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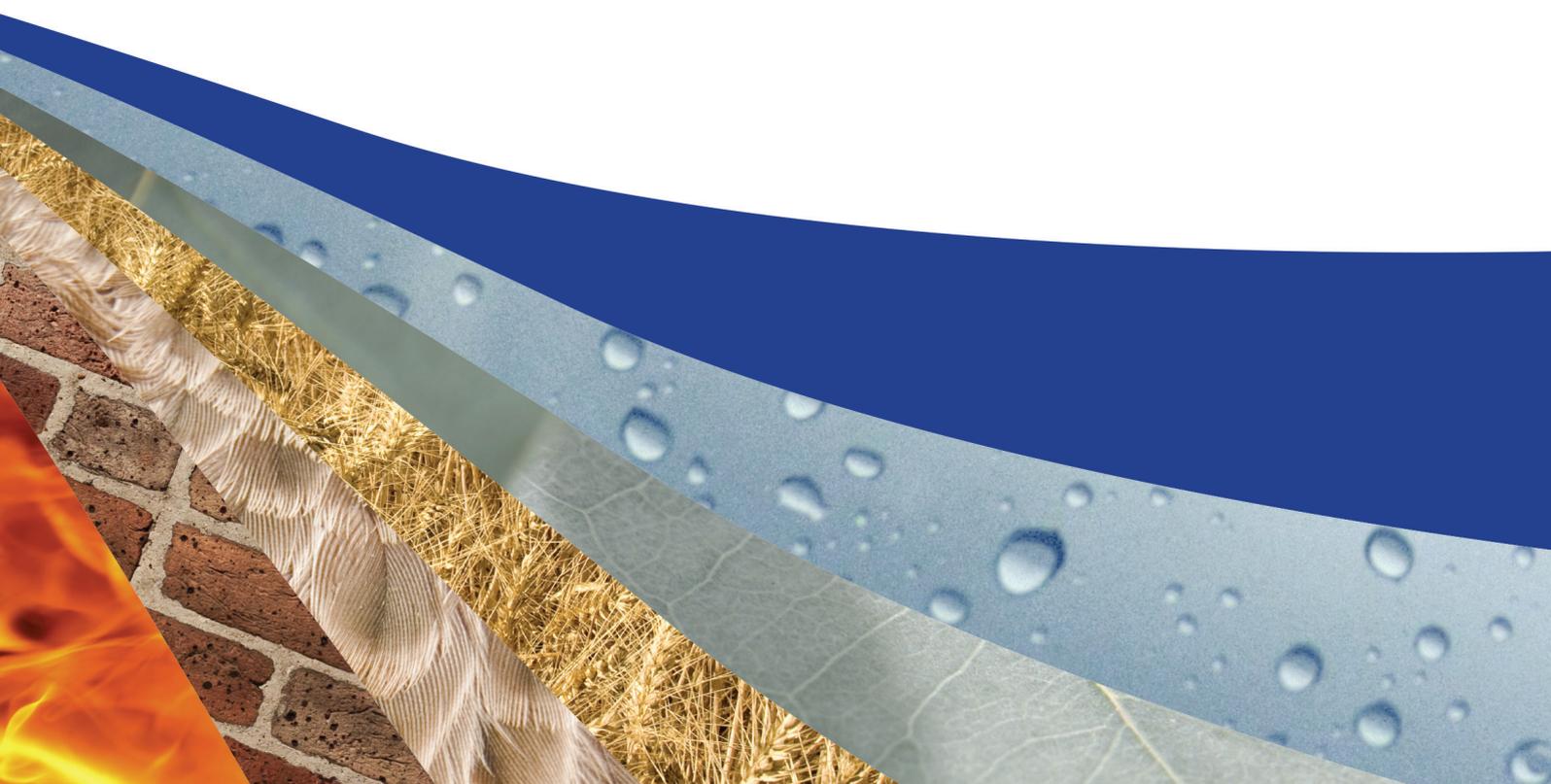
Environment and Planning

# DRAFT ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

Living With a Warming Climate



FEBRUARY 2016



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## Minister's foreword



Climate change affects our community as a whole and we are already witnessing the impacts of a warming climate.

To respond to the changing climate we must act, but government cannot do so alone. Together we must prepare for the more extreme changes that lie ahead and increase our resilience in the face of them.

The ACT Government leads Australia in acting to mitigate climate change through its legislation, policy and on-ground works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This same ambition and leadership is now needed to adapt both our environment and our lifestyle to local climate changes caused by the greenhouse gases already accumulated in the atmosphere. These gases will continue to impact on us for decades to come and we must act now to minimise their consequences for us and future generations.

To guide our collective efforts in adapting to climate change in a coordinated and economical manner, the government is developing the ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. While much work has been undertaken or is underway to adapt and improve our resilience, there is still much more we can and must do.

This draft Adaptation Strategy identifies the key adaptation policy challenges for the ACT and asks the community—you—to provide feedback to inform our strategy. In doing so, you will be supporting our collective vision for Canberra to be a carbon neutral city by 2060, to be achieved through ambitiously reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, shifting to renewable energy sources, and enhancing the resilience of our people, our city, our environment and our economy through effective adaptation measures. The government is committed to Canberra's place as a world-leading sustainable city.

Simon Corbell MLA  
Minister for the Environment and Climate Change



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Figure 1: Climate change impacts and affected ACT sectors.

# ACT CLIMATE IMPACTS





## Executive summary

Increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution mean that global temperature rises over the remainder of the 21st century are inevitable, irrespective of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Our climate is already changing and we must adapt to these unavoidable changes if we are to thrive as a sustainable community. The ACT Government has therefore prepared this draft ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: Living With a Warming Climate (the Adaptation Strategy). This draft document was informed by a review of the potential impacts on and the risks for the ACT as the basis to develop actions that would help us adapt and reduce our vulnerability. This draft is now open for the community's feedback, which will inform the final Adaptation Strategy of the ACT Government.

The purpose of the Adaptation Strategy is to help the community, our city and the natural environment adapt to climate change and become more resilient to the impacts by:

- communicating the risks and impacts of climate change to our region (how climate change will affect us)
- incorporating climate change risk considerations and adaptation actions in ACT Government policies, programs and practices
- encouraging actions by everyone to consider making changes to their daily life to increase resilience and foster emerging opportunities.

## How will climate change impact the Canberra region

The ACT and surrounding region is projected to experience longer, drier summers and increased frequency and severity of storm events. This increases the level of threat from bushfires, heatwaves and violent storms to lives, property, economic activities and the natural environment.

Information on climate change projections and climate impacts specific to our region are generated from two primary sources: the NSW and ACT Regional Climate Model (NARClIM) project; and the Commonwealth and Scientific Industry Research Organisation (CSIRO) / Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) Climate Change in Australia – Projections for Australia's NRM Regions.

This information confirms previously known trends and gives us a greater level of certainty about likely climate changes and timeframes in which they will occur. The advice is that there is significant risk that extreme climate events will become more frequent and intense, impacting life and property. Therefore, for future generations to enjoy the quality of life we enjoy now, actions are needed to increase our resilience to the effects of a changing climate.



## Why is adaptation important?

Adaptation is the process by which vulnerability to climate hazards is minimised. However, adaptation responses can vary greatly depending on the type and severity of the hazard and the capacity of the community to adapt. These responses range from building resilience (coping strategies to maintain business-as-usual) to transitional (incremental system changes) and transformational (fundamental system change).

An incremental approach to adaptation, based on predicted hazards and risks, is achieved through an understanding of the place, the characteristics of the community and careful planning, particularly by government. In consultation with the specific community, adaptation planning and action reduces the risk of major disruptions to society from abrupt transformations. As such, the ACT Government is seeking to work with households, businesses and communities to adapt to climate change impacts in our region in a measured and systemic way.

Some policy and regulatory barriers may inhibit adaptation responses, suggesting the potential for government action to improve outcomes for the community. Given this, the ACT Government's adaptation efforts need to:

- embed consideration of climate change in risk management practices across all ACT Government directorates and their operations and
- ensure sufficient flexibility in regulatory and policy settings to allow households, businesses and communities to manage the risks of climate change.

## What the ACT Government is doing and why

The ACT Government has been taking climate change seriously for over 20 years through decisive actions. The current Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the ACT, AP2 (2012) envisages: "By 2060 we will be a more sustainable and carbon neutral city that is adapting to climate change."

The primary focus of AP2 is on climate change mitigation through legislated targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by improving energy efficiency and increasing renewable energy generation. However, reducing greenhouse gas emissions is only half the task and robust adaptation efforts need to be implemented and adapted over time.

AP2's three adaptation actions are: the Territory Wide Risk Assessment; the Ministerial Statement; and the assessment of impacts on ecological systems. These have provided a better understanding of the potential risks and impacts of climate change in the ACT and reveal the need for more work to promote effective adaptation.

This draft Adaptation Strategy requires climate change impacts to be 'mainstreamed' into policies and practices across government, households, businesses and the community. It identifies that some people in our community and some ecosystems in our region have a higher vulnerability to the risks from climate change and therefore warrant particular consideration.

## How did the ACT Government develop this strategy

The ACT's approach to adaptation is consistent with the national Climate Adaptation Outlook: A Proposed National Adaptation Assessment Framework (2013). This framework presents strategies to build understanding and adaptive capacity, and to reduce sectoral and regional vulnerability to climate change impacts.



Informed by this framework, the draft Adaptation Strategy has been developed through a collaborative approach. Enabling Adaptation in the ACT (EnAACT) meetings and workshops were conducted in 2014 with the ACT Climate Change Council, local academics, peak bodies, neighbouring NSW governments and agencies across the ACT Government.

The guiding principles applied throughout the strategy development process were:

- no regrets: choose actions that are worthwhile for the community no matter what specific climate changes occur
- inter-generational equity: take action now rather than leaving the burden to future generations
- decision lifetime: consider how long the decision will have an effect and whether it is fit-for-purpose for whole-of-life; for example, given major infrastructure lasts for over 50 years, decisions today need to take account of needs and climate conditions that far into the future
- triple bottom line: consider the environmental, economic and social benefits and costs of actions.

## Proposed approach to climate change adaptation

It is the ACT Government's intention that climate change adaptation is mainstreamed; that is, considered throughout the planning and delivery of systems and services such as buildings, power, water and health services, as well as in the management of natural resources and ecosystems. The resilience of our community should be enhanced proactively in a steady and incremental way, rather than reactively following a severe climate event.

Adapting to climate change is everyone's business. As such, everyone in our community has a role to play and can take actions to reduce their vulnerability. These actions need to be informed by robust information and understanding. To achieve this, the ACT Government recognises the need to effectively engage and collaborate with diverse stakeholders across the region to improve our resilience.

