trails some of which are becoming inaccessible and may compromise future fire preparation and fighting capability. The Government is working towards developing options to address ongoing concerns.

Key Information

- In January 2020, the Orroral and Beard fires and subsequent heavy rainfall impacted Namadgi National Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and areas around Pialligo, Oaks Estate and Beard.

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Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager Ext: x75001
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Lead Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

- An early assessment of the bushfire and flood impacts and risks indicated significant damage to the National Park's physical assets, wildlife, habitat and water catchments. The Rapid Risk Assessment report was released on 3 March 2020.
- In July, the Government released the 'Rapid Response Progress Update' which contains information about the Government's actions in the first six months.
- On the 4 September 2020, the Government released the three-year ACT Bushfire and Flood Recovery Plan (the Plan) and announced the reopening of the Namadgi Visitor Information Centre. The Plan marked the transition from the rapid response phase to an ongoing recovery program. The Plan includes key principles that guide recovery efforts and provide for the broader community, and most importantly Nggunawal People, to be engaged in the recovery process.
- In conjunction with the Plan, the Government also provided \$1.36 million to support recovery actions in 2020-21. The funding will be used to re-instate and improve popular walking trails, and address erosion and sedimentation in key areas. This included realigning the upper sections of the Mt Tennent walking trail which is now open for public use.
- Through the Australian Government's Bushfire Recovery for Wildlife and Habitat program, \$600,000 was also secured for urgent interventions to support recovery of native plants, animals and their habitat. In addition, a further allocation of \$1.183 million was recently confirmed to support sustained efforts for longer-term recovery of native plants, animals and their habitats.
- Ecological recovery projects include work focused on the impacts of fire on the Vulnerable Broad-toothed Rat and Two-spined Blackfish, and the Endangered High Country Bogs and Associated Fens as well as work on Sambar Deer impacts, fire-affected flora, sub-Alpine woodlands, and cryptic native frog species.
- The Government's Economic Stimulus Program has provided \$625,000 for the reconstruction of boundary fences, \$325,000 to assist with remediation of the Lower Cotter Catchment and employment of 26 rangers and field officers (temporary), including six rangers from the Nggunawal community to assist with recovery actions.
- On 14 February, the Australian Government awarded approximately \$9.5 million to the ACT government under the Australian Government's Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program. Funding will support infrastructure and community recovery actions under the Plan.
- Insurable assets will be recovered through ACTIA.
- Ongoing consultation with key stakeholders (including Kosciuszko Huts Association and National Parks Association) continues on next steps for Max and Berts and Demanding Huts, which we destroyed by the Orroral Valley Bushfire.

Background Information

- The Orroral Valley bushfire started in Namadgi National Park on Monday 27 January 2020 and continued to burn until it was declared out on Thursday 27 February 2020.

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CHOOSE BRIEF TYPE

The fire burnt through 88,000 hectares, including approximately 80 percent of the National Park.

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Portfolio: Environment

Delivery of the EPSDD Science Plan

Talking points:

- The EPSDD Science Plan 2020-2025 (the Plan) is now under implementation by the Environment, Heritage and Water (EHW) division, enabling better coordination and prioritisation of scientific work across a number of teams. The Plan is being delivered within existing resources, serving to sharpen and enhance the impact of our scientific work, and increase its timeliness and relevance to management of our ecosystems and the services they deliver to the people of the ACT.
- EPSDD carries out joint research with a wide array of research partners, including our key local research partners the Australian National University (ANU), CSIRO, and the University of Canberra (UC). Since development of the Plan, we have developed a number of new collaborative initiatives. For example, we have worked with the ANU and other partners to develop two “Linkage” proposals, currently being reviewed by the Australian Research Council for funding. One of these is seeking to build new knowledge and practical approaches for managing species within fenced sanctuaries, at Mulligans Flat, and the other focuses on understanding the extent and drivers of dieback in Snow Gums.
- EPSDD has over 100 research and monitoring projects underway, designed to respond to the needs of decision makers at all levels. To provide some examples:
 - research on sambar deer and control methods aims to understand the impacts of deer on Namadgi National Park and the most effective way to control them;
 - research on bushfire recovery aims to understand the direct and indirect impacts on a range of threatened species (like Broad-toothed Rats or Three-spined Blackfish) and communities (like high-country bogs and fens), and what interventions are effective in restoring populations and habitats;
 - research on fertility control of macropods is generating new tools for land managers to safeguard ecosystem and habitat quality for a range of threatened and other native species;
 - monitoring of species and communities on offset lands enable tracking of delivery of commitments to maintain and restore ecological values; and
 - research on the drivers of blue-green algae outbreaks inform interventions to maintain water quality.
- As a key tool to help implement the Plan, EPSDD has developed a Research Directory, an online platform and dashboard that brings together key information on current (and recent past) projects from teams carrying out research in EPSDD.
- A strong focus of current work is using innovative digital tools to streamline data capture and visualisation. This involves early work to move an enormous amount of ecosystem assessment data online onto dashboards that will allow real-time data visualisation.

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Key Information

- The Environment, Heritage and Water Division (EHW) aims for a strong evidence base to underpin the work of EPSDD, delivered in a responsive, targeted and timely way to enable adaptive management.
- To further this end, in December 2020, Minister Vassarotti launched the [EPSDD Science Plan 2020-2025](#) (the SciencePlan).
- The Science Plan is a framework for a coordinated and strategic approach to identifying, funding and delivering science-based knowledge to maximise its relevance, cost-effectiveness and impact.
- It responds to a number of challenges: our research and knowledge needs have grown in diversity and quantity as environmental challenges multiply; research and monitoring effort has expanded across multiple teams; research funding is ever-more competitive; and the importance of citizen science has increased.
- The vision guiding the plan is that “Robust science underpins and guides adaptive management for conservation, sustainability and liveability in the ACT”. The Plan sets out five action areas and ten research and monitoring themes to structure and work towards this vision.
- The Plan is under implementation, and has been promoted through:
 - the development of a centralised Research Directory (currently internal, with plans to make it externally accessible) bringing together all our work
 - a number of collaborative planning activities
 - the establishment of the Science Platform, a one-stop shop website to access EHW’s science-related work and resources
 - the establishment of the EPSDD Data Governance TaskForce
 - initiation of development of a Program Evaluation Framework to foster adaptive management
 - and of course the research and monitoring activities themselves that form the backbone of the plan.
- Over 100 research and monitoring projects are currently under implementation in EPSDD focused on the priority themes of the Science Plan, with a wide array of research and community partners.

Background Information

- The Plan fulfils the requirements of the Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Program (BRAMP), a notifiable instrument under the Nature Conservation Act.
- An annual Science Plan Implementation Plan has been prepared and is shaping the work program in FY 2021-2022. A full report on progress since launching of the Plan will be prepared by the end of FY 2021-2022. Review of this progress will shape a further annual Implementation Plan for FY 2022-2023.

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Portfolio: Environment

Environmental Performance Framework

Talking points:

- An Environmental Performance Framework (EPF) is being developed by the Environment, Heritage and Water (EHW) to support evaluation of the ACT Government's management of environmental values.
- Currently we have a robust and powerful system in development to assess and track ecological values at the high level of ecosystems (grasslands, woodlands, bogs and fens, riparian and aquatic, forests; the Conservation Effectiveness Management Program (CEMP)). We also have varying levels of data capture on management activities and outputs at the program level (weeds, pest animals, kangaroos, threatened species, etc). However, we lack a system to link the two – to evaluate how particular programs are contributing to maintaining or improving the state of our ecosystems.
- The EPF will link existing environmental monitoring programs with policy, planning and land management program activities across the EHW division, enabling an evaluation of program effectiveness against strategic environmental management goals.
- The EPF will help demonstrate the outcomes of environmental management actions and assist in guiding investment in program areas by highlighting where programs are effective in achieving their stated goals and where further investment or adjustments to programs should be prioritised.
- The EPF will make use of innovative and contemporary data capture and visualisation tools such as field tablets and apps to streamline data collection, and online dashboards to make results and outcomes accessible to decision makers in real time.
- The Conservation Research and Evaluation branch is leading development of the EPF and aims to deliver a conceptual model for the approach by June 2022.

