



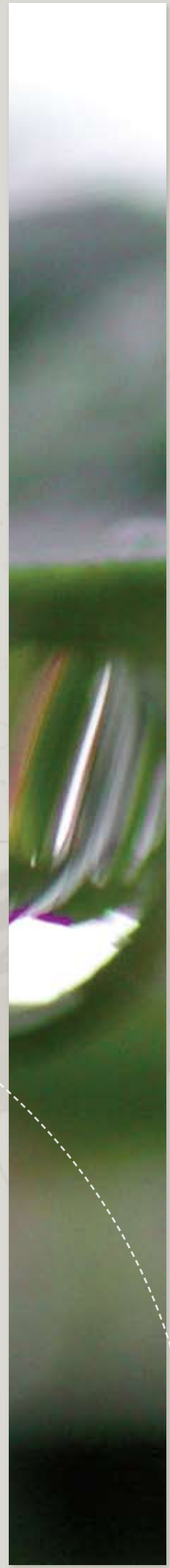
# People, Place, Prosperity

THE ACT'S SUSTAINABILITY POLICY  
2009



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# Foreword

On 27 March 2003, I launched *People Place Prosperity: a policy for sustainability in the ACT*. This document set out the ACT Government's policy commitment to sustainability, which included:

- embedding sustainability within its decision-making processes;
- promoting sustainability to the wider community;
- developing partnerships for sustainability with the ACT community; and
- developing indicators and reporting regularly on progress.

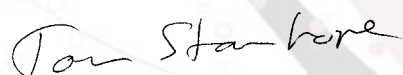
To date, the Government has made significant progress.

- Delivering *The Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century*, setting out goals and priorities for the sustainable development of the ACT.
- Producing *Capital Development: Towards Our Second Century* to provide a blueprint for the ACT's continued sustainable economic development. *Capital Development* replaced the *Economic White Paper*, which had guided five years of sustained economic growth.
- Putting in place new arrangements for the engagement of the community in government processes through *Citizen Centred Governance*.
- Developing and implementing the ACT's Climate Change Strategy, *Weathering the Change*, which has sustainability and sustainable actions at its very core.
- Securing the ACT Government's water supply, including through the development and implementation of *Think Water, Act Water*.
- Announcing a long-term goal of achieving zero net emissions in the ACT;
- Developing a framework of performance measures to allow more transparent scrutiny, and provides meaningful information on performance of the agency, service area or Government. These performance indicators reflect financial, social and environmental outcomes in the relevant areas of Government operations.
- Improving the format and presentation of the budget papers to provide information on Government's objectives and goals, its decisions on resource allocation, and the targets to be achieved by agencies, service areas and at the whole of government level.
- Enhancing the reporting framework (in both budget papers and departmental annual reports) to improve accountability through reporting against strategic objectives and budget targets for individual agencies as well as at whole of government level.
- Introducing sustainability into budgeting and resource allocation decisions.

Notwithstanding the significant achievements made by the ACT Government to date, there is always scope for improvement and work is ongoing across a number of areas of government.

This work is detailed in the following document, which represents a 'renewal' of *People Place Prosperity*. This reflects the fact that sustainability has now been embedded in the ACT's key guiding policy documents: the *Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century* and its subsidiary plans. The release of an updated *People Place Prosperity* also provides an opportunity to reflect on achievements to date, to consider what has changed over the last six years, to restate the ACT Government's commitment to a sustainable government and community, and to detail a program of activity for the coming years.

I commend this document to you.



Jon Stanhope  
Chief Minister





## Sustainability in the ACT

Sustainability for the ACT Government, its agencies and authorities is about providing for people, protecting our places and creating prosperity – now and into the future.

While it is expressed in many different ways, the concept of sustainability has three key components:

- recognition of the interdependence of social, economic and environmental well-being;
- a focus on equity and fairness, and that we need to take account of the effect of our actions on others in an interdependent world; and
- recognition that meeting the needs of today must not be at the expense of future generations being able to meet their own needs.

In order to fulfil our role effectively in creating a sustainable future, the ACT Government has adopted an understanding of sustainability that recognises the need for a long-term perspective, the need for responsibilities and benefits to be shared equitably, and the interdependence of our economy, environment and society.