Taking collective action to adapt to a changing climate will incur some costs. However, this will be an investment that mitigates the risk of higher costs in the longer term.

## Sectoral assessments and actions

Consistent with accepted leading practice, the draft Adaptation Strategy adopted a sectoral assessment approach to identify climate change risks and consider adaptation actions. This assessment process included:

- identifying the likely future climate impacts relevant to each sector
- considering adaptation activities already underway
- identifying any emerging issues and/or residual climate-related risks
- proposing new actions to address vulnerabilities
- articulating the desired outcomes of proposed adaptation measures.

Five sectors have been selected based on their relative priority in the Territory:

1. Disaster and emergency management
2. Community health and wellbeing
3. Settlements and infrastructure
4. Water
5. Natural resources and ecosystems



Reflecting the need to ramp up our existing adaptation work, high priority short-term (between 2016 and 2020) actions are proposed for the five sectors, with integrating actions to ensure cross-agency coordination. The actions have been aggregated under four outcome areas:

- **Outcome 1: Territory-wide resilience**  
A focus on people and community resilience through ramping up actions on risk and vulnerability, health and wellbeing, disaster and emergency preparedness.
- **Outcome 2: A city for all seasons**  
A focus on place and increasing Canberra's sustainability through renewed investment in 'living infrastructure' and new requirements for climate-wise buildings and landscapes.
- **Outcome 3: Opportunity for adaptation innovation**  
A focus on prosperity through increasing economic diversity and innovation that responds to climate and sustainability drivers.
- **Outcome 4: Integration**  
A focus on ensuring that action is effective and integrated across all sectors.

The suite of 22 actions (refer Table 1) will enable the ACT Government to continue its work and ramp up engagement with business and households to build greater resilience in our community, our city and our environment. New work is subject to future budget decisions.

## Next steps

The ACT Government values public comment on this draft ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: Living With a Warming Climate. It is important to engage the whole community, including our regional stakeholders.

Community feedback will be taken into consideration when the Environment and Planning Directorate revises the draft into the final strategy. The final Adaptation Strategy is expected to be adopted by the ACT Government in 2016, with the priority actions to start in 2016–17.



## 22 priority short-term adaptation actions

Table 1: Outcomes 1

### Outcome 1: Territory-wide resilience

#### Actions by end 2016

##### 1. Bushfire prone areas

Make changes to regulatory settings to:

- a. recognise Canberra's expanded bushfire prone area
- b. introduce higher Bushfire Attack Level standards for new buildings and major extensions.

##### 2. Reducing impacts from the warming climate

Increase awareness of climate risks and what we all can do in our daily lives by expanding existing:

- a. Emergency Services Agency outreach to households in the Bushfire Prone Area
- b. Actsmart programs to households in the Bushfire Prone Area.

#### Actions by end 2017

##### 3. Climate risk assessments

Update or undertake new assessments of climate risks and hazards with upgrade proposals for:

- a. ACT Government owned and leased buildings
- b. ACT owned utility and services infrastructure and essential services delivery.

##### 4. Climate impact and planning

Introduce requirements to planning for new estates and urban renewal in Territory Plan and sub-division guidelines and design standards to ensure climate change adaptation considerations in planning discussions.

##### 5. Framework for flood management

The revision of the framework is completed and being implemented.

##### 6. Strategic Bushfire Capability Framework

Complete the capability framework under the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan.

##### 7. Sustainable procurement

Introduce mandatory minimum sustainability requirements to ACT Government capital works and asset upgrade projects to ensure assets and services will be 'climate wise' and carbon neutral by 2020.

##### 8. Landscape conservation

Support key landholders and managers to collaboratively identify, protect and strengthen:

- a. potential climate wildlife refuges (biodiversity refugia) across the landscape of the region
- b. adaptive capacity of ecosystems (wildlife communities) in our bioregion.

##### 9. Caring for land and water

Implement:

- a. education of land managers about climate impacts and adaptation actions
- b. more effective control of pest animals and plants that may become more critical under climate change
- c. measuring and monitoring of climate impacts on ecosystems in our bioregion.

#### Actions by end 2020

##### 10. Climate wise buildings

Introduce ACT region specific climate wise guides for buildings and estate planning.

##### 11. Regional collaboration

Work with the region to:

- a. improve awareness of climate change impacts to build resilience and adaptive capacity
- b. improve awareness of climate-suitable practices for agriculture.



Table 2: Outcomes 2

Outcome 2: A city for all seasons
Actions by end 2017
<p><b>12. City resilience</b></p> <p>To increase sustainability in adapting to climate change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. review design standards for public infrastructure to ensure climate change adaptation is considered</li> <li>b. invest in the urban forest to provide sufficient public area shade and shelter across all districts</li> <li>c. introduce requirements to reduce heat absorption of building surfaces and pedestrian pavements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>13. Tree-lined pathways</b></p> <p>Add to the Strategic Cycle Network Plan a program of shade tree planting for walking and cycling routes.</p>
<p><b>14. Increasing healthy living</b></p> <p>Support healthy living through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. progressive implementation of the Active Travel Strategy through expansion of pathways with appropriate support infrastructure such as drinking fountains, parking, seating and shower facilities.</li> <li>b. assess opportunities for investment in community gardens in new estates and urban renewal areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>15. Integrated Catchment Management Strategy</b></p> <p>The preparation of the plan for the catchments of our region is completed and being implemented.</p>

Table 3: Outcomes 3

Outcome 3: Opportunity for adaptation innovation
Actions by end 2017
<p><b>16. Climate adaptation innovation</b></p> <p>In projects across the city for new or existing public infrastructure, initiate the creation and or provision of trials to innovate in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. materials, surfaces, structures, products or methods</li> <li>b. maximising capture and re-use of stormwater</li> <li>c. making public realm landscape treatments more climate resilient.</li> </ul>
<p><b>17. Water for life</b></p> <p>Evaluate stormwater infrastructure and initiatives for potential further expansion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. stormwater irrigation of priority public open spaces</li> <li>b. mitigation of nuisance flooding through increasing on-site retention and infiltration</li> <li>c. protection of aquatic habitats and prevention of waterway scouring.</li> </ul>
<p><b>18. Climate adaptation training and education</b></p> <p>Collaborate with peak bodies and local knowledge brokers on new or innovative delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. programs for education, training and upskilling of builders and trades people</li> <li>b. continuing professional development for Canberra and region built environment professionals</li> <li>c. a web-based tool for self-assessment of household climate adaptation and resilience.</li> </ul>
Action by 2019
<p><b>19. Basin Priority Project</b></p> <p>Complete the construction of approved water quality improvement projects incorporating new approaches to catchment 'treatment trains' in six priority sub-catchments.</p>



Table 4: Outcomes 4

## Outcome 4: Integration

### Actions by 2016

#### 20. Sustainability alliance

Build on existing engagements with peak bodies and local knowledge brokers to create a cross-sector partnership providing an efficient and effective vehicle to:

- a. share climate change and sustainability information across diverse groups to build understanding, support informed decision making and inspire action
- b. seek input on relevant ACT policy and program issues
- c. facilitate collaboration between sectors on challenges and opportunities of mutual interest.

#### 21. Awareness raising

Achieve effective sharing of information across all stakeholders through sustained promotion and engagement efforts, including providing periodic updates on local climate impact assessments and emerging research outcomes.

#### 22. Monitoring and evaluation framework

Measure resilience as an outcome of successful adaptation, including:

- a. establishing a longitudinal community survey (commencing in 2016 and repeated in 2020)
- b. measurable and repeatable indicators to evaluate resilience across community sectors.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

*Spring into life:* Entry by Rupsa Neogy Kumar to the Challenge Accepted climate change competition



## 1.1 Purpose

The ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: Living With a Warming Climate (the Adaptation Strategy) will support the community, our city and the natural environment to become more resilient to the impacts from climate change to 2020 by:

- communicating the key impacts of climate change on the ACT and how this will affect us
- incorporating climate change risk considerations and adaptation actions in ACT Government policies, programs and practices
- encouraging actions by households and businesses to increase resilience and foster emerging opportunities.

This document brings together information on the latest advice on the climate change impacts we are facing into the future and some of the measures we can take to reduce our vulnerability to them; in other words, to increase our resilience. This draft Adaptation Strategy has been prepared for the purpose of public consultation.

## 1.2 Government's objectives

In preparing this draft Adaptation Strategy, the ACT Government's objectives are:

- **Mainstreaming:** climate change adaptation becomes considered throughout the planning and delivery of systems and services, such as buildings, power, water and health services that support our daily lives.
- **Resilience:** the climate resilience of our community should be enhanced in a steady and incremental way, rather than being prompted by a severe climate event. The ACT Government recognises the need to deliver effective engagement and collaboration with the community, to work together across our region to improve our resilience.
- **Leadership:** by including climate change considerations in all policies and projects, the ACT Government seeks to provide leadership for community and business, particularly in investment planning and risk management. Taking action to adapt to a changing climate will incur some costs now, but will save us all in the longer term from loss of health, wellbeing and prosperity.
- **Effectiveness:** by concentrating attention where most improvement can be gained over the short term (to 2020) the ACT can set itself on the path to transformative adaptation.

## 1.3 The changing climate

Climate change refers to the set of changes to the Earth's climate systems from global warming. Global warming is the result of burning fossil fuels (coal, gas and oil) and other processes which release carbon dioxide and other gases, such as methane, into the atmosphere. These gases cause the 'greenhouse' effect that keeps our planet at a stable temperature, but the ongoing accumulation of greenhouse gases (known as GHG emissions) is bolstering the greenhouse gas effect and thus increasing the warming of the planet. This warming is contributing to changes in climate (and then weather) patterns across the planet.

Climate change impacts resulting from the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are already being observed. Even with significant global action now to reduce or stop GHG emissions altogether, there have been enough greenhouse gases accumulated already that global warming will continue for decades and impacts will become increasingly more severe.