Key Information

- The EPF will make recommendations for relevant and streamlined data capture at the levels of program activities and program outputs and link these to environmental outcomes via the existing Conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Program (CEMP)(figures 1 and 2).
- Key design considerations for the EPF include:
 - Explicitly stating measurable goals at all levels – Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes, Impact

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- Adaptive management cycle – plan/do/review – to operate at all levels
- Planning and evaluation of actions is based on an explicitly articulated conceptual model of the system
- Measurables are meaningful: i.e., they are 1) selected to inform program decision making and 2) address uncertainty in conceptual models
- Data gathering is standardized, consistent and accessible, making full use of innovative digital tools such as specialized apps
- Progress to date includes drafting of a high-level conceptual model of the EPF (figures 1 and 2). This was presented to the EHW division’s Senior Managers Leadership Team in September 2021.
- Further consultative workshops with internal stakeholders are scheduled for March and April 2022.
- Two detailed case studies will be conducted in collaboration with selected program areas to drill deeper into program level solutions for defining relevant measurables.
- The case studies and workshops will inform refinement of the EPF and identify key data that program areas can provide to feed into the EPF.

Background Information

Figures 1 and 2 below depict the conceptual foundation of the EPF and show the source of input data at the level of program activities (management inputs/efficiency indicators), program outputs (effectiveness indicators), and environmental outcomes, highlighting key groups that need to be involved at each level.

Figure 1. The EPF involves a three-tiered approach to measuring and evaluating performance. Information capture and evaluation occurs at all levels including program inputs/activities (efficiency indicators), program outputs (effectiveness indicator against program goals), and finally progress toward strategic environmental goals measured as longer-term outcome indicators.

Performance Framework

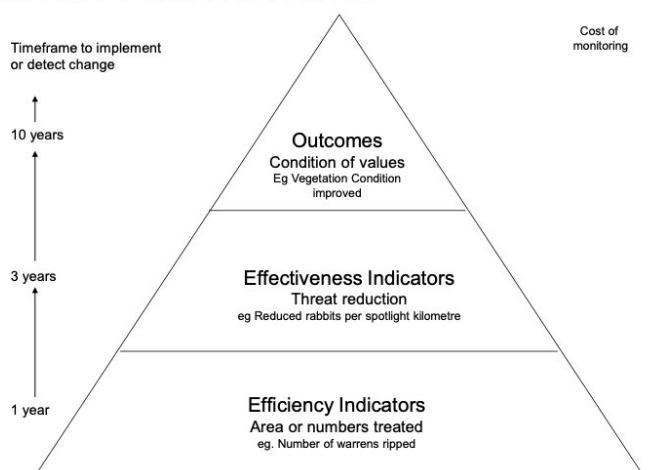
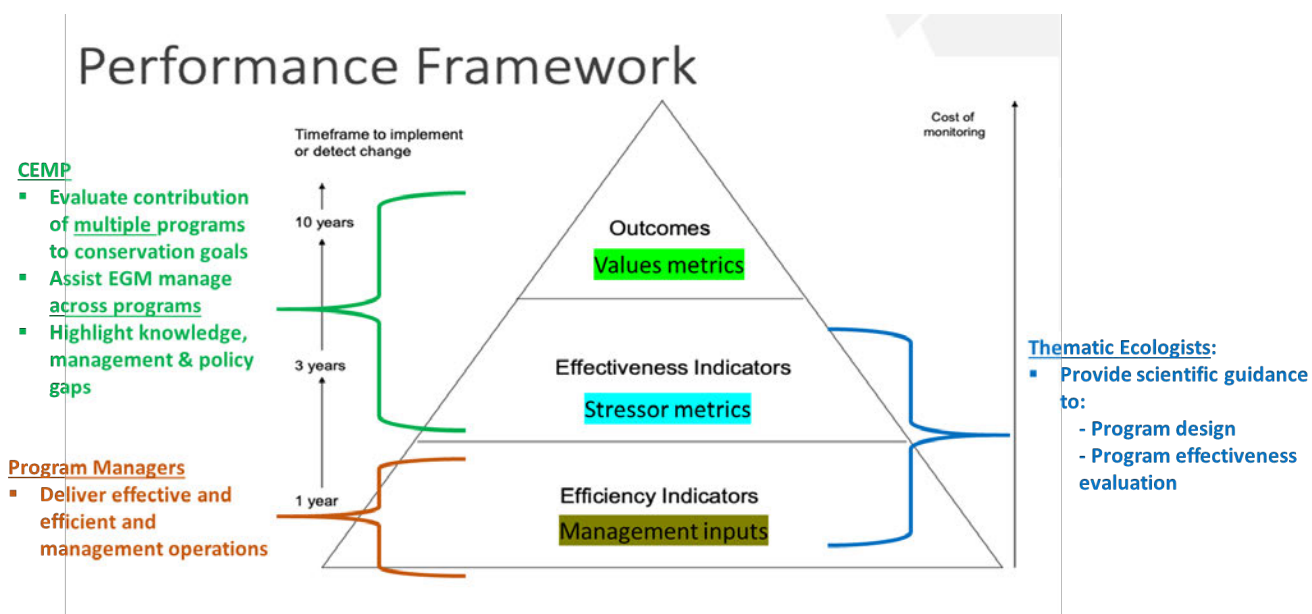


Figure 2. Who needs to be involved Development of the EPF will require collaboration between stakeholders including program managers, thematic/program ecologists, and the CEMP team.



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Portfolio: Heritage

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS

Talking points:

- Conservation Management Plans (CMP) are important documents in managing heritage places and objects, by setting out policies and management actions that will conserve the heritage values of a place.
- CMPs can also explore opportunities for adaptive reuse and change at heritage places, and define development opportunities that will not diminish heritage values.
- CMPs also provide certainty to heritage owners in their management of heritage places, and can approve conservation works at a heritage site.
- When prepared, CMPs are submitted to the independent ACT Heritage Council (Heritage Council), and can be approved for five or 10 year periods.
- Two important CMPs have been recently approved by the Council, being:
 - The Canberra Brickworks Precinct CMP, approved in August 2021.
This CMP is a significant heritage milestone for the redevelopment of the Canberra Brickworks Precinct, as it will inform detailed design by Doma Group and the long term conservation of the site.
 - The Sydney and Melbourne Buildings CMP, approved in January 2022.
This CMP will provide detailed guidance to the many owners of the landmark Sydney and Melbourne Buildings, on external works to the buildings.
- Preparation of CMPs for registered heritage places is often a funding priority of the ACT Heritage Grants Program, and owners are encouraged to consider these opportunities.