The Brundtland Commission was convened by the United Nations in 1983 to address growing concern about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for

economic and social development. In establishing the Commission, the UN General Assembly recognised that environmental problems were global in nature and determined that it was in the common interest of all nations to establish policies for sustainable development.

The ACT Government has adapted the Commission's definition of sustainability to guide its creation of a truly sustainable ACT:

*Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

## A Triple Bottom Line Approach to Sustainability

The Government has adopted a triple bottom line approach to sustainability, recognising the interdependence of social, economic and environmental well-being, but also acknowledging that decision-making will often involve trade-offs between the three.

This approach is reflected in both the Government's sustainability strategy, *People, Place, Prosperity*, and in the Government's broader approach to sustainability as set out in the three core strategies of the *Canberra Plan – the Social Plan, Capital Development*, the Government's economic plan, and the *Canberra Spatial Plan*.



# Our Commitment to Sustainability

## Guiding Principles

In revising *People, Place, Prosperity*, the ACT Government has reviewed the original supporting principles. The following set of principles has been developed to clarify the ACT Government's approach to sustainability, and to support its implementation:<sup>1</sup>

- Dealing cautiously with risk, uncertainty and irreversibility;
- Integrating environmental, social and economic goals in policies and activities;
- Ensuring and encouraging equal opportunity and community participation;
- Valuing and conserving biodiversity and ecological integrity;
- Ensuring inter generational equity;
- Recognising the global dimension;
- Committing to best practice and the principles of continuous improvement;
- Ensuring good governance; and
- Taking account of the wider region.

The ACT Government will continue to incorporate these principles into the way we do business, and we will encourage their uptake and use in the wider ACT community.

<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth of Australia 1992, Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment 1992, Bellagio Principles 1996, Commonwealth of Australia 1999, OECD 2001, Earth Charter; Hargroves and Smith 2005.

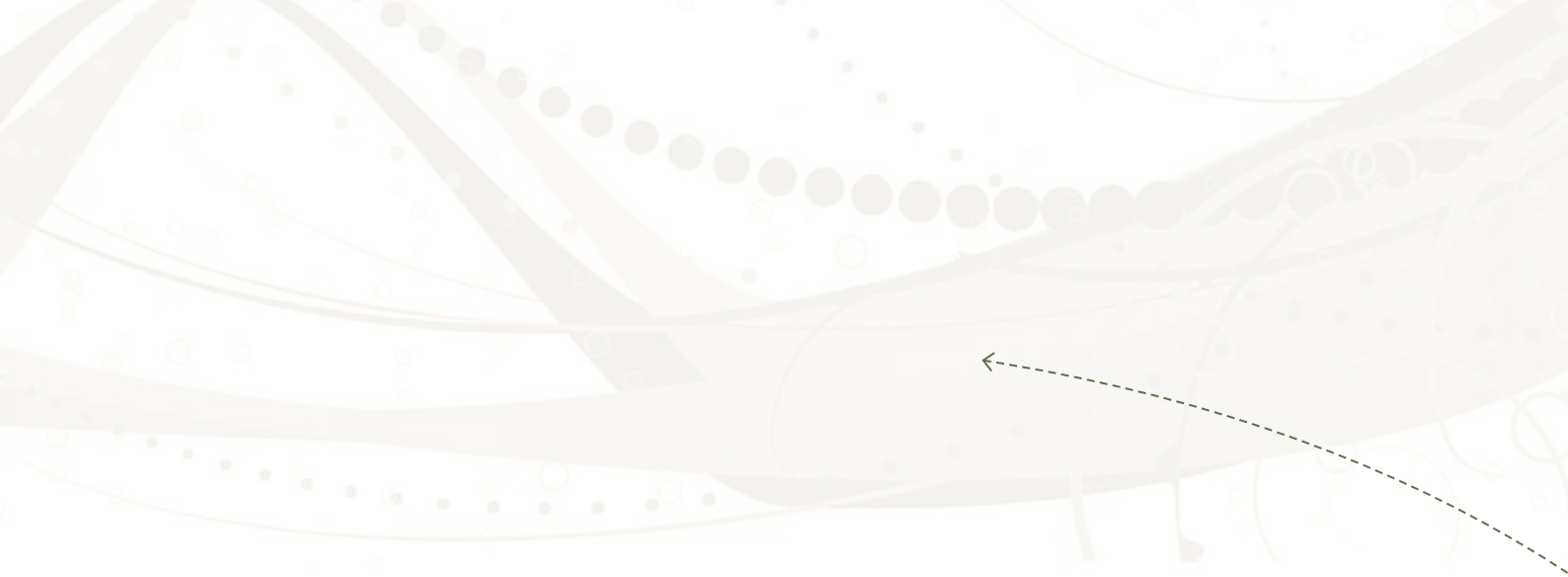
## Translating sustainability into practical action