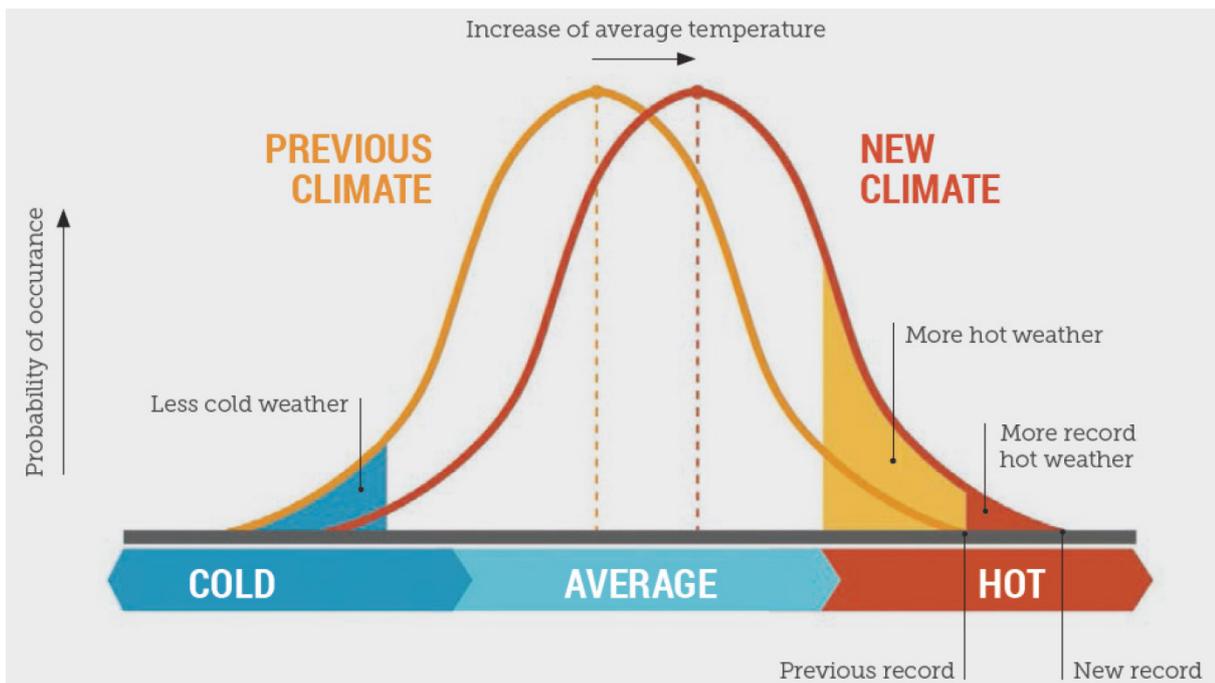


The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that on current trends, the global average surface temperature increase could be five degrees Celsius (5°C) by the end of the 21st century. Climate modelling at our regional scale has been done for the ACT through the NSW and ACT Regional Climate Modelling (NARClIM) project, released in late 2014. Its findings are in line with the IPCC projections.

To prepare adequately for living in a warming climate, we must consider the multiple impacts on our way of life, including through 'worst case' scenario planning such as drought combined with a heatwave plus an increase in the number of bushfires. A real example of this scenario was the multiple impacts that occurred in summer 2014 in Victoria when Melbourne's rail system stopped when temperatures over 40°C caused buckling train lines, stranding people; cancellation of sporting events; a large number of emergency call outs due to heat stroke; and rolling 'brownouts' of electricity supply due to demand for additional power for air conditioning.

The decisions governments and individuals make today about infrastructure, health, water management, agriculture, biodiversity, transport and housing will have lasting consequences for our children and future generations. By considering the future climate when making these decisions, we will be in a better position to deal with the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

Figure 2: Diagram showing the warming of the future climate



Climate change diagram by Professor Will Steffen, ACT Climate Change Council member

In developing the draft Adaptation Strategy the following concepts have been considered:

**Adaptation** to climate change involves the planning and activity by individuals, communities, businesses and governments to cope with the changing climate.

**Vulnerability** to climate change is defined by the IPCC<sup>ii</sup> as the degree to which socio-economic and biological systems are susceptible to, and unable to cope with, adverse impacts of climate change.

**Adaptive capacity** refers to the ability of a socio-economic or environmental system to change to better suit climatic effects or impacts. There are limits to the speed or degree to which some parts of these systems can change. Limitations can be economic, technical or behavioural. For example, the rate of climate change is faster than some species can adjust to. In this case they will migrate or be replaced by species more suited to the new climate.



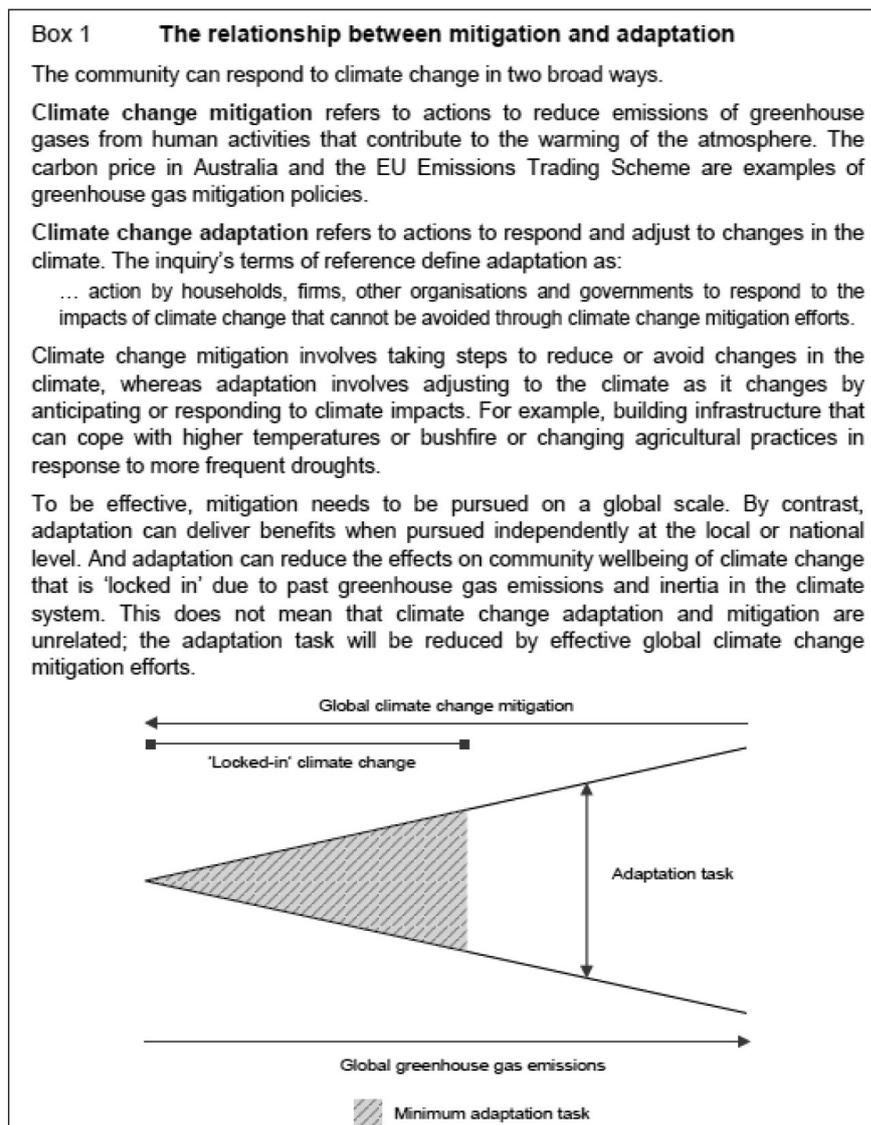
**Resilience** is the ability of a system to deal with different types of stresses or hazards in a timely, efficient, and equitable manner. Adaptation actions are intended to increase resilience to, and/or reduce the severity of, climate change impacts on both human and natural systems.

**Transformation** in adaptation refers to changes that help us adapt to climate change beyond what can be achieved by small or incremental changes to a business-as-usual approach. It implies a completely different approach to the way services or goods are delivered. For example, a transformed transport system may not be arrived at by making fossil fuel powered vehicles incrementally more efficient but by introducing electric vehicles powered by renewable energy.

**Maladaptation** is action that leads down a wrong or dead-end pathway due to a ‘set and forget’ approach rather than continuing to respond to change over time; or due to short-term decision making that does not apply intergenerational equity and lifetime considerations.

**Mitigation** concerns activities to reduce, eliminate or prevent GHG emissions. This can be primarily achieved by using more energy-efficient equipment and technology and/or replacing electricity generated by fossil fuels with electricity generated by renewable resources such as wind and solar energy.

Figure 3: Diagram illustrating the need for adaptation action in addition to mitigation



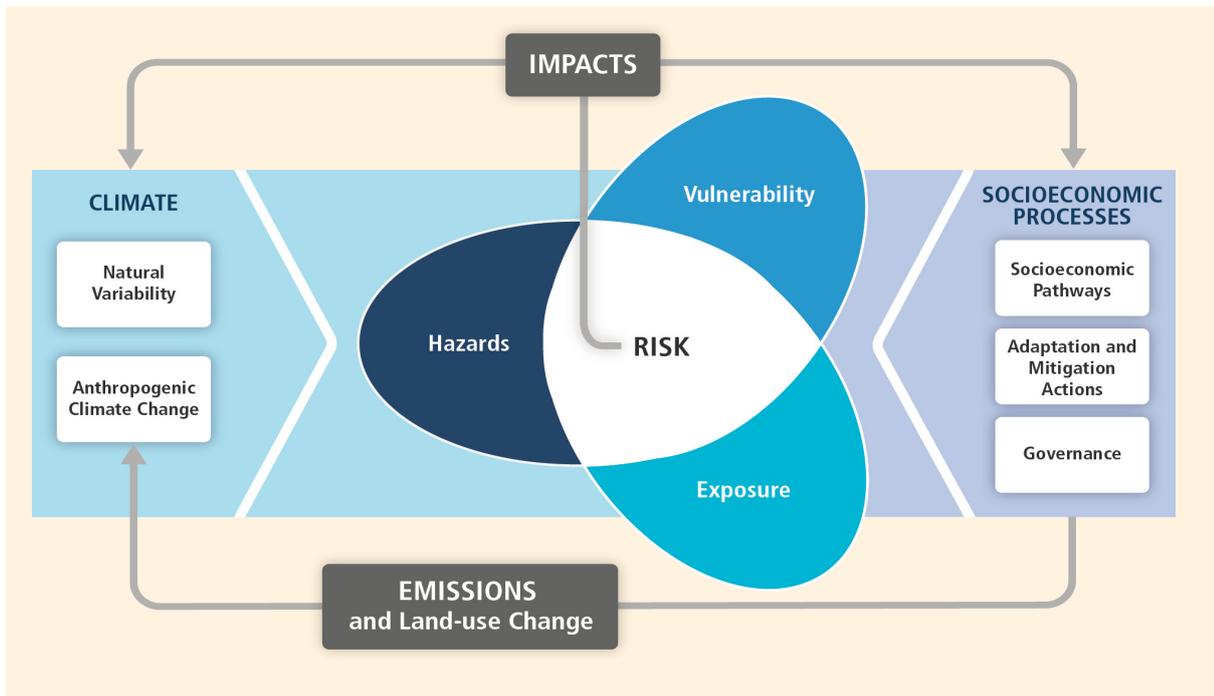
“Even if emissions stopped globally today, the accumulation of greenhouse gasses already in the atmosphere will continue to warm the planet requiring us to adapt. The degree of adaptation required will be commensurate with the ongoing emission and accumulation of greenhouse gases<sup>iii</sup>.”