Key Information

- CMPs are submitted to the Heritage Council under Part 13 of the Heritage Act, and are approved when the Council is satisfied that CMPs will ensure the conservation and responsible management of the place or object.
- CMPs are voluntarily prepared by heritage owners, however, the Heritage Council can also direct ACT Government authorities to prepare a CMP under Section 110 of the Heritage Act.
- Council currently has 10 CMP submissions requiring assessment, with the majority coming from government agencies or their partners.
- Heritage Council policy on CMP information requirements is found on the EPSDD Heritage website, at: https://www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage/heritage-and-the-community/heritage_grants_program

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Portfolio: Heritage

22 BROCKMAN STREET, NARRABUNDAH (PARAL HOUSE)

Talking points:

- On 22 July 2021, the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) accepted a nomination application to the ACT Heritage Register (the Register) for 22 Brockman Street, Narrabundah (also known as Paral House).
- The Council will not take further action under the Heritage Act in respect to the Narrabundah residence, and has advised the nominator and the owners of this decision.
- The Council has decided not to issue a Heritage Direction under section 62 of the Heritage Act, and will not pursue a decision to provisionally register Paral House.
- To issue a Heritage Direction, the Council must be satisfied the place has heritage significance, and meets the criteria under section 10 of the Heritage Act.
- The threshold levels required to demonstrate significance in the case of a Heritage Direction are exceptionally high, and Council is of the view that the Narrabundah property will not meet criteria to the degree high enough required in order to issue a Heritage Direction, which is a reviewable decision in the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.
- This decision is based on a history of some modification, a lack of professional recognition, and the fact that the design work of architect Derek Wrigley (OAM) at the Australian National University is more highly regarded.
- The submission of a nomination application made after demolition approval under the Building Act represents a rare circumstance of unfortunate timing beyond the ability of the Council to undertake detailed research and a full assessment against the heritage significance criteria – a process that generally takes some months to complete.

Key Information:

- The nomination application for 22 Brockman St did not meet dismissal conditions.
- Nomination acceptance is a standalone, preliminary process in which the Council is only required to consider the merits of the application received. Nomination acceptance should not be taken to mean a place has heritage value and has been registered on the ACT Heritage Register.
- The nomination was received after the property was approved for demolition in accordance with a building approval (BA) under the *Building Act 2004*.
 - As documented in the nomination itself, the nominator was aware of the likelihood of imminent demolition.
- The acceptance of a nomination does not invalidate the BA, which can proceed without an offence occurring under the *Heritage Act 2004* (the Heritage Act).

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- In due course, the Council will enter a Statement of Reasons not to provisionally register Paral House on the Heritage Register, formally setting out the reasons for its decision to not pursue heritage registration, or a Heritage Direction.
- The decision does not prevent Council from considering other houses by Mr Wrigley for heritage registration, should the Council receive and accept a nomination application for these.
- The processes to nominate, register and protect heritage places and objects are legislated under the Heritage Act, which also establishes the Heritage Council as an independent expert statutory body with decision making powers on registrations and heritage directions.
- The Minister ensures that all matters have been appropriately considered prior to the Council making a final decision on whether or not a place or object has heritage significance.
- Decisions about registrations can be controversial with a wide range of often opposing views expressed from interested parties and the community. As such, there is benefit in having an independent and expert Council responsible for the decision-making process to remove political interference in the decision making process.
- The Heritage Act provides the nationally accepted principle of separating the identification, assessment and registration of heritage places from decisions about their conservation and management.
- The Heritage Council provides entity advice on Development Applications (DA), however, Ministerial call-in provisions under the *Planning and Development Act 2007* enables the Planning Minister to consider a broader range of issues in making a decision on a DA when exercising this power.

Background Information:

- Paral House was designed by architect Derek Wrigley, who passed away in June 2021. Built in 1959. Nominated by a member of the Wrigley family.

Portfolio/s: Heritage

Planning and Land Management

NATIONAL HERITAGE LISTING OF CANBERRA

Talking points:

- Government has been working with the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment to understand the detail of a proposed National Heritage Listing (NHL) of Canberra under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- The Commonwealth Government has sought the ACT Government's views on the proposed NHL, before determining the listing.
- A NHL recognises places that have outstanding heritage value to the nation.
- The proposed listing would formally recognise the symbolic and physical importance of Canberra as the nation's seat of government and planned capital city.
- The proposed listing includes the town centres (as structural elements of the city); inner hills; early garden suburbs (roads and suburban parks); central national area and views to the distant mountains (from defined public vantage points).
- The NHL excludes private property and individual buildings.
- Once listed, the heritage values of a place included in the NHL are protected under the EPBC Act. This means that a person cannot take an action that will have a significant impact on the heritage values of the place, without approval.
- However, the NHL is at a broad (thematic), rather than detailed level. So it is unlikely to result in many proposals requiring approval under the EPBC Act.
- The NHL would continue to allow growth and change and is not intended to limit development or 'preserve' features in their exact current form.
- The ACT Government formally considered the proposed NHL in December 2021 and provided a response to the Commonwealth. The response acknowledges the benefits of the listing while raising a number of concerns. It seeks ongoing communication with the ACT Government as the Commonwealth makes a final decision on the listing.
- The Commonwealth Government is currently considering the ACT Government's response
- The Commonwealth Minister for the Environment (Sussan Ley MP) will make the ultimate decision on the proposed listing.

Key Information:

- The proposed listing recognises features of the city that are important to Canberrans and seeks to protect these, while allowing for sympathetic change.

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- The proposed listing will help educate the community and build awareness of the importance and value of Canberra as the planned National Capital.
- The proposed listing could have a positive impact on the image and status of Canberra as a place to visit, live and do business by recognising its unique character and planning legacy.
- The proposed listing is complementary to the Territory Plan and National Capital Plan.
- The proposed listing may raise concerns, such as another layer of approval, or restrictions on development and infrastructure proposals. However, it does not affect private property and the heritage values are at a very broad, rather than detailed level.
- Most of area subject to the proposed listing is Designated land under the National Capital Plan, and so is already subject to detailed planning and design provisions.
- In addition, there are many existing heritage items at ACT, National and Commonwealth levels already within the proposed listing area.

Background Information

- A proposed National Heritage Listing of Canberra has been contemplated for over a decade.
- Consideration has been given to how the proposed reforms under the EPBC Act interact with the proposed NHL. The reforms are likely to lead to streamlined processes and improved timing and costs where an action affecting the NHL requires assessment and approval.
- Consideration has also been given to other cities with a NHL, including Adelaide, Broken Hill, inner Melbourne and central Sydney. The NHL has not had a limiting impact on development in those cities.

Portfolio: Heritage

NOMINATION OF LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN

Talking points:

- Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands' (the Lake) is nominated for Commonwealth Heritage Listing, under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- The Commonwealth Heritage List includes places that are under the control of the Commonwealth Government on Commonwealth land or in Commonwealth waters, or that are owned or managed by the Commonwealth Government.
- As this area is National land, 'Designated Area', the ACT Government has limited influence on the area proposed for listing.
- The National Capital Authority, not the ACT Government, has the responsibility for determining detailed planning policy and works approval.
- In addition, there are already well-established planning requirements to consider impacts on the Lake and surrounds under the National Capital Plan.

Key Information:

- Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands has been identified as an Australian Heritage Council priority assessment since at least 2017.
- On 27 January 2021, as part of the Commonwealth heritage assessment process, the Australian Heritage Council sought public views on whether Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands meets significance criteria.
- The ACT Heritage Council has no jurisdiction in this space, and the *Heritage Act 2004* does not apply.

Background Information:

- The EPBC Act establishes both the Commonwealth and National heritage lists, they are separate lists with similar criteria. The key difference is the level or 'threshold' of significance required to reach the criteria; 'significant' for Commonwealth, 'outstanding' for National.
- The Commonwealth Heritage List, lists places under the control of the Commonwealth Government on Commonwealth land or in Commonwealth waters, or owned or managed by the Commonwealth Government.
- As distinct from the National Heritage List, which lists places deemed to be of outstanding heritage significance to Australia, contributing to Australia's identity and could be owned by other governments or in private ownership.