In 2008, the ACT Government released its revised *The Canberra Plan: Towards our Second Century*. It reflects the Government's commitment to sustainability, both in its vision for Canberra and through the themes and actions. The document is the ACT's key overarching policy framework document and is guided by a vision for Canberra that

*Canberra will be recognised throughout the world as a truly sustainable and creative city; as a community that is socially inclusive – acknowledging and supporting those who are vulnerable and in need and enabling all to reach their potential; as a centre of economic growth and innovation; and as the proud capital of the nation and home of its pre eminent cultural institutions; and as a place of great natural beauty.*

The vision is supported by seven key themes:

- Quality Health Care
- A Fair and Safe Community
- Excellent Education, Quality Teaching and Skills Development
- A Strong, Dynamic Economy
- A Vibrant City and Great Neighbourhoods
- A Sustainable Future
- High Quality Services.



The Plan is supported by *Capital Development: Towards Our Second Century*, the revised economic plan also released in 2008, the *Spatial Plan* and the *Social Plan*.

*The Canberra Plan* themes reflect the ACT Government's priority areas for sustainability in the Territory and, together with the subsidiary plans, provide a framework for *People Place Prosperity* and the Government's sustainability work program.

## Achievements to date

To date, the Government has made significant progress towards its sustainability goals.

### Social outcomes

- In relation to health and well-being services, the ACT Government has:
  - provided increased funding to address growing demands in key areas;
  - expanded mental health and aged care services;
  - established child and family centres to provide integrated care;
  - supported workforce development; and
  - implemented a range of health promotion programs.
- In releasing *The Canberra Plan-Towards our Second Century* in August 2008, the Government reinforced its commitment to further enhance community engagement and to provide opportunities for the community to participate in decisions.
- The *Citizen Centred Governance* paper, released in July 2008, further explored community engagement, acknowledging that governments

nationally and internationally are looking beyond the specific propositions to engage communities in discussion about the large and complex issues that they mutually face.

- This includes broader community conversations that are open-ended as the range of interrelated matters around complex issue are explored openly by the community, business and government. A citizen centred governance model is one that puts the citizen or community at the centre of policy development and provides a range of means for enabling citizens to contribute to the design and development of services that affect them.
- The Government has been working in partnership with the non-government sector with the development of the Social Compact in 2004. The Social Compact is a statement of understanding about the relationship between the ACT Government and the community sector. The Joint Community Government Reference Group, which meets bi-monthly, is a consultative forum that provides strategic advice on critical sustainability issues that affect government and non-government agencies in the community services sector, including advice on the Social Compact.
- The ACT Government has progressed substantial work on poverty impact analysis and generated an assessment tool that allows government to assess the probable impacts of new policy proposals on the community.
- The aim of enabling all members of the community to reach their full potentials has been a key focus of both Canberra Plans and the Canberra Social Plan. The Canberra Social Plan was supported by the implementation of a broad range of programs to enhance social inclusion.
- The Community Inclusion Board, which operated from 2004-09, promoted social inclusion and researched and supported a range

of strategies to support the most disadvantaged in the community. As a result of the Board's deliberations, the Government is developing a framework to ensure that the social impact of policies and programs is considered early in the policy development cycle.

- The Government has held six Sustainable Future workshops to identify what key stakeholder groups consider are priorities, obstacles and opportunities for creating a more sustainable city. They will provide an important springboard for further community conversations to identify specific strategies and actions.