## 1.4 How the draft strategy was developed

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group II, in Assessment Report number 5 (WGII AR5), identified that the risk of climate-related impacts results from the interaction of climate-related hazards (including hazardous events and trends) with the vulnerability and exposure of human and natural systems. Changes in both the climate system and socio-economic processes, including adaptation and mitigation, are drivers of hazards, exposure and vulnerability<sup>v</sup>.

Figure 4: Risk of climate-related impacts from the WGII AR5



### Enabling adaptation in the ACT

This draft Adaptation Strategy has been developed in collaboration with the NSW Government. Recognising that the ACT is a small jurisdiction located wholly in NSW. A key activity in developing the draft strategy was the EnAACT project conducted in 2014<sup>v</sup>.

In the EnAACT project climate information from local and national experts (CSIRO, ACT Climate Change Council, Bureau of Meteorology and the Australian National University) was shared at a series of workshops with representatives from relevant ACT Government agencies. The process was to inform and then deliberate on the risks and vulnerabilities across five sectors. Representatives identified the present situation, the risks and vulnerabilities from a new climate future, and what might have to change by 2030 or by 2060. The key risks and vulnerabilities with the interrelationships between climate and non-climate factors were identified. The adaptive responses considered pathways that ranged from coping strategies that maintain business-as-usual transitional responses that introduce incremental system change, through to transformation within sectors to fundamentally different ways of operating.

In considering adaptation responses, the risk of maladaptation was acknowledged. That is, the potential for short-term solutions that ultimately compound the problem. Reducing the risk of maladaptation is addressed by ensuring that full lifecycle and operational costs are included and that long-term impacts are considered using the best information available.



## 1.5 Limits and barriers to adaptation

Considering adaptation actions for sectors means identifying what is at risk from climate change impacts and what must change to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience. This applies in both human and non-human systems, with actions by government and non-government sectors.

Actions need to recognise there are limits to adaptation. Not all climate change impacts can be adapted to by all people or all ecosystems. Understanding the limits to adaptation is important in conserving natural resources. If key species in an ecosystem cannot adapt to the incremental changes or are diminished by events such as frequent intense fires, the whole ecosystem is less resilient and may decline before adaptation to the new conditions can take place. Understanding the physiological limits to human and non-human systems in the ACT and region is necessary to be able to plan for transformative actions that will be suitable for the changing climate.

The pathways approach to climate change adaptation is the accepted best practice. An adaptation pathway can be gradual transformation with many small steps over time, or radical transformation with rapid change. Radical transformation is usually triggered by advances in knowledge and technology that are adopted.

The 2012 Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, *Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation*, concluded that the barriers to effective climate change adaptation are from one or more of the following:

- “Market failures—conditions that prevent markets from allocating resources to the uses or areas where they are most highly valued. For example, a barrier could arise where there is insufficient or inadequate information on climate change impacts for households, businesses, other organisations and governments to make well-informed adaptation decisions.
- Policy and regulatory barriers—regulation (or an absence of regulation) that inhibits effective adaptation. For example, a lack of integration of building and planning regulation could create a barrier to adaptation where neither system appropriately manages a particular risk to property (such as flooding).
- Governance and institutional barriers—poor governance arrangements impede coordination between governments and agencies, reduce accountability or lead to authorities being allocated responsibilities they do not have sufficient capacity to carry out effectively. For example, the current legal liability of councils is uncertain when they make land-use planning decisions relating to land that is subject to future climate change risks. In some cases, there is a risk that councils may defer decisions as they are uncertain about the legal implications of their decisions.
- Behavioural and cognitive barriers—the way people process information and make decisions could act as a barrier to effective adaptation. For example, individuals may have trouble weighing up the costs and benefits of adaptation actions where climate change impacts and potential resultant damages are uncertain and occur over long timeframes. As a result, they might procrastinate or defer actions that would be in their own best interest now.”



## 1.6 Opportunities

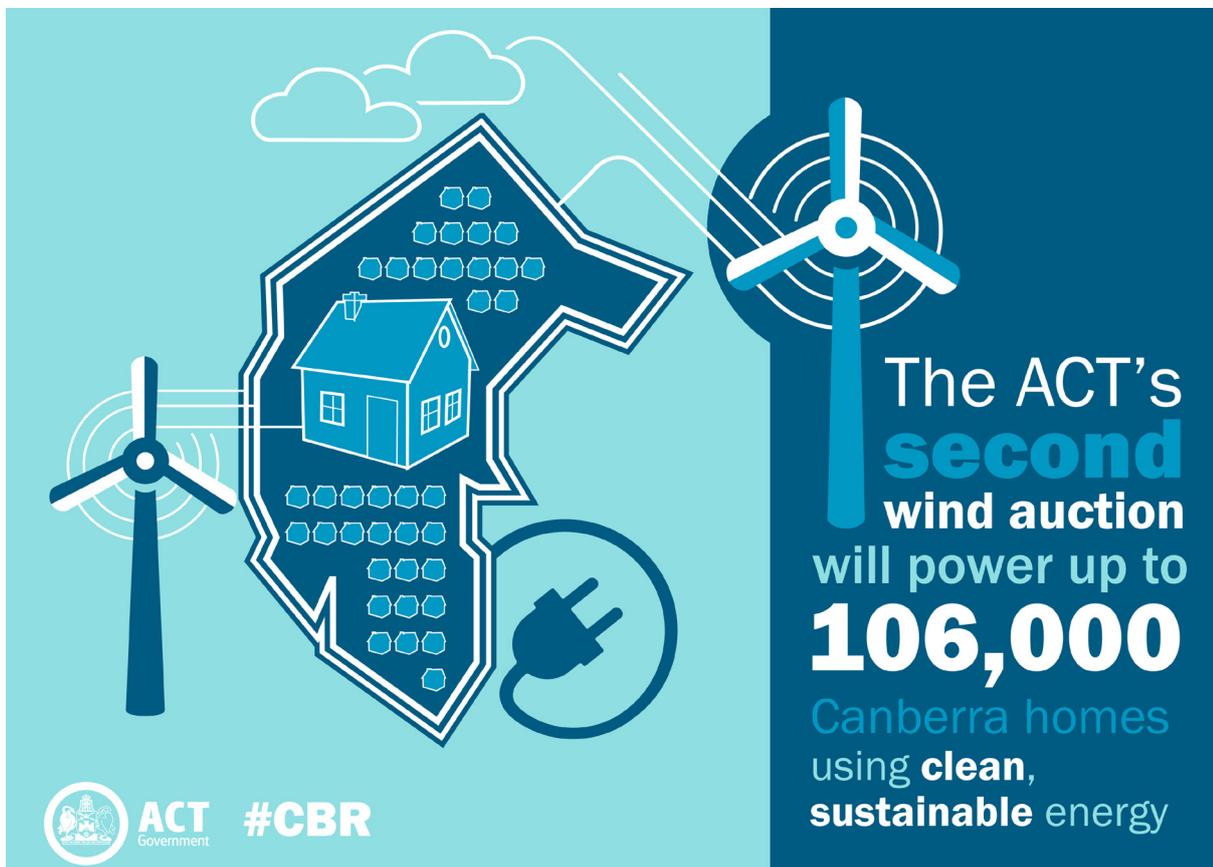
As we take adaptation actions we may be able to create related economic opportunities. However, we need to be proactive in identifying these opportunities and support their development. Opportunities may be in the fields of training and education; new design or materials in the built environment; enhanced environment and natural resource management practices; or new technologies, products, and businesses.

The ACT Government has demonstrated that a transition to a low carbon society can be good for the environment and result in tangible benefits to our local economy. In the procurement of renewable energy for the city, interested companies were required to address the Local Investment Framework<sup>vi</sup>. This has meant that in addition to the benefits of increased engineering, consulting and construction jobs, a series of local investments have been secured, including:

- wind farms managed from the ACT in new corporate and operations hubs
- new Pacific-region headquarters for private companies established in the ACT
- a new Renewable Energy Skills Centre of Excellence at Canberra Institute of Technology
- a new Masters course in wind energy at the Australian National University
- a Renewable Energy Innovation Fund, contributed to by industry.

By looking at the possibilities that adapting to the changing climate will bring, we can generate innovative ideas that can become the basis for new jobs and doing things differently.

Figure 5: ACT's commitment to renewable energy supply





## 2. CONTEXT

*Nice for a change, not every day:* Entry by Paul Cowled to the Challenge Accepted climate change competition



## 2.1 A growing and ageing city

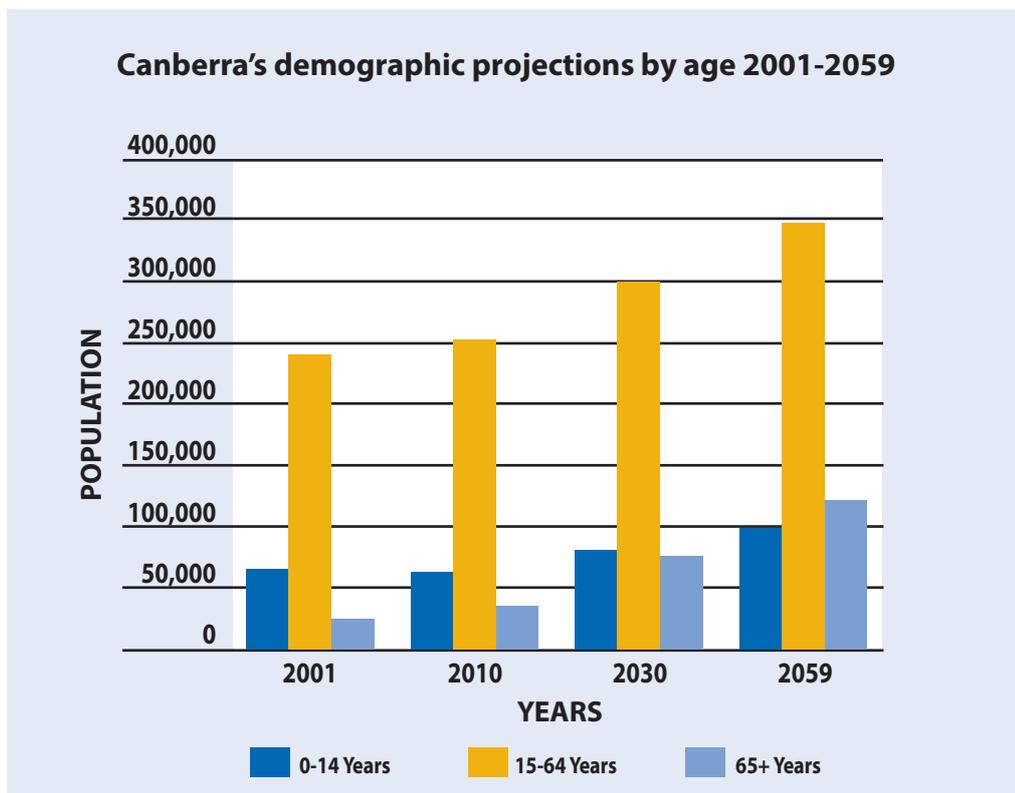
Planned from its inception, the ACT is home to Australia's capital city, Canberra. The ACT comprises over 2,350 square kilometres situated within the upper Murrumbidgee River catchment in the Murray–Darling Basin.

