Canberra’s key climate change policies and programs

The ACT Government has the vision for Canberra to be a truly sustainable city providing leadership in addressing climate change through innovative mitigation and adaptation measures. To help achieve this vision, the ACT has established Australia’s most ambitious emissions reduction targets. Reductions will be achieved through the introduction of renewable electricity sources and energy efficiency measures to lower consumption. Climate change impacts are also being managed through city planning, transport and nature conservation policies.

The ACT Government is driving its vision by developing forward looking legislation and policy, managing of renewable energy projects and administering a suite of programs that help people reduce energy consumption at home and in their business or organisation. The government is leading by example to achieve carbon neutrality in ACT Government operations by 2020 by implementing energy efficiency systems and infrastructure as well as encouraging behaviour change in its workforce.

A recent community survey in Canberra demonstrated the overwhelming support for government to take a clear leadership role in addressing climate change. In response, the ACT Government has restated its commitment to continue to engage with all sectors of the community in the development of the policy options to further mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The following summarises Canberra’s recent progress in implementing key climate change policies and programs.

**Legislation**

**Greenhouse gas reduction**

The ACT’s ambitious emissions reduction targets are formalised in the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010*:

- zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2060
- peaking per capita emissions by 2013
- 40% reduction of 1990 levels by 2020
- 80% reduction of 1990 levels by 2050.

The *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010* is available online.

**Renewable energy**

A major shift to renewable energy sources is required to meet the Territory’s 2020 emission reduction targets. To achieve this shift, in November 2013 the ACT Government formalised a 90% renewable energy target (RET) as a disallowable instrument under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Act 2010*.

The *Minister’s media announcement* and the *disallowable instrument* are available online.

**Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme**

Improving energy efficiency helps people reduce energy use or get more out of the energy they do use, and can provide a buffer against higher energy prices predicted for the future. The Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme (EEIS) sets a Territory-wide energy savings target and obliges individual ACT electricity retailers to help customers save energy, with a strong focus on targeting low-income households. The EEIS is formalised in the *Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act 2012*.

The *EEIS* and the *Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act 2012* is available online.

**Policies and action plans**

**Climate change**

The ACT’s second climate change strategy and action plan, Action Plan 2 (2012), sets out a clear strategy to support the community’s vision that by 2060 Canberra will be a sustainable and carbon neutral city that is adapting to a changing climate. The strategy sets the path to meet the greenhouse gas reduction targets outlined above.

The *Action Plan 2* is available online.
Spatial planning

The ACT Planning Strategy provides a long-term spatial planning policy for the ACT and goals to promote orderly and sustainable development, consistent with the social, environmental and economic aspirations of the people. A more dense and diverse urban structure supported by public transport and active travel (for example, walking and cycling) are central to the strategy.

The ACT Planning Strategy is available online.

Transport

Transport for Canberra is the foundation for Canberra’s transport planning to 2030. Prepared in conjunction with the ACT Planning Strategy, it coordinates land use and transport to support the shift to a more sustainable Canberra. A priority action in the strategy is the construction of a light rail system to promote increased public transport use, supported by higher housing density. Active travel is also highlighted.

The Transport for Canberra and Light Rail Master Plan are available online.

Nature conservation

The ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013–2023 provides direction on how to better integrate and extend conservation efforts to provide the best chance for natural ecosystems to adapt to expected longer term shifts in climate. The strategy supports ongoing monitoring to understand the impacts of climate change and outlines priorities for adapting biodiversity to climate change.

The ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013–2023 is available online.

Water

The ACT’s new water strategy, Water for the Future – Striking the Balance, is being finalised. The strategy will outline actions to improve water security and water quality, and include water sensitive urban design requirements as part of green infrastructure as an integral part of urban growth and renewal.

The draft Water for the Future – Striking the Balance is available online.

Waste

Developed in consultation with the community, the ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011–2025 sets a clear direction for the management of waste in the ACT. The strategy’s goal is to ensure the ACT leads innovation to achieve full resource recovery and a carbon neutral waste sector.

The ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011–2025 is available online.

In March 2014 the ACT Government announced it would offer up to 23MW of feed-in-tariff entitlements to support the establishment of an integrated Material Recovery Facility and next generation energy-from-waste facility. This new waste infrastructure will increase diversion from 70-75% at present to 90-95% when fully operational.

See the Minister’s media announcement is available online.

Programs

Carbon Neutral ACT Government Framework

The ACT Government is committed to achieving carbon neutrality in its own operations by 2020, demonstrating leadership in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the achievement of the Territory’s legislated greenhouse gas reduction targets. In August 2012, the government endorsed the Carbon Neutral ACT Government Framework to enable and coordinate a whole-of-government approach to achieving carbon neutrality in a cost-effective manner by 2020.

The framework is available online.
ACTSmart Programs
Through ACTSmart, the ACT Government is helping households, businesses, schools and community groups contribute to a more sustainable future and reduce the ACT’s carbon footprint. Various support and tools offered through ACTSmart are available online.

Renewable energy projects under development
The first steps to meeting the renewable energy target for the ACT were achieved with the ACT Government’s large-scale solar feed in tariff reverse auction to support the development of 40 megawatts of large-scale solar generation capacity in the ACT. This pioneering reverse auction process, the first of its kind in Australia, allowed solar developers to bid and compete for ACT feed-in tariff support.

This competitive process gave developers the long-term financial security they needed to develop the facilities at the lowest cost for the ACT.

The Renewable energy project information is available online.

In February 2014 the ACT Government initiated a community solar scheme whereby households can pool resources to develop new large-scale solar installations with a guaranteed income stream of up to 20 cents per kilowatt-hour for 20 years. This secure income stream enables community groups to partner with renewable energy developers and access project finance. Details of this scheme will be announced mid-2014.

The Minister’s media announcement is available online.

On 12 March 2014 the ACT Government announced a 200 MW wind auction. The wind auction differs from similar projects in Australia in that the selection criteria for the auction require developers to demonstrate best practice community engagement processes for their projects and that the projects contribute to local job creation.

The wind auction information is available online.

The ACT Government will soon undertake an expression of interest process to identify a suitable location for, and market interest in, a solar technology demonstration precinct in the Territory. This will enhance the ACT’s position as Australia’s Solar Capital while leveraging local research and business capability to develop a solar energy investment cluster that will create local jobs and contribute to the diversification of the ACT economy.

The next generation solar information is available online.