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- Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands' (the Lake) is nominated for Commonwealth Heritage Listing. The nominated area covers approximately 6,640 hectares including:
 - Lake Burley Griffin bounded by the entrances of the Molonglo River, Jerrabomberra Creek and Sullivans Creek, and Scrivener Dam;
 - Springbank and Spinnaker Islands. The Carillon is listed separately on the Commonwealth Heritage List;
 - Scrivener Dam;
 - Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and Kings Avenue Bridge;
 - Stirling Ridge, Stirling Park, Attunga Point, Yarramundi Grasslands, Roman Cypress Hill and the Lindsay Pryor Arboretum.

HERITAGE NOMINATION LIST

Talking points:

- The ACT Heritage Council is an independent statutory authority established under the *Heritage Act 2004*. The Council is responsible for the assessment of nominations to the Heritage Register and decisions on the inclusion of heritage places and objects in the Register.
- Heritage nominations are prioritised by the Heritage Council for assessment based on a range of factors including imminent threat, thematic representation, and pressures from development or other works.
- Since reaching a peak of 320 nominations in 2008, hundreds of decisions have been made, resulting in a current nomination list of 78.
- ACT Heritage within EPSDD conducts research and makes recommendations to the Heritage Council, which then reviews this work before making a decision, applying the knowledge of Council members. The steady and carefully considered addition of places and objects to the Heritage Register is a significant conservation outcome for the ACT community.

Key Information:

- Nominations receive statutory recognition under the Heritage Act, which requires the Heritage Council to advise on any proposed development impacts.
- Nominations older than 20 years were made under the repealed *Land (Planning and Environment Act) 1991* which did not require the same level of information upon submission as those made under the current Heritage Act. As such, research and assessment of older nominations is more resource intensive.
- The Heritage Council determines priority assessments at the beginning of each financial year. Priorities include older nominations, private residences and Aboriginal heritage.

Background Information

- ESPDD provides 2.2 FTE to assist the Council in assessing nominations.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021 to date
Nominations accepted	2	10	2
Nominations dismissed	1*	1	0
Provisional registration decisions (including decisions to not provisionally register)	6	6	9
Registration decisions (including further registration decisions)	4	3	1

*Includes the removal of identified duplicate entries on the nomination list.

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Portfolio: Heritage

PINE PLANTINGS AT THE BRADFIELD DEVELOPMENT - DOWNER

Talking points:

- The existing Monterey Pine trees along Bradfield Street, Downer, were planted in the early 1940s as a windbreak to protect the former Council for Science and Industry Research, Dickson Experiment Farm.
- These trees are of heritage significance and are registered on the ACT Heritage Register.
- The Heritage Act requires that registered heritage places are conserved and responsibly managed, for current and future generations.
- In this instance, conservation requires the replacement of trees when they reach their end of life, and that these replacement trees be pines planted in a windbreak formation.
- The replanting of the historic windbreak is a requirement of heritage and planning approvals for the redevelopment, which date to 2017.
- In November 2021, some residents of The Bradfield proposed changes to the replanting outcome, on the basis that pine trees would reduce solar access to the new development.
- These changes, such as using deciduous trees or planting a single row of pine trees in the road reserve, were not supported by the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) as they would result in the loss of a registered place of heritage significance.
- However, in January 2022, the Council did endorse minor amendments to the replanting outcome, to provide for some improved solar access to the new development whilst conserving the heritage windbreak for future generations.
- The Council has encouraged the developers of The Bradfield to adopt these changes, and has advised the ACT planning and land authority that this outcome is supported.

Key Information:

- Heritage requirements for The Bradfield development have been identified by the Council, who is the independent statutory body established to administer the *Heritage Act 2004*.
- The Council has decision making authority at arms-length from the government of the day.
- The ACT planning and land authority also considers the expert advice of the Heritage Council in development applications for registered heritage places.
- For Stages 1 and 2 of the development:

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- On 1 August 2017, a Heritage Act approval was issued, which permitted the removal of the existing Monterey Pine trees and their replacement with Canary Island Pine trees.
- On 5 September 2017, the ACT planning and land authority conditionally approved development, which also required the replanting of the historic windbreak.
- For Stage 3 of the development:
 - On 24 August 2021, a Heritage Act approval was issued, which permitted the removal of the existing Monterey Pine trees and their replacement with Canary Island Pine trees.
 - A development application (DA) has been submitted, which is currently under assessment by the ACT planning and land authority. The DA has also been referred to entities for advice, including the Council, whose advice on the DA was provided on 17 October 2021.
- On 13 January 2022, the Council provided advice to the ACT planning and land authority and the developers of Stages 1, 2 and 3 of The Bradfield, endorsing the following amendments to the replanting outcome along Bradfield Street:
 - Support for pruning of pine trees as they mature, to lift their canopies by up to one third of their height; and,
 - Movement of the entire windbreak formation approximately three metres north within the block, closer to the street.
- These two amendments will not significantly alter the heritage significance of the place, but the increased setback and lifted canopies will allow greater solar penetration to the ground floor living areas within the new development, especially to Building 1 which is the closest to Bradfield Street.

Background Information:

- The 'Trees of the Former CS&IR Experiment Station' was registered on the ACT Heritage Register on 26 June 1998.
- Canary Island Pine trees are to be used for replanting of the historic windbreak, as Monterey Pine trees are now a declared pest species in the ACT.

Portfolio: Heritage

THE FOOTHILLS CAMPBELL– DOMA GROUP, “AINSLIE VOLCANICS” HERITAGE

Talking points:

- On 9 December 2020, the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) accepted a nomination to the ACT Heritage Register (the Register) for the Ainslie Volcanics (the Nomination), submitted by Ngambri Elder Shane Mortimer.
- The Nomination includes the former Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) headquarters site, at Blocks 4 and 5 Section 38 Campbell.
- Doma Group propose to develop this site as ‘The Foothills’ residential complex.
- As the Foothills includes National Land, development approval authority does not lie with the ACT Government. However this did not prevent the Council from accepting the Nomination as per the requirements of the *Heritage Act 2004* (the Heritage Act).
- The Nomination encompasses both National Land and Territory Land, and claims there are Aboriginal, historic, natural and geological heritage values present on both the National Land and Territory Land portions of the Nomination.
- The ACT Heritage Council called a special meeting for 2 August 2021 to address two matters concerning the Nomination:
 1. The National Land portion of the nomination
 2. The Territory Land portion of the nomination

Key Information:

- National Land (Campbell Section 38 Blocks 4 and 5)
 - The *Heritage Act 2004* (the Heritage Act) has no effect on National land, and so the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) has no jurisdiction to make a decision on this part of the Nomination. Doma Group and the nominator have been advised of this.
- Territory Land (Campbell Section 63 Block 4; Ainslie Section 60 Blocks 2 and 3; Wolseley Road Reserve)
 - The Territory land part of the Nomination will remain nominated to the ACT Heritage Register (the Heritage Register), until such time as the Council makes a decision to, or not to provisionally register the place under the Heritage Act. Doma Group and the nominator have been advised of this.
 - A provisional registration decision requires the Council to assess whether the place meets, or does not meet one or more of the heritage significance criteria under section 10 of the Heritage Act.