The Territory's population of 390,000 is growing, and is projected to reach 400,000 by 2017 and 500,000 by 2033. Much of the population growth is projected to occur in the new development areas of Gungahlin and Molonglo. Canberra's future age profile is projected to show growth at all ages, with the largest cohort being young adults. One of the biggest projected changes into the future is population ageing, with those aged 65 and over increasing from 11% of the population in 2012 to 22.5% in 2062<sup>vii</sup>.

Guiding how population growth is distributed is critical to Canberra becoming a more compact, efficient city. Focusing urban intensification in town centres, around the mid-sized business and retail centres (group centres like Dickson and Mawson) and along the major public transport routes balances greenfield expansion, as is occurring in the Molonglo Valley.

Population growth and demographic changes affecting the ACT are reflected in similar changes in our region, with residential growth continuing to occur in all surrounding local government areas.

Figure 7: Figure 5: Demographic projections for Canberra based on 2011 ABS data





## 2.2 Regional climate effects

The Territory's climate is termed 'cool temperate' and 'alpine'. Our diverse topography, from the surrounding mountains ranges to the plain where the city of Canberra sits, results in a wide range of microclimatic conditions. The other physical determinants of our climate are our latitude (between 35 degrees and 36 degrees south of the Equator); our elevation (from 450 to 1911 metres above sea level) and our distance from the sea (130 kilometres).

### CSIRO climate projections

The climate projections for Australia produced by the CSIRO, together with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), are provided in the State of the Climate 2014 report and updated in the 2015 Climate Change in Australia<sup>viii</sup> report. The CSIRO and BOM projections state there was 'very high confidence' that temperatures would rise across Australia throughout the century, with the average annual temperature set to be up to 1.3°C warmer in 2030 compared with the average experienced between 1986 and 2005. Canberra is located in the Murray Basin cluster of the eight Australian climate regions for Australia modelled in the CSIRO reports.

Figure 8: CSIRO Murray Basin Cluster map



#### Murray Basin cluster:

##### Temperature

By 2030 warming of 0.6–1.3°C above 1986–2005. By 2090, for a high emission scenario warming is 2.7–4.5°C; intermediate scenario warming is 1.3–2.4 °C above 1986–2005. Frost days, temperatures under 2°C, could halve by mid century.

##### Rainfall

In the near future (2030) natural variability is projected to predominate over trends due to GHG emissions. Late in the century (2090) cool season (April to October) rainfall is projected to decline.

Time spent in drought is projected, with medium confidence, to increase over the course of the century.



## NARClIM ACT regional projections

The NARClIM project reported on future climate impacts for the ACT region on a 10x10 kilometre scale grid, which provided more refined climate projections than those previously available.

Key impacts identified include:

- The climate will be hotter, with warm days starting earlier in spring and with heatwaves more frequent and of longer duration.
- The annual quantity of rainfall may remain the same but will decrease in winter and spring and increase in autumn.
- The storm season will extend from spring into autumn.
- Longer periods of hotter weather will result in the environment being drier overall, contributing to an increase in severe fire weather days over a longer fire season.
- The identified trends of projected changes to the climate out to 2030 will continue, and will increase and intensify by 2070.

Figure 9: Key climate impacts for the ACT identified by NARClIM

	<b>Projected temperature change</b>	
	Maximum temperatures are projected to <b>increase</b> in the near future by 0.6 – 0.9°C	Maximum temperatures are projected to <b>increase</b> in the far future by 1.4 – 2.3°C
	Minimum temperatures are projected to <b>increase</b> in the near future by 0.4 – 0.7°C	Minimum temperatures are projected to <b>increase</b> in the far future by 1.4 – 2.3°C
	 The number of hot days will <b>increase</b>	The number of cold nights will <b>decrease</b>
	<b>Projected rainfall change</b>	
	Rainfall is projected to <b>decrease</b> in spring	Rainfall is projected to <b>increase</b> in summer and autumn
	<b>Projected Forest Fire Danger Index (FFDI) changes</b>	
	Average fire weather is projected to <b>increase</b> in spring, summer and winter	The number of severe fire weather days is projected to <b>increase</b> in summer and spring



## 2.3 Climate impacts

Changes to the climate are already occurring and will continue for the foreseeable future. The projections mean that adaptation actions need to be enhanced and supported with greater publicity so that our community understands the importance of everyone taking action. The key climate impacts identified are explored in further detail below.

### Temperature increase and heat wave



*'Historically, in Australia more people die from heatwaves than they do from any other type of natural disaster.'*

Professor Will Steffen, ACT Climate Change Council member, IPCC scientist (2014)

Based on long-term (1910–2011) observations, temperatures in the ACT have been increasing since the 1950s. The ACT is projected to continue to warm into the near future compared to recent years (1990–2009). The projected warming trend is large compared to previous natural variability in temperature and is similar to the rate of warming projected for adjacent regions of NSW.

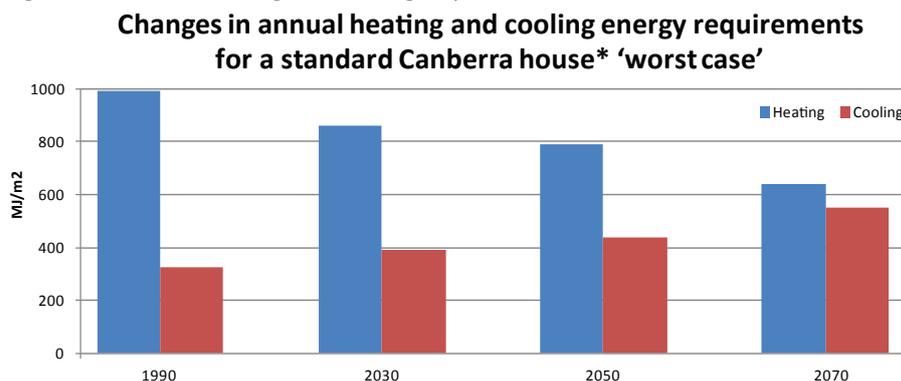
Currently Canberra experiences an average of fewer than ten very hot days (over 35°C) per year, with none in the alpine areas. In the near future of 2030 there will be up to an additional five hot days and in the far future of 2070, up to 20. The hotter weather will be mainly in spring and summer but will extend into autumn.

Temperature extremes, both hot and cold, can have considerable impacts on health, infrastructure and ecosystems. These projected extremes, rather than average temperature changes, bring greater risks.

Hot weather is normal in our summer season; however a heatwave is an extreme event. The definition of heatwave is relative to where you live and therefore what you are already acclimatised to. For the Canberra region, a heatwave is a series of more than three days with maximum daytime temperatures over 35°C without sufficient night-time cooling temperatures below 23°C.

Research into housing types in Canberra highlighted the cost-effectiveness of investing in building retrofits by considering a range of adaptation scenarios<sup>x</sup>. Results showed that by 2070 climate change could mean the energy required to heat a typical Canberra home may be one-third lower, but energy for cooling could more than double (megajoules per metre square or MJ/m<sup>2</sup>). In absolute terms, the total annual energy requirement could fall slightly.

Figure 10: Annual heating and cooling requirements for a standard Canberra house.



\*A standard Canberra house is considered to be three bedroom, slab-on-ground and brick veneer.<sup>i</sup>



## Rainfall and drought



*'The first decade of the 21st century was characterised by the Millennium Drought and the return of El Niño conditions is anticipated in the near future.'*  
Bureau of Meteorology (2014)

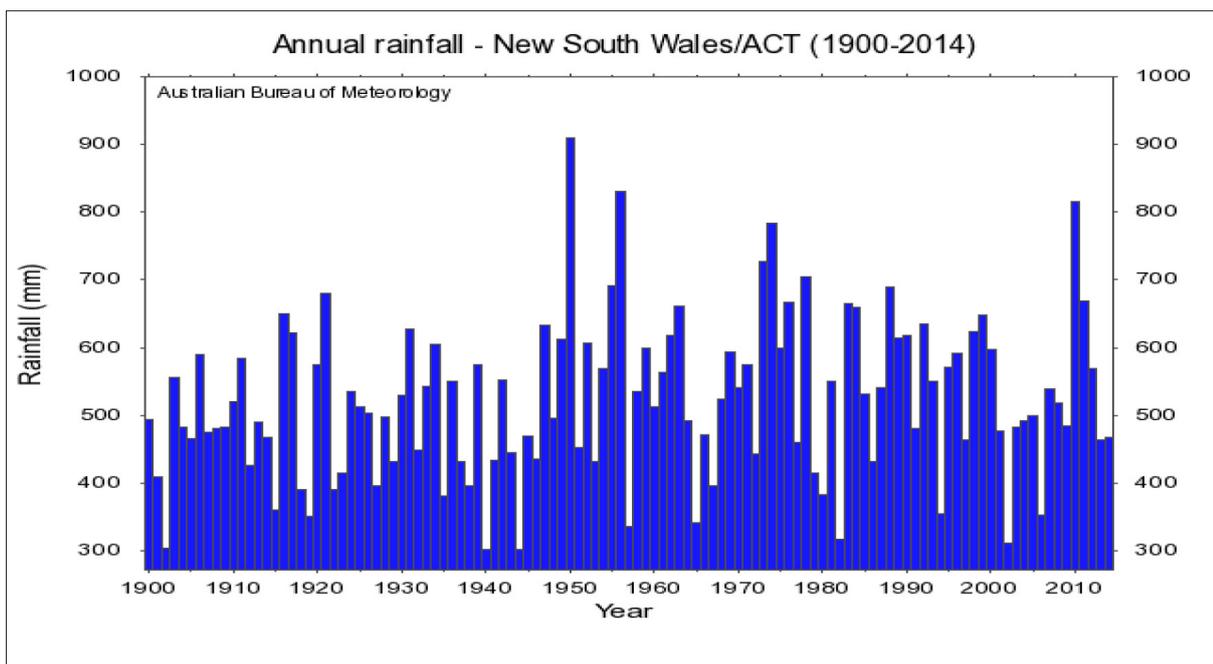
The ACT currently experiences rainfall variability from season to season and from year to year, with no rain falling in some months. This is due to the complex interactions between regional weather patterns, the influence of larger-scale climate patterns such as El Niño/La Niña, and the topography of the Great Dividing Range.