## Economic outcomes

- The Government's release in 2008 of *Capital Development: Towards Our Second Century* reflected the success of the Economic White Paper. Over the five years of the Economic White Paper, the ACT had enjoyed five solid years of economic growth, the lowest unemployment level in Australia and average weekly earnings well above the national average.
  - *Capital Development: Towards Our Second Century* provides a new, more flexible framework to support continued economic development, addressing current global and national economic circumstances.

## Environmental outcomes

- The Government is implementing its Climate Change Strategy, *Weathering the Change*, which has sustainability and sustainable actions at its core.
- The Government has taken many steps to protect the ACT's biodiversity, including:
  - Establishing the Mulligans Flat and Gorooyaroo Nature Reserves;





- Developing action plans for endangered species; and
- Expanding the role of the Commissioner for the Environment to encompass broader sustainability issues.
- Securing the ACT's future water supplies, including through developing the *Think Water, Act Water* strategy and a range of measures, including an enlarged Cotter Dam and the Murrumbidgee to Googong Transfer project.
- The Government has articulated a vision of Canberra becoming Australia's solar capital, introducing Australia's most generous feed-in-tariff and facilitating the establishment of a large-scale solar power facility.
- The Government has agreed to establish a long-term goal of zero net greenhouse gas emissions for the ACT.

## Outcomes across social, economic and environmental spheres

- The Government has developed a framework of performance measures that is more relevant to the needs of users, and provides meaningful information on performance of the agency, service area or Government. These performance indicators reflect financial, social and environmental outcomes in the relevant areas of Government operations.
- The Government has improved the format and presentation of the budget papers to provide information on Government's objectives and goals, its decisions on resource allocation, and the targets to be achieved by agencies, service areas and at the whole of government level.
- The Government has enhanced the reporting framework (both budget papers and departmental annual reports) to improve accountability through reporting against strategic objectives and budget targets for individual agencies as well as at whole of government level.



- The Government has introduced sustainability into budgeting and resource allocation decisions.
- The Government has been using cross-government taskforces to address key issues to ensure integration across relevant policy and service areas. This approach has been adopted, for example, in the development of the Government's affordable housing action plan.
- One of the taskforces established by the ACT Government has been the ACT Stimulus Taskforce. The Taskforce is overseeing the roll-out of the planned construction and infrastructure in the ACT under the Australian Government's economic stimulus package.

## Future Work Program

Notwithstanding the achievements made by the ACT Government to date, there is always scope for improvement and work is ongoing across a number of areas of government. This work includes:

- embedding community inclusion policy and practice in ACT Government;
- preparing a scoping study that will be used to shape a Clean Economy Strategy for the ACT Government;
- development of a triple bottom line assessment framework for government policies, programs, projects and initiatives;
- introduction of triple bottom line annual reporting;
- monitoring and reporting on progress towards sustainability;
- Developing a second Action Plan under the ACT's Climate Change Strategy 2007-2025, *Weathering the Change*; and
- the development of a framework for embedding environmental sustainability in ACT Government operations.

## Projects with social outcomes


### EMBEDDING COMMUNITY INCLUSION

The ACT Government has a strong commitment to community inclusion and as part of the renewal of the Canberra Social Plan in 2009-10 will develop a high level action plan to embed community inclusion policy and practice in ACT Government. This work will build on the foundations set through the work program of the Community Inclusion Board from 2004 - 2009. This forward policy agenda will feature a number of key elements including:

- development of community inclusion goals and a high level action plan targeting key action areas;
- the adoption of a set of principles for delivering or 'operationalising' community inclusion, recognising that nurturing joined-up and whole of government approaches to social issues is critical to building community inclusion and addressing disadvantage;
- oversight of progress by a Community Inclusion Committee of Cabinet; and
- biannual Community Inclusion Forums held at a neighbourhood level, led by three Chief Minister's Community Inclusion Advocates, to continue the important work of listening to the community and drawing on community leadership.

### POVERTY IMPACT ANALYSIS

The poverty impact analysis (PIA) tool is designed to be used by government policy makers at the initial stages of policy development. While the anticipated direct impacts of a policy are generally identifiable, there can be other impacts that are not readily apparent. The PIA tool is designed to help policy makers identify these 'hidden' consequences early in the policy cycle.



The ACT Government is now considering how the PIA tool can augment its development of triple bottom line assessment.