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- The Nomination includes outcroppings of the Ainslie Volcanics geology which have overlapping Aboriginal heritage values that the Council will be required to assess in the future as part of the heritage registration process.
- The nominated geology and overlapping Aboriginal heritage values are protected by, and subject to the requirements of the Heritage Act.
- The Nomination also includes the following species/habitats (the ‘Natural Values’) which are protected under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (NC Act):
 - Natural Temperate Grasslands;
 - Yellow Box Blakeley’s Redgum Woodland;
 - Canberra Spider Orchid habitat;
 - Golden Sun Moth habitat; and
 - Hoary Sunray habitat.
- The planning and land authority (PLA) is the decision maker on development applications that occur on the Territory land portion of the Nomination.
- Any development on Territory land would be subject to the provisions of the *Planning and Development Act 2007*. Development in an area where the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* applies triggers a requirement for an Environmental Impact Statement and a referral would be made to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna as part of that process.

Background Information:

- At the time of accepting the Nomination in December 2020, the Council understood that Territory enactments do not bind a Commonwealth entity unless agreed to by the Commonwealth, however, the matter of private entities on National land was unclear at that time.
- The Heritage Act stipulates conditions under which the Council can dismiss a nomination application, and the Ainslie Volcanics nomination did not meet any conditions for dismissal.
- Note that acceptance of a nomination does not equate to heritage listing on the Register. Nomination acceptance is a separate and preliminary step.
- The Nomination includes Blocks 4 and 5 Section 38 Campbell, which Doma Group propose to develop as ‘The Foothills’ residential complex.
- As the Foothills is National Land, development approval authority does not lie with the ACT Government, and the National Capital Authority (NCA) granted approval for the development on 26 February 2021.
- Redevelopment has also been subject to heritage impact assessment under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
- The NCA advise that a 2020 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment by Navin Officer Heritage Consultants sufficiently informs the management of Aboriginal heritage

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matters on the Foothills development site, enabling approval of the Foothills development.

- In December 2021, site clearing activities were undertaken on Blocks 4 and 5 Section 38 Campbell, as part of preparation works for The Foothills development. These works occurred only on these blocks, which are National Land.

Portfolio: Heritage

HERITAGE ADVICE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Talking points:

- There has been a substantial and sustained increase in requests for heritage advice and approvals in recent years, which has increased by 107 percent since 2014.
- This increased demand is affecting ACT Heritage Council (the Council) response timeframes, on development applications (DAs) and other submissions.
- The Council did not meet its performance indicator for DA advice in 2021-22, and is unlikely to meet the indicator this year.
- While response timeframes are affected, measures have been adopted to minimise risk to heritage during the development application process.
 - Advice is prioritised on DAs that propose works that may damage or diminish heritage values.
 - Some DA referrals relate to work near heritage places, but which will not have heritage impacts, and advice on those DAs may not be prioritised.
- The Council is responsible for a range of functions under the Heritage Act, and provide advice on a wide range of applications and referrals. Generally, DA advice is less than 20 percent of all Council advice in any given year.

Key Information

- Performance Indicator 2.3(b) is that 90 percent of Council advice on referred development applications is provided within 15 working days.
- This reflects *Planning and Development Act 2007* provisions, which require entity advice on referred developments within 15 working days (Section 149).
- In 2020-21, 83 percent of Council advice was issued in 15 working days.
- In 2021-22, 70 percent of Council advice was issued in 15 working days in the year to date.

Background Information

- The ACT Heritage Approvals and Advice team support delivery of Council advice. The team consists of four permanent FTE (one SOGC Manager and three ASO6 Conservation Officers), and is currently supported by two temporary contracts (to June 2022).
- In 2020-21, the Approvals and Advice team provided 970 pieces of formal Council advice and approval.
- This included 181 DA referrals (18 percent), 260 other ACT Government referrals (27 percent), and 529 direct submissions from heritage owners and developers (55 percent).

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Minister for Housing and Sustainable Development

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Portfolio/s: Housing and Suburban Development

Economic Recovery through Social Housing Package

Talking points:

- The 2020-21 Budget funding of \$200,000 allocated through the Economic Recovery through Social Housing Package was for the build-to-rent (BtR) initiative, which is one component of the broader Economic Recovery through Social Housing Package agreed to in August 2020.
- The allocated funding was used to engage a development feasibility consultant to undertake analysis on BtR in the ACT context and for minor due diligence studies.
- EPSDD engaged a consultant to provide expert advice on BtR and to undertake research of current policy challenges, financial entity appetite, feasibility analysis and considerations on BtR and to provide advice on an EOI process for the release of land for BtR.
- The feasibility analysis was finalised in June 2021 and the findings have been, or will, be used to inform Government on undertaking an Expression of Interest for a BtR pilot program and provide a framework for a potential EOI or market sounding process. The ACT Government will also consider the benefits of BtR in the ACT context and investigate if any changes to tax treatments or planning reform are required to encourage the BtR asset class.
- The work on the initiative also informed decisions related to the 10th Legislative Assembly Parliamentary and Governing Agreement commitment of '*constructing a build-to rent affordable rental co-located with Common Ground Gungahlin*'. Work for this deliverable, funded through this initiative, included early planning and design concept work.
- EPSDD have released a public-facing version of the feasibility report on the Planning website, in the Affordable Housing tab (<https://www.planning.act.gov.au/urban-renewal/affordable-housing>).

Key Information

- To aid future decision making and to progress with further consideration of BtR in the ACT, a consultant was engaged to provide expert advice and to undertake research of current policy challenges, financial entity appetite, feasibility analysis and considerations on market-rate and affordable BtR and advise on an EOI process for the release of land for BtR.
- The feasibility study also included analysis on the affordable BtR co-located with Common Ground Gungahlin and the former Northbourne Flats - Turner site on Northbourne Avenue.

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- The feasibility study was finalised in June 2021 and has supported implementation of EPSDD and cross-directorate BtR outcomes to achieve Government commitments. This includes:
 - i. A Treasury-led business case that presents options to pilot Government assistance to improve the feasibility of BtR projects and attract developers to deliver long-term BtR projects with an affordable rental component in the ACT;
 - ii. The SLA's consideration of an EOI/market-sounding release for BtR;
 - iii. Delivery of an affordable BtR co-located with Common Ground Gungahlin as per the PAGA commitment; and
 - iv. EPSDD consideration of planning changes to support BtR in the Territory.

Background Information

- The ACT Government is committed to improving housing availability, diversity, and choice to a growing population within Canberra.
- The ACT Housing Strategy (the Strategy) 2018 has put in place a suite of measures to meet the Territory's diverse and changing housing needs.
- The Strategy commits to an expression of interest process to build affordable rental properties under a build-to-rent (BtR) model.
- In addition, the 10th Legislative Assembly Parliamentary and Governing Agreement includes a commitment to construct a BtR and affordable rental model co-located with Common Ground Gungahlin.
- The BtR model focusses on increasing the supply of long-term rental housing by the construction of multi-unit dwellings that are rented out rather than being sold.
- BtR is well established overseas and while take-up has been slow in Australia, governments in New South Wales and Queensland have recently gone to the market seeking proposals that include the supply of affordable rental, and in the case of New South Wales, public housing. Both proposals include private rental.
- BtR housing has the potential to provide long lasting community benefits, with greater housing choice for tenants who would have access to high-quality dwellings, in a stable rental environment. Increased rental security offers wider social and economic benefits, with tenants better able to establish themselves in a community.

Portfolio/s: Housing and Suburban Development

Expanding investment in Social Housing

Initiative description (as per Economic Update papers)

- The Government has delivered new initiatives to increase the amount of public housing, community housing and affordable housing in the ACT. The cost of this project was offset by savings returned from the Public Housing Renewal Taskforce. This project was completed in 2019-20.

Key deliverables and timetable

- The total cost to deliver the program was \$487 million against a budgeted cost of \$550 million, delivering a saving to Government of over \$63 million. This budget transferred those savings to Housing ACT for delivery of the *Expanding investment in Social Housing* initiative, which has grown the number of public housing properties available to the community.
- These efficiencies were achieved as a result of rigorous procurement processes which provided a mix of both new and existing replacement dwellings in the delivery of the Public Housing Renewal Program.
- New housing delivered caters to the diverse needs of public housing tenants which cannot be met by the private rental market. The program delivered housing which is accessible and adaptable to meet future housing needs.
- Homes have been constructed and purchased through the renewal program in more than 30 different suburbs across Canberra including the inner north and Greenfield estates, offering tenants a choice of a variety of public housing locations
- 217 new dwellings have been secured in suburbs adjacent to Northbourne Avenue, accounting for almost 17 per cent of all replacement dwellings.

Previous Funding Provided / Project development details

- Funding was allocated in the 2015–16, 2016–17 and 2017–18 budgets for the redevelopment and replacement of Bega Court (Reid), Northbourne Flats (Braddon and Turner), Currong Apartments (Braddon), Stuart Flats (Griffith), Strathgordon Court (Lyons), De Burgh Street—North and South (Lyneham) and Gowrie Court (Narrabundah). The renewal of these old public housing sites were included in the ACT's Asset Recycling Initiative (ARI) agreement with the Commonwealth.

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Portfolio: Housing and Suburban Development**Rental prices – measures and policies****Talking points:**

- The ACT is now the third most affordable jurisdiction to rent in Australia, as measured by the proportion of family income needed to meet rent payments.
- The ACT Government is continuing to increase affordable rental housing, as set out in the ACT Housing Strategy (2018) and supported by the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10th Legislative Assembly.
- Each year the ACT Government sets an annual target for community housing to increase the supply of affordable rental homes in new developments across Canberra.
- The ACT Government has expanded the affordable community housing land tax exemption scheme for properties rented at below 75 percent of market rent.
- The ACT Government is committed to improving housing affordability, diversity, and choice, for Canberrans by supporting affordable rental properties built under a Build to Rent model. The Build to Rent model focuses on increasing the supply of long-term rental homes.

Key Information

The ACT does well on many measures of housing affordability and continues to experience comparatively low levels of housing stress (generally defined as paying more than 30 percent of household income on rent or mortgage costs).

According to the Real Estate Institute of Australia (REIA), 21.2 percent of family income was needed to meet median rent payments in the ACT in the September quarter 2021, the third lowest jurisdiction in Australia.

The ACT Government has taken proactive steps to assist tenants during the pandemic, including a range of temporary changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* to protect tenants impacted by COVID-19, and rates and land tax rebates for landlords who reduce their tenants rent by 25 percent until the end of June 2021. Under this initiative, the Government matches 50 percent of the rent reduction through rebates to a maximum of around \$100 per week. The rebate has been offered since April 2020 and has helped over 750 households, to date.

Key actions under the ACT Housing Strategy supporting affordable rentals include:

- setting an annual community housing target to provide additional affordable rental properties managed by registered community housing providers, as part of the commitment to dedicate 15 percent of the Indicative Land Release Program to public, community, and affordable housing;
- under the Affordable Housing Innovation Fund, facilitating a project to develop community rental housing on underutilised leased community facility land;

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- exploring opportunities to extend land rent to community housing providers for the provision of affordable rental properties;
- establishing an Affordable Rental Real Estate Management model as a pilot under the Affordable Housing Innovation Fund; and
- working with community housing providers to develop more affordable rental properties.

Commitments under the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement toward affordable rental housing include:

- constructing a build-to-rent affordable rental co-located with Common Ground in Gungahlin;
- in close partnership with the community, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, supporting the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled community housing provider;
- expanding further the existing land tax exemption program for affordable rental housing by increasing the cap to 250 properties and removing the time limit for this exemption, which has now been completed;
- ensuring the planning and housing system continues to deliver affordable housing; and
- striving to deliver additional affordable housing dwellings despite constraints, with a goal of 600 additional affordable rental dwellings by 2025-26.

Background Information

REIA median rent for a 3-bedroom house increased by 1.7 percent to \$590 a week in the September quarter 2021, while median rent for a 2-bedroom unit increased by 3.9 percent to \$530 a week.

Compared to the September quarter 2020, median rent for both a 3-bedroom house and a 2-bedroom unit increased by 9.3 percent and 8.2 percent, respectively.

Domain data released on 13 January 2022, shows that Canberra's median rent for a house was \$675 a week in the December quarter 2021, a 4.7 percent increase from the September quarter 2021. Median rent for units increased by 1.9 percent in the December quarter 2021, to \$530 a week.¹

Compared to the December quarter 2020, median rent for both houses and units increased by 12.5 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively.

The ACT rental vacancy rate of 0.8 percent, recorded for the September 2021 quarter, is the second lowest in the country, and 0.1 percentage points lower than 0.9 percent recorded in the September quarter 2020. A rental vacancy rate of less than three percent (the industry benchmark rate) generally indicates strong demand for rental accommodation.

¹ <https://www.domain.com.au/research/rental-report/>

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With international border restrictions now eased, and international student and overseas migrant arrivals have commenced from early this year, demand for rental properties is anticipated to increase, putting pressure on rental vacancy rate.

Latest data from Domain recorded a rental vacancy rate of 0.7 percent in January 2022, a 0.3 percentage points decrease from December 2021, and 0.1 percentage point lower than its rate in January 2021.

The property market in the ACT has been remarkably resilient with the take-up of Commonwealth and ACT stimulus measures exceeding expectations. ACT's median property prices have steadily increased since early 2020, rising by 14.5 percent (March 2020 – November 2021).

Building activity in the ACT remains solid, supported by a continuing pipeline of dwelling investment for detached and semi-detached houses heading into 2022 and record low interest rates. However, there has been signs of stabilisation. The number of residential building approvals increased by 136.5 percent in December 2021, and was 119.8 percent lower than its level in December 2020. The expiry of Home Builder stimulus in March 2021 and the ACT stamp duty concession ending on 30 June 2021 is expected to have some impact in future.

In addition, the land sales program, which has seen a significant increase in activity supported by the Government's temporary stamp duty exemption for the purchase of single dwelling blocks, and off-the-plan apartments by owner-occupiers from 4 June 2020 to 30 June 2021, will slow as the incentives expire.

Following a review in 2016 that involved extensive community consultation, the ACT Government has undertaken an ambitious reform program to further support residential tenants. Recent reforms specifically aimed at increasing rental affordability include:

- improving protections for tenants against excessive rent increases by limiting increases to a prescribed amount (which is linked to inflation) unless exceptional circumstances apply;
- lowering upfront costs for tenants by reducing the maximum amount of rent that can be charged in advance from four weeks to two weeks. This reduces the upfront costs of entering a new tenancy and smooths payment amounts during the tenancy; and
- easing the financial burden when transitioning into social housing or aged care by allowing tenants to terminate their fixed term leases at short notice and without paying compensation if they have accepted a place in social housing or aged care.

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Portfolio: Housing and Suburban Development**2021-22 Housing Targets****Talking points:**

- Targets for public, community and affordable housing have been agreed for Government land releases across the Territory for 2021-22. Targets for 2021-22 were released as part of the Indicative Land Release Program (ILRP) in conjunction with the Budget on 6 October 2021.
- This aligns with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate's Output Class 4 in the 2020-21 Annual Report, and in particular accountability indicator 4.1 (b) which is to publish the annual affordable, community and public housing targets (refer to page 303 of the Annual Report).
- These targets align with residential land releases identified in the ILRP for 2021-22.
- For 2021-22, a target of 307 dedicated public, community, and affordable dwellings has been determined. This target is made up of:
 - 155 public housing dwellings;
 - 30 community housing dwellings; and
 - 122 affordable housing dwellings.
- The 2021-22 targets take into consideration sector need, delivery capacity, amenity, proximity to schools, transport and employment centres, public open space, and existing concentrations of affordable, community, and public housing in each suburb.
- Under the affordable housing targets, the dedicated affordable dwellings are sold to people who have registered and been assessed as eligible via the ACT Government's Affordable Home Purchase Database.
 - If the database is exhausted, properties can then be offered to registered community housing providers at the affordable housing price threshold. If the properties are not taken up they can be sold on the open market at the affordable price threshold.

Key Information

- Under section 65 of the *City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017* relevant Ministers are required to set affordable, community, and public housing targets for residential development in an urban renewal precinct, within an urban renewal area other than in an urban renewal precinct, and in new suburbs.
- As required by the *ACT Housing Strategy (2018)*, the housing targets will be presented for Cabinet's consideration as part of the *Indicative Land Release Program (ILRP)*. The Government has committed to at least 15 percent of residential land releases in the ILRP being dedicated to affordable, community, and public housing.

Background Information

- The agreed targets were developed by a cross-Government Reference Group, with representatives from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, Community Services Directorate, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, Suburban Land Agency, and City Renewal Authority.
- The targets include provision for dwellings in greenfield suburbs for separately titled homes as well as 122 affordable home purchase opportunities in urban renewal/infill sites, including the Gungahlin Town Centre and Kippax Group Centre (Holt).
- A copy of the 2021-22 housing targets is provided in the attached table.
- The 2021-22 target is equal to 15 per cent of eligible residential sites planned for release in 2021-22, noting residential land to be released in Casey, Taylor, Kingston, Oaks Estate, Belconnen, Lawson, and Turner, has been excluded from the target calculation as these suburbs already have an allocation of public, community, and affordable, dwellings or have been identified for other housing projects.

Table 1: Indicative Housing Targets by Suburb and Individual Site

Suburb	Block	Section	Affordable Purchase Dwellings	Public Housing Dwellings	Community Housing Dwellings	Total Targets Numbers	Total res dwellings from ILRP	% P/C/A Housing
Casey*	12,13	132	0	0	0	0	100	0%
Gungahlin			20	30	10	60	300	20%
Jacka			10	20	0	30	200	15%
Whitlam			10	20	0	30	200	15%
Strathnairn			10	25	0	35	250	14%
Denman Prospect			60	60	20	140	1,000	14%
Taylor*			0	0	0	0	157	0%
Kingston*	1	68	0	0	0	0	518	0%
Oaks Estate*	5,8,11		0	0	0	0	6	0%
Oaks Estate*	5,6,9	7	0	0	0	0	11	0%
Holt (Kippax)	37, 47, 66 (part) 6, 22, 36, 64 (full)	51	12	0	0	12	80	15%
Belconnen*	26,30,1	52,151	0	0	0	0	500	0%
Lawson*			0	0	0	0	850	0%
Turner*			0	0	0	0	565	0%
Subtotal			122	155	30	307	4,737	
*Housing Target – excludes Casey, Taylor, Kingston, Oaks Estate, Belconnen, Lawson and Turner						307	2,030	15%

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Portfolio: Housing and Suburban Development**HOUSING AFFORDABILITY****Talking points:**

- As part of the *10th Legislative Assembly Parliamentary and Governing Agreement*, the Government has committed to improving social housing and housing affordability over the next four years, as part of the roadmap for increased supply of affordable housing that is outlined in the ACT Housing Strategy.
- As part of the ACT Government's continued tax reform program of phasing out of stamp duty, and replacing with more efficient land based taxes, stamp duty for off-the-plan apartment and townhouse purchases up to \$500,000 has been abolished, effective from 1 July 2021.
- This initiative is in addition to the ACT Government's extension of the *Home Buyer Concession Scheme* last year to include all new and established dwellings, and vacant land purchased by eligible first home buyers regardless of price, and the Commonwealth Government's *First Home Loan Deposit Scheme* for first home buyers.
- Improving housing affordability for all Canberrans has been an objective of the ACT Government for many years. Increasing the supply of land available for new homes and increasing the total housing stock has been an effective way to improve housing affordability for home buyers and renters.
- The ACT Government is making every effort to maintain a sustainable and affordable supply of residential land for new home buyers to take up the stimulus measures currently on offer.
- The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue commenced an inquiry into housing affordability and supply in Australia on 16 August 2021¹. The Committee is investigating the impact of tax and regulatory regimes on the price, affordability, and supply of housing in Australia today, as well as into the future. The inquiry has attracted 159 submissions, of which 15 submissions were from the ACT. The Committee is set to hand down a report in early 2022.

Key Information***Housing affordability***

- The ACT does well on many measures of housing affordability and continues to experience comparatively low levels of housing stress (generally defined as paying more than 30 per cent of household income on rent or mortgage costs).

¹[https://www.aph.gov.au/About Parliament/House of Representatives/About the House News/Media Releases/Housing affordability and supply in Australia](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/House_of_Representatives/About_the_House_News/Media_Releases/Housing_affordability_and_supply_in_Australia).

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- This is due to Canberra's low unemployment and comparatively high income, though the overall prosperity of the ACT can conceal disadvantage at the individual level. The ACT's full-time adult average weekly ordinary time earnings was \$1,910, compared with the national average of \$1,737 in May 2021².
- The ACT's 170,000 households are divided into income quintiles. Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) analysis, updated in September 2021, shows that for an average household in the ACT (earning an average gross household income of \$144,939)³, affordable rents start at \$836 per week and an affordable mortgage enables the purchase of a home starting at \$798,500.
 - This is below the median rent of \$590 a week for a 3-bedroom house and \$530 a week for 2-bedroom unit in Canberra, and a median dwelling price of \$670,000 recorded in November 2021.⁴
 - Domain data released on 13 January 2022 shows that the ACT recorded a median rent of \$675 a week for houses and \$530 a week for units in the December quarter 2021.
- At these levels there are many homes available on the private market, suggesting that Government focus should be on supporting households with incomes below \$100,000.

Housing Affordability improved in the September quarter 2021⁵:

- The ACT's *Home Loan Affordability Indicator* increased in the September quarter 2021. The ACT remains the second most affordable jurisdiction in Australia, behind the Northern Territory.
- The ACT was the second most affordable jurisdiction to buy a home with 25.8 per cent of family income required to meet home loan repayments.
- The improvement in affordability was due to a 1.4 per cent increase median weekly family income.

Rental affordability was unchanged in the September quarter 2021⁶:

- Rental affordability was unchanged in the September quarter 2021. However, the ACT is now the third most affordable jurisdiction to rent a home, with 21.2 percent of family income required to meet rent payments.
- The median weekly rent for a 3-bedroom house in Canberra was \$590, the highest weekly rent of all capital cities. The median weekly rent for a 2-bedroom unit was \$530, also the highest of all capital cities.

² Source: ABS Full-Time Adult Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings publication, May 2021.

³ Calculations are based on mean gross household income per week from the ABS Income and Wealth Survey 2018-19. The 2019-20 and 2020-21 weekly mean disposable income has been calculated by inflating the 2018-19 ABS data with financial year Wage Price Index (WPI). While income has not increased much, the prevailing record low mortgage interest rates are increasing people's borrowing capacity.

⁴ Median rent is based on Real Estate Institute of Australia data, September Quarter 2021 and median house price is from sales data from Access Canberra, November 2021. Note the median dwelling price includes prices for all dwellings (both houses and units).

⁵ Source: Real Estate Institute of Australia (REIA) Housing Affordability Report, September Quarter 2021.

⁶ Source: Real Estate Institute of Australia (REIA) Market Facts Report, September Quarter 2021.

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- The high rent is due to Canberra recording a low rental vacancy rate of 0.8 percent in the September quarter 2021, the second lowest vacancy rate of all capital cities behind Adelaide (0.6 percent).

Domain Rental data:

- Domain data released on 13 January 2022 shows that Canberra's median rent in the December quarter 2021 for both houses and units were the highest of all capital cities at \$675 a week and \$530 a week, respectively.⁷
- Domain data also shows that rental vacancy rate remained low in Canberra, decreasing by 0.3 percentage points to 0.7 per cent in January 2022, and was 0.1 percentage point lower than its rate in January 2021.⁸

Median house price stabilising in November 2021⁹:

- The ACT was the only jurisdiction to record stable house prices during the pandemic. This is attributable to Canberrans having better job security with employment in the public sector and higher median income compared to other jurisdictions.
- In November 2021 the *median transaction house prices* decreased slightly by 0.3 per cent to \$947,000, while the *median transaction unit price* decreased by 1.9 per cent to \$530,000.
- In November 2021 the *average transaction house price* was \$1,069,933 (a decrease of 0.6 per cent) and the *average transaction unit price* was \$601,749 (an increase of 2.4 per cent).
- There was a 27.1 per cent increase in turnover of houses (417 sales) in November 2021. There were 670 sales recorded for units, a decrease of 17.2 per cent in November 2021.

First Home-buyer activity:

- There were 245 *owner occupier first home buyer* housing finance commitments and a further 32 *investor first home buyer commitments* in December 2021¹⁰, a decrease of 21.0 per cent and an increase of 18.5 per cent, respectively, compared to the same period last year.
- Data from the ACT Revenue Office shows that between July 2020 to 30 June 2021, there were 963 *Stamp Duty Concession* applications, of which 771 were for purchase of vacant land.

Commonwealth Government HomeBuilder program:

- In June 2020, the Commonwealth Government announced a *HomeBuilder Program* as part of their stimulus package to provide economic support during the pandemic.
- Between July 2020 and 30 June 2021 there were 2,993 applications received as part of the HomeBuilder Program, of which 2,321 applications were for construction of new homes and 672 applications for renovations.¹¹

⁷ <https://www.domain.com.au/research/rental-report/>.

⁸ <https://www.domain.com.au/research/vacancy-rates-december-2021-1112478/>.

⁹ Source: Access Canberra Property settlements data, November 2021.

¹⁰ Source: ABS Lending Indicators, December 2021.

¹¹ Data from ACT Revenue Office.

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- A \$25,000 grant was available for eligible owner-occupiers (including first home buyers) to build a new home, or substantially renovate an existing home where the contract was signed between 4 June 2020 and 31 December 2020.
- On 29 November 2020, a new, and reduced, \$15,000 grant was announced for contracts signed between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 2021 inclusive.
- An extended deadline was provided for all applications to be lodged by 14 April 2021 for both the \$25,000 grant and the new \$15,000 grant.
- An extension was provided to the construction commencement timeframe, from three months to six months, for all applications signed on or after 4 June 2020.
- The initiative was targeted at assisting the residential construction market and assist affordability for existing home buyers who fall within the eligible household income thresholds of \$125,000 for an individual, or \$200,000 for a couple.
- Announced in the 2021-22 Federal Budget was a 12-month extension of the HomeBuilder construction commencement period for existing applicants.

Major Housing measures in 2021-22 Federal Budget

The 2021-22 Federal Budget included the following additional housing related policies:

- **Family Home Guarantee** – Single parents will be given Federal Government assistance to purchase a property. The Federal Government will guarantee 18 percent of a home loan for 10,000 eligible single parents, whether they are first home buyers or previous owner occupiers, enabling eligible single parents to purchase a property with two percent deposit with no lenders mortgage insurance.
- **New Home Guarantee** – the Federal Government has rebranded the First Home Loan Deposit Scheme, first introduced at the start of 2020, to 10,000 places, by an additional 10,000 places for new dwelling purchases.
- **First Home Super Saver Scheme** – first announced in 2017-18 Federal Budget, the scheme allows for voluntary contributions of up to \$30,000 to be released for first home buyers for purchase of owner occupied property. The 2021-22 Federal Budget has increased the cap to \$50,000.
- **Expansion of Downsizer Contribution** – first announced in 2017-18 Federal Budget, this measure allows older Australians to make a tax free contribution to their super of up to \$300,000 from proceeds of selling their home without it being counted towards the contributions cap. From July 2022, Australians 60 years and over (as opposed to 65 years and over) will be able to access this scheme.

Background Information:

- In its submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue in September 2021, the Reserve Bank of Australia's key messages were as follows:

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- Housing affordability differs across the Australian population and has changed over the past decade in different ways for different groups.
- Housing prices have risen relative to income in many, but not all, areas. At the same time, interest rates have been low for a prolonged period, which has lowered the cost of debt service for borrowers. For those looking to purchase a property, the combination of low interest rates, low income growth, and high median housing prices, have made it harder to save a deposit.
- For those in the rental market, a large increase in the construction of apartments has lowered the cost of renting apartments in Australia's largest cities, but elsewhere rents have risen for most income groups.
- Affordability is assessed to have declined the most for lower income households who are renting or looking to buy a home.
- Some features of Australia's tax and transfer system incentivise owner occupation and investing in property, and discourage mobility. This affects the balance of demand and supply in the housing and rental markets, and may contribute to affordability pressures for some.
- Changes in regulation and other drivers of construction activity affect the flow of newly built housing, which in any one year only shifts the stock of housing incrementally. Even the most flexible construction sector is therefore limited in how quickly it can respond to rapid shifts in demand.
- Some constraints on the responsiveness of new supply relate to Australia's urban structure and geography. Regulatory changes are unlikely to alleviate these constraints entirely. One of the key challenges for supply over coming decades is that if populations in large cities expand further, households will either need to live further away from the centre of major cities (necessitating new infrastructure investment) and/or accept further increases in higher-density housing.
- Other regulations and planning processes may also be able to be streamlined to make supply more responsive to increases in demand. However, many of these regulations are intended to promote other social goals, such as ensuring buildings are constructed safely, and that neighbouring residents do not have costs and inconveniences imposed upon them about which they are not consulted.
- The COVID-19 pandemic, and the policy response to the pandemic, have affected housing markets in a number of ways. For example, changes in housing preferences may have shifted the balance between the supply of and demand for, housing in some housing markets. Affordability has improved a little for some and declined for others. Since it is not clear how lasting any shifts in preferences will be, there may be greater than usual uncertainty in evaluating any prospective policy changes.
- In response to declining affordability, some other advanced economies have sought to improve the balance between supply and demand, including by restricting demand.

- Moreover, the submission from NSW Government suggested the Federal Government review the 50 percent capital gains tax discount. The NSW government acknowledges factors like low interest rates, and supply of housing stock, are significant factors driving house prices, but says the Federal Government holds levers that could be improving affordability.
- A submission by Urban Taskforce Australia focuses on NSW (including Regional). They argue that the NSW Planning System has failed to ensure enough houses are built to meet demand. They have also pointed out that record low interest rates and relatively loose APRA lending controls has led to increase in home prices. They have made 15 recommendations to the Committee.