Rainfall varies from over 1200 millimetres (mm) precipitation in the mountains, to 400–800 mm in the north of the city. This falls each season in a range from 100 mm to 300 mm. Canberra's rainfall averages 52.4 mm per month and 629 mm annually. The average is 108 rain days per year, however local variability can mean no rain in some months and the whole season's rain in just a few days.

Climate projections for the water cycle indicate even more reduced reliability of evenly spread rain throughout the year. In the mid to longer term, winter and early spring rain is projected to decrease, but there will be more intense rain events in the warmer months of late spring and summer. Consequently, the annual average rainfall is not projected to vary significantly in the near future. However there is a higher degree of uncertainty about the annual average in the longer term. This is in part due to the ACT being between the drying projected for Victoria and the wetting projected for northern NSW (with the influence of cyclones moving south).

With increasing temperatures and decreasing reliability of rainfall each month, plant life will become stressed and respond as if in drought conditions. This combination will have flow-on effects for natural ecosystems and urban landscapes.

Figure 11: Annual rainfall for New South Wales/ACT



## Storms and flooding



*'La Niña events are associated with flooding, such as Queensland floods in 2011 that left at least 38 people dead, affected about 70 towns, saw the evacuation of thousands of residents and hit the economy by about \$30 billion.'*

Study published in Nature Climate Change (2014), lead author Dr Wenju Cai

Storms can happen at any time of the year but the current predominant period of storm activity (storm season) in the ACT is from September to the end of February. The longer-term projections for water cycle changes include tropical cyclones reaching further south, thereby increasing the frequency of storms over a lengthened storm season and potentially increasing the rainfall at this time of year.

More frequent and more intense storms with hail and intense rain can impact urban infrastructure systems and buildings, and the houses, crops, roads and bridges in rural areas. Intense rain does not have time to soak into the ground and becomes runoff (stormwater), potentially causing flash flooding. Stormwater can be a hazard to people getting around, cause damage to infrastructure and adversely impact the water quality in the city's lakes and ponds. Hail and intense rain can cause inundation and damage to buildings, damage trees and bring down phone and power lines. Canberra has been designed to cope with flash flooding from intense rain events. However with increasing intensity of storms, the design of the city and the ability of its existing infrastructure to cope will be tested. Additionally, an increase in storm frequency and/or intensity will increase demands on our emergency services.

At present in Australia, the damage associated with storms causes the greatest social, environmental and economic costs related to natural disasters. When events are severe, massive efforts by the community and the government are required for restoration and remediation. Research by CSIRO indicates that extreme La Niña events will almost double in frequency as the climate warms and will occur every 13 years compared with a past frequency of every 23 years.



2010 December flood



## Bushfires



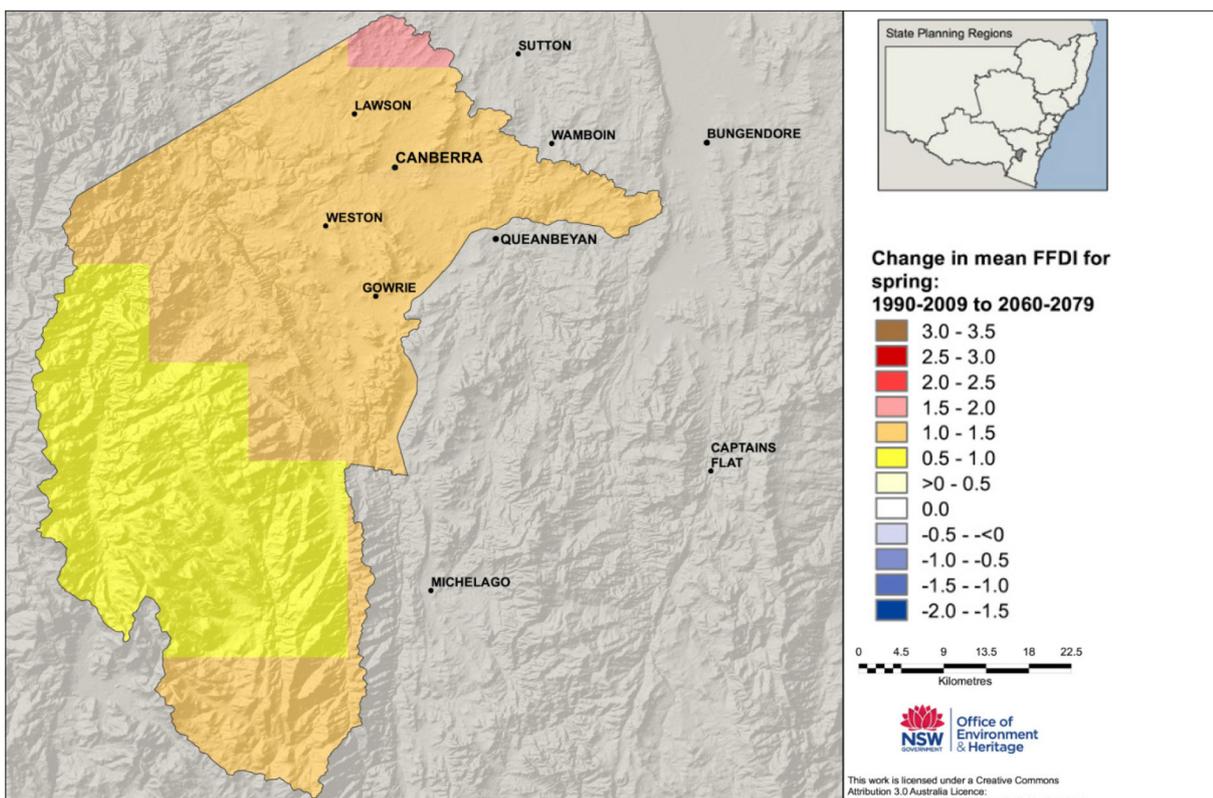
*'The fire experienced by the ACT in 2003 was not a normal category of bushfire, although it started that way. Due to the fuel, weather and topographic conditions it became a firestorm. Since 2003 there have been over 30 such extreme fire events in Australia. This phenomenon is not yet well understood or able to be predicted; however increasing incidence is thought to be linked to the hotter and drier climate.'* ACT Emergency Services Agency (2014)

The risk of bushfire depends on four factors: enough dry vegetation (fuel), with weather favourable for fire spread and an ignition source. The Forest Fire Danger Index (FFDI), used in NSW and the ACT to quantify bushfire hazard levels, combines the weather factors of temperature, humidity and wind speed with an estimate of the fuel's state of dryness. FFDI projections come from daily measurements at 17 stations in NSW and the ACT. There are six categories of FFDI: a value of 12 or less indicates low to moderate; 12–25 is high; 25–49 is very high; 50–74 is severe; 75–99 is extreme, and above 100 is catastrophic.

In Canberra long-term FFDI estimates show the average daily FFDI is 7. BOM issues Fire Weather Warnings when the FFDI is forecast to be over 50. The ACT is projected to experience an increase in both average and severe FFDI in the near and far future. The projected increase in fire hazard is three more days every decade, to occur mainly in summer and spring, with a decrease in autumn. The current ACT average of 1.1 severe fire weather days each year is projected to increase to 7 days per year by 2030 and 19 days per year by 2070.

This increasing bushfire risk and changing seasonality has consequences for how we manage the natural and built environments across all scales, from our national parks to our urban areas. Below is the NARCIIM map of future spring fire danger weather.

Figure 12: Spring fire danger for the ACT



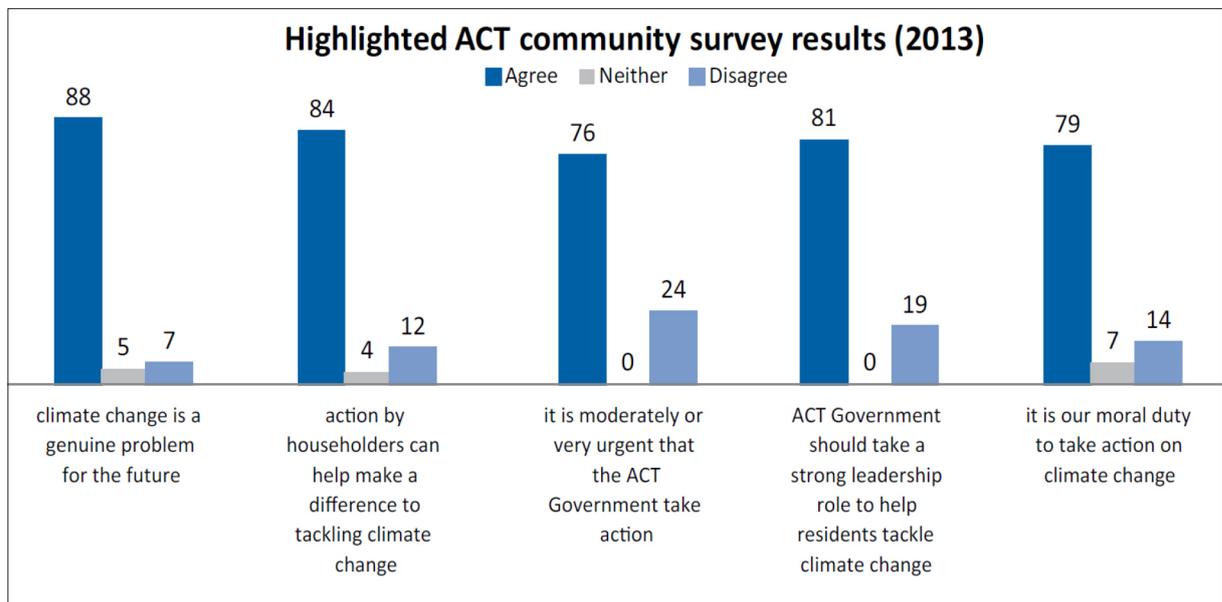


## 2.4 ACT community's climate change views and values

The ACT Government is committed to the principles of open government and consultation and sought to gauge broader community attitudes towards climate change as the basis for the development of this strategy. A number of engagement activities, including a resident survey in 2013, signalled the following:

- a high level of awareness of climate change
- a high level of support for local action on climate change
- a willingness to commit to individual household actions.

Figure 13: ACT 2013 community survey results



The full results of the survey are at: [www.environment.act.gov.au/cc/community-engagement](http://www.environment.act.gov.au/cc/community-engagement).

These results helped to frame the degree of ambition called for in working towards a city that is demonstrating leadership in both climate change adaptation and mitigation policy.

Since 2007, The Climate Institute has produced Climate of the Nation research, which captures the nation's views on climate change, its impacts and solutions. The Climate Institute recently published Climate of the Nation 2015 – Australian Attitudes on Climate Change<sup>xv</sup>. This year's results show:

- increasing awareness of the cause and impacts of climate change
- strengthening support for renewable energy and carbon pollution regulation
- a greater call for government action
- older Australians now remain the only demographic more likely to believe the seriousness of climate change is exaggerated.



## 2.5 What the ACT Government is doing and why

Canberra is generally well placed to adapt to some climatic changes because we have a planned city with relatively new infrastructure; we are not susceptible to sea level rise, storm surge or cyclones; and we have built above flood levels. Combined, these mean our city has inherent resilience and the ability to cope with these stressors and shocks.

Notwithstanding this, climate change will exacerbate a number of impacts that will need to be addressed. The ACT Government Territory Wide Risk Assessment<sup>xvi</sup> identified the three most extreme hazards for Canberra as:

- Bushfires – potential for: loss of life, casualties, property damage, loss of infrastructure and utilities and water supply; environmental, cultural, business and economic impacts; disruption to transport; evacuation; and impacts on Commonwealth assets.
- Extreme heat – potential for: fatalities; impacts on health; significant impact on vulnerable communities; impact on energy consumption and resulting disruption in supply; impact on the provision of essential services and infrastructure; increased risk to the environment, animals; and increased risk of bushfire.
- Severe storms – potential for: loss of life, injuries, property damage, loss of infrastructure and utilities; evacuation; impacts on vulnerable communities, local community, local businesses and local economy; disruption to transport and closure of roads; impact on the environment; and impacts on domestic animals and livestock.

Work is already underway by ACT Government agencies to address the extreme hazards identified in the Territory Wide Risk Assessment. However, residual risks and vulnerabilities will remain and our exposure to bushfires, heat, storms, rainfall variability and drought is expected to increase.

### ACT climate change policies and action plans

In 2007 the ACT introduced its policy on climate change, *Weathering the Change*, and the associated Action plan 1. A key achievement of this policy was identifying the cross-cutting issues and establishing consideration of climate change impacts across government policies and decision making.

Following a review, a new climate change strategy and action plan (AP2) was adopted in late 2012. Implementation is continuing and focuses on mitigating the cause of climate change by reducing GHG emissions. AP2 recognises that adapting to ongoing changes to the climate needs to be ongoing and continuous.

The simplicity of the AP2 vision, 'By 2060 we will be a more sustainable and carbon neutral city that is adapting to climate change', belies how challenging this will be to achieve. However, it recognises that adapting to ongoing changes to the climate needs to be ongoing and continuous.

Three adaptation actions under AP2 have been foundation steps for this draft Adaptation Strategy:

#### Territory Wide Risk Assessment

In 2012 the ACT Government completed an assessment of the potential risks of climate change to Territory life and property, including in acute weather and fire events. A revised version was completed in July 2014 and this work has been integrated into natural disaster and emergency risk management and planning.

#### Ministerial Statement

On 21 May 2014, Mr Simon Corbell MLA, Minister for the Environment, delivered his Ministerial Statement on Climate Change Adaptation. The statement included commitment to develop the ACT's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The brochure, *Adapting to a Changing Climate: Directions for the ACT*, explains this planned policy work. This draft Adaptation Strategy is the next step.



## Assessment of ecological systems

The risks to our natural ecosystems and biodiversity from a warming climate are very real and are dynamic. The ongoing assessment of the impacts of climate induced changes is needed and is included in the policy and action plan, ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013–23. This strategy (along with other key government strategies) has directly influenced this draft Adaptation Strategy.

## Climate change legislation

The ACT's *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010* has a focus on climate change mitigation and establishes GHG emissions reduction targets, with monitoring and reporting provisions. Monitoring of the ACT's emissions shows GHG emissions per person is estimated to have peaked in 2006 and the ACT is on track to achieve our target of a 40% reduction in GHG emissions, based on 1990 levels, by 2020 <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/cc/acts-greenhouse-gas-emissions>.

The Act enables other actions on climate change such as the development of ACT Government policies and programs, and gives recognition to the private sector for actions it can take. The legislation also established the ACT Climate Change Council as an expert panel of ACT community members to provide advice to the Minister on climate change issues, including adaptation measures. Since its inception in 2011, the Council has advocated for both mitigation and adaptation actions by government and works to raise awareness of the issues in the community.

The Council's website is [http://www.environment.act.gov.au/cc/climate\\_change\\_council](http://www.environment.act.gov.au/cc/climate_change_council).



**2015 photo of the ACT's Climate Change Council with Minister for the Environment.**

Left to right: Professor Will Steffen, Dr Frank Jotzo, Ms Dorte Ekelund, Minister Simon Corbell MLA, Professor Barbara Norman (Chair), Mr Toby Roxburgh, Professor Penny Sackett.



## Advice and assistance to our community

The ACT Government Actsmart program is helping the ACT community adapt to climate change through a suite of programs that assist households, businesses and schools. The programs provide advice and assistance for a more sustainable future, for example by saving energy through increasing efficiency, reducing use of water and reducing the levels of waste to landfill. Refer to the website <http://www.actsmart.act.gov.au>.

## Other key government work

The ACT Government continues to act on climate change impacts and consequent risks to public assets in all aspects of its work. By taking account of existing adaptation work, the government can identify gaps in our ability to respond to the impacts of climate change and help to build our community's resilience.

Table 5 demonstrates the current publicly available ACT Government policies, plans and projects that have explicit adaptation measures or have significant adaptation co-benefits. Many of these have subsidiary initiatives and action plans.

## Climate change adaptation action around Australia

Action on climate change adaptation is occurring across Australia. The chart in Appendix 1 provides a snapshot from each jurisdiction, current in the first half of 2015 but omitting coastal and sea level rise works. While action is also being taken at the city level (local government), this information has not been captured.



Table 5: ACT Government initiatives responding to climate change

ACT Government initiatives	Community Health and Wellbeing	Disaster and Emergency Management	Settlements and Infrastructure	Water	Natural Resources and Ecosystems
Urban renewal and transport projects <i>Capital Metro and the City and Northbourne Urban Design Framework</i>					
Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure					
Territory Plan development codes					
Climate Change Strategy and Action plan (AP2)					
Nature Conservation Strategy					
Pest Animal Management Strategy					
Planning Strategy					
Strategic Bushfire Management Plan					
Transport for Canberra					
Waste Management Strategy					
Water Strategy – Striking the Balance					
Weeds Strategy					
Actsmart programs					
Environment programs					
Air and water monitoring					
Flood modelling and mapping					
Community Recovery Plan					
Emergency Plan					
Healthy Weight Action Plan (Towards Zero Growth)					
Human Services Blueprint					
Public Housing Asset Management Strategy					
Territory Wide Risk Assessment Report					
Vulnerability (to Climate Change) Assessment Framework for Infrastructure					



# 3. APPROACH AND METHOD

*Black Opal Stakes 2060? Entry by Tom Gay into the Challenge Accepted climate change competition*



## 3.1 Adaptation approach

### Why adaptation is important

Adaptation is the process by which vulnerability to climate hazards is minimised. However, adaptation responses can vary greatly depending on the type and severity of the hazard and the capacity of the community to adapt.

Adaptation responses can range from resilience (changes or coping strategies to maintain business as usual) to transition (incremental system changes) and transformation (fundamental system change). In practice there is considerable overlap, and sub-components of systems may transform in order to maintain wider system resilience. An incremental approach to adaptation, achieved through an understanding of community behaviour and careful long-term planning by government in consultation with the community, carries reduced risk of disruption to society from abrupt transformation.

Adaptive capacity can be considered in terms of 'five capitals'<sup>xvii</sup>: human, social, natural, physical and financial factors that influence the capacity of society to function well, and these have been applied in this project.

### Guiding principles

Climate change is complex. Its exact patterns and impacts are not fully known or predictable. There is a degree of uncertainty in what is best to change from what we are doing now (business as usual). Therefore, guidance is needed for sensible and wise decision making by government and non-government sectors. Leading practice sees the following four principles applied in climate change decision making.

#### Intergenerational equity principle

Intergenerational equity means considering the impacts of decisions made today on future generations. The *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010* requires "application of the intergenerational equity principle, along with requirements to consider the impacts on the community, particularly the disadvantaged".

#### No regrets principle

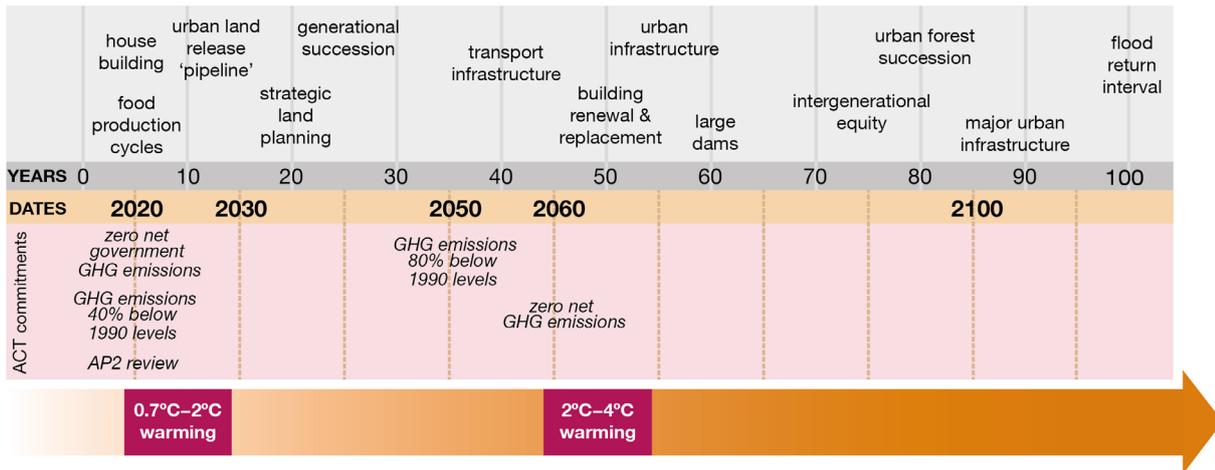
The no-regrets<sup>xviii</sup> principle means taking decisions or actions to reduce or avoid potential negative consequences and, even if these do not eventuate, the actions and outcomes will not be regretted as benefits are achieved whether hazards take place or not. Decisions or actions that lack suitable climate foresight may result in greater future risks and costs. No-regrets measures can be done now as they enhance current living conditions with additional future benefits. For example, making buildings more comfortable and less energy dependent will help reduce both costs and GHG emissions into the future.



## Decision lifetime concept

The decision lifetime concept means recognising the length of time into the future that will be affected by a decision. In adapting to climate change, the decisions we take now need to be effective in preparing us for the future climate. For example, a house is generally built to last over 50 years<sup>xx</sup>, so the design and construction decisions of today need to make it fit-for-purpose for that length of time.

Figure 15: Decision lifetimes concept illustrated for the ACT



Adapted from work by Stafford Smith, D.M., Horrocks, L., Harvey, A., Hamilton, C., 2011. Rethinking adaptation in a 4°C world. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* 369, 196–216.

## Shared responsibility

The ACT Government's approach to climate change adaptation is pragmatic: working together to manage the unavoidable and potentially harmful impacts of climate change to allow us all to continue to enjoy a good quality of life.

A shared responsibility approach was adopted by the ACT Government after the 2003 firestorm (accepting the McLeod report<sup>xxi</sup> recommendation). This way of thinking is still relevant today and means we all take responsibility for managing our lives and do not expect the government is able to remove all risk for everyone. The ACT Government's role is to act where there is a risk to public assets or services, or assist where the free market will not meet the community's basic needs.

## Working across scales

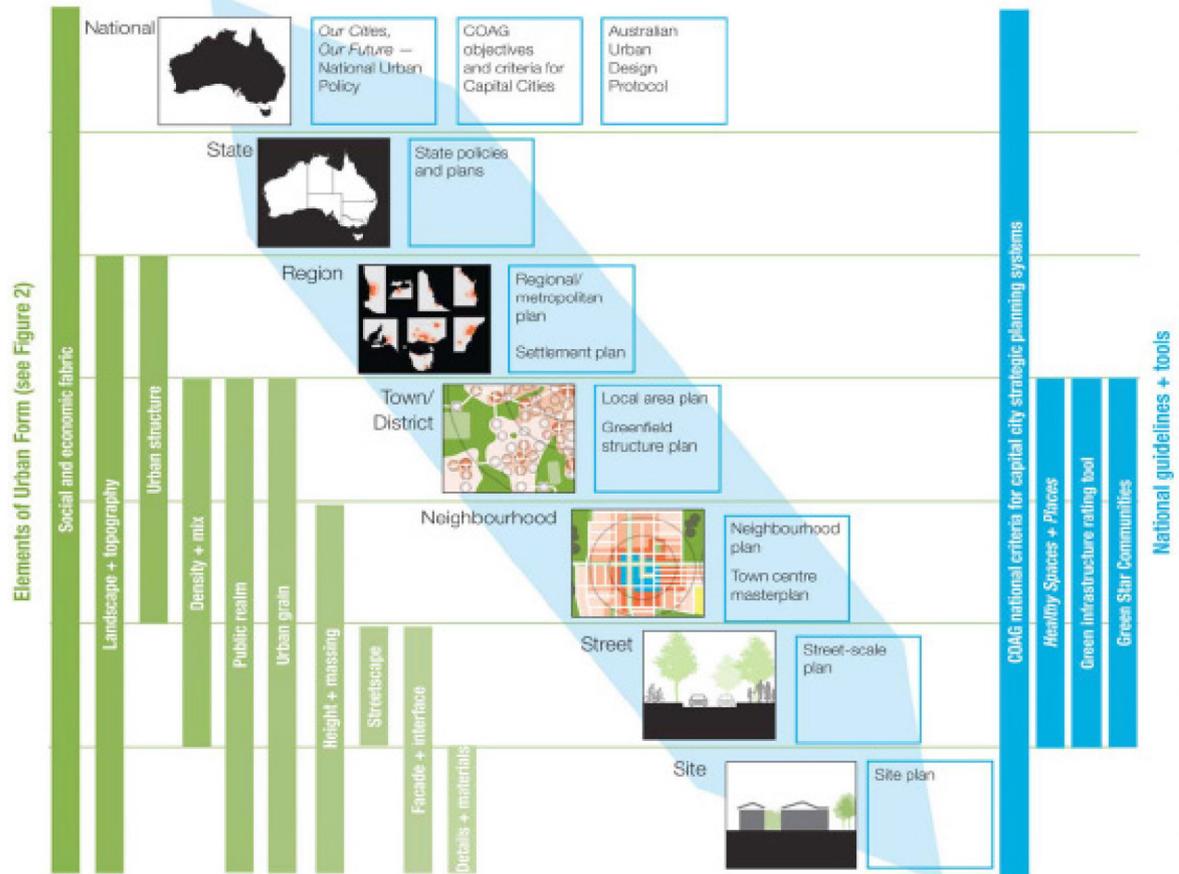
To adapt and be resilient to climate change means different scales (geographic area) need to be considered. For example: to manage household emissions, the actions of individuals need to be understood; to manage water resources, the sub-catchments need to be considered; or to manage flora and fauna biodiversity, the bio-region needs to be considered. Taking this approach means working at different scales and with different actors across our region to harmonise capacity and capability, as well as rules and regulations. The different operating systems of governments in our region need to be aligned to effectively address the needs of people and the environment.

The existing cross-border ACT/NSW agreements can be further enhanced to recognise this and facilitate greater harmonisation of services and resources to respond to climate change impacts. In practice, an effective Adaptation Strategy will take account of issues and activities across multiple scales and work with relevant institutions and actors to affect meaningful outcome in increasing resilience and adaptive capacity. Figure 15 is an extract from the Australian Government's report, *Creating Places for People*<sup>xxii</sup>, describing the importance of planning across different scales.



Figure 16: The 'line of sight' planning for different scales

Figure 1: Line of sight from national to site level



Thinking about urban design, strategic and statutory planning at different scales helps put them in context. The elements of urban design are illustrated next to the scale of planning at which they are commonly addressed. Concept adopted from *Next Generation Planning*, published by the Council of Mayors (SEQ), 2011



## 3.2 Sectoral assessments and actions

### Sectoral pathway approach

The draft Adaptation Strategy considers adaptation issues and action across five key areas known as sectors. This approach is consistent with the National Adaptation Framework<sup>xxiii</sup> (2007) established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Australian Government's Climate Adaptation Outlook: A proposed national adaptation assessment framework (2013). The intent of this approach is to build understanding and adaptive capacity and reduce sectoral and regional vulnerability to climate change impacts.

The National Adaptation Framework also includes the agriculture and coast sectors. The coast sector was not included in the ACT assessment, while the agriculture sector was considered to have a modest footprint in the Canberra context with some of the issues arising addressed across the emergency services, health and community, and settlement and infrastructure sectors.

Table 6 details the scope of each sector with the lead ACT Government agencies responsible for taking action.

Table 6: The five key sectors for the ACT and the key ACT Government agencies responsible for action and monitoring adaptation

Sector	Scope	Key Government Agency
<b>Disaster and emergency planning</b>	The emergency planning and response to extreme weather events and natural disasters in the ACT and cross border with NSW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justice and Community Safety Directorate (with Emergency Services Agency, Police, State Emergency Service, Ambulance and Fire and Rescue Service and the Rural Fire Service)</li> <li>Community Services Directorate</li> </ul>
<b>Community health and wellbeing</b>	The essential services supporting the ACT community's health and wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Directorate</li> <li>Community Services Directorate</li> <li>Territory and Municipal Services</li> <li>Environment and Planning Directorate</li> </ul>
<b>Settlements and infrastructure</b>	The physical infrastructure and social and economic components of the ACT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environment and Planning Directorate</li> <li>Territory and Municipal Services</li> <li>Land Development Agency</li> <li>Community Services Directorate</li> <li>Justice and Community Safety Directorate</li> </ul>
<b>Water</b>	The quantity and quality of water resources in the ACT and adjacent regional catchments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environment and Planning Directorate</li> <li>Icon Water</li> <li>Territory and Municipal Services</li> <li>Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate</li> <li>Health Directorate</li> </ul>
<b>Natural resources and ecosystems</b>	The species, ecosystems and natural resources in the ACT and region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environment and Planning Directorate</li> <li>Territory and Municipal Services</li> </ul>

Note: In addition to the above, the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate is responsible for cross-border issues and has an overarching decision-making role.



## Sector 1: Disaster and emergency management



*“Close to a quarter of all dwellings in the ACT are located in the area identified as bushfire prone in the draft maps. As the city grows, new suburbs are being developed on the western edge of Canberra, which includes new areas in Molonglo. Due to the concentration of people and houses, this western edge presents the greatest bushfire risk to life and property.”*

Minister for Emergency Services, Simon Corbell MLA 26.6.2014

### Climate change impacts

Climate projections indicate that emergency and disaster service levels will need to be enhanced as the risks of adverse climate impacts become incrementally higher. In the ACT, the greatest risk to life comes from extreme heat, severe storm and bushfires.

### Reducing vulnerability to extreme heat

Heat related deaths do not attract the media attention that bushfires do, but they kill more Australians than any other extreme weather event. The ACT Emergency Plan 2014<sup>xxv</sup> has a subsidiary Extreme Heat Plan and the ACT Ambulance Service is the front-line responder to this impact. Reducing the risk of increasing urban heat is discussed further in the settlements and infrastructure sector.

### Reducing vulnerability to bushfire

The ACT's Emergency Services Agency (ESA) 2014 revision of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) includes a new map of places at risk i.e. the bushfire prone areas within the urban area of Canberra.

It is an ACT Government priority to reduce bushfire vulnerability by improving the ability of houses, gardens and open spaces on the urban edges to withstand ember, radiant heat and direct flame attack from bushfires. Consequently, it is proposed that the ACT's building requirements be changed to reflect the National Construction Code and the 'bushfire attack level' assessment.

The SBMP also foreshadows modifications to the design and management of the landscape on both public and private land at the urban edge. Part of this will include expanding landscape management 'tools' to more widely use a mosaic of fuel reduction burning, both in and out of urban areas. Possible changes to existing 'rules' for our city are discussed further in sector 3