### **ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY**

The *Reaching Out to the Community initiative* (2009-2010 Budget - \$398,000) provides for improved community engagement initiatives across government. The first year includes project funding to support a broader community conversation on big picture issues that affect Canberra's future. Other initiatives include:

- reviewing community engagement practices and protocols informed by the Preferred Methods of Community Engagement consultancy; and
- updating the community engagement manual *ACT Guide to Engaging with the Community* and improving ACT Government websites including the Community Engagement website during 2009.

### Projects with economic outcomes

#### **A CLEAN ECONOMY**

The ACT Government has engaged the University of Canberra to conduct a scoping study which will be used to develop a clean economy strategy for the ACT Government.

The study is seeking advice on:

- local industry capability and future opportunities;
- local research capability and future directions in 'green tech' and 'clean tech';
- opportunities for collaboration between local industry and local research and what's needed to promote collaboration;

- Australian Government 'green tech and clean tech' industry development programs and their reach and relevance in the ACT; and
- Supply-side issues such as skills availability and skills requirements for clean businesses, both locally and nationally.

It will also:

- describe and define 'clean economic development' in a local context;
- discuss the role of governments in supporting a clean economy and
- advise on possible approaches and next steps.

The University of Canberra has assembled a multi-disciplinary team across fields such as environmental science, landscape architecture and planning, and community sustainability. Staff from the ANU Climate Change Institute and Fenner School of Environment and Society will also be involved in the project.

### Projects with environmental outcomes

#### **WEATHERING THE CHANGE**

In 2007, the ACT Government provided leadership by releasing its comprehensive strategy for addressing climate change, *Weathering the Change*.

The ACT Government has completed many of the actions in this most important strategy, and continues to make progress on the other initiatives.

Reflecting the need to respond and lead in the changing national and international context for this issue, the ACT Government has brought forward the development of the second Action Plan under *Weathering the Change*. The ACT Government has also committed to the long-term goal of zero net greenhouse gas emissions.

### **MINIMISING THE ACT'S WASTE**

The ACT already recovers and recycles three-quarters of its waste across all sectors. Through its Office Smart and Business Smart programs, the ACT Government is undertaking further work to improve the rate of recycling from the commercial waste stream, which currently contributes about half of the waste going to landfill.

The ACT Government is also reviewing the ACT's overarching waste strategy, to further improve rates of reuse, recycling and potential energy recovery, and to minimise waste going to landfill and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### **REVIEWING THE NATURE CONSERVATION ACT**

The *Nature Conservation Act 1980* is the ACT's primary legislation supporting nature conservation in the Territory. It has served the ACT well; 54% of ACT land is managed with the primary objective of nature conservation.

The Act, however, is now almost thirty years old and is being reviewed to ensure it reflects contemporary national legislation and policy frameworks, current ecological knowledge and the ACT's sustainability directions.

### **Projects with social, economic and environmental outcomes**

#### **TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE ASSESSMENT**

Treasury has put significant preliminary work into the development of a triple bottom line assessment tool to support decision-making. This will now be finalised by Chief Minister's Department.

#### **TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE REPORTING – AGENCY**

The Government is committed to the introduction of Triple Bottom Line annual reporting.

Triple bottom line reporting has witnessed considerable growth in popularity over the last decade and there are a multitude of reports available for various listed companies, government agencies and not-for-profit organisations.

To progress this initiative, the Government will pilot a triple bottom line annual report for Chief Minister's Department that will be published in addition to the conventional 2008-09 report later this year. This will provide Government and the community with an opportunity to assess the value of the initiative before implementing it across all agencies.

#### **TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE REPORTING – MEASURING OUR PROGRESS**

The Government will also take a new approach in reporting against *Measuring Our Progress* by establishing a live website which provides up-to-date data on a set of high level performance indicators.



## Conclusion

There is no identifiable end-point in the pursuit of sustainability, and the balancing of social, environmental and economic outcomes. As the ACT travels this path, it will be essential to continually review our progress and to replot our path, identifying the next targets and initiatives that are required.

This need for active repositioning means that this version of *People, Place, Prosperity* is necessarily a statement of progress and intent reflecting this particular point in time. The ACT Government is committed to the ongoing work of resetting our goals and actions to take us beyond our achievements, and addressing new challenges as they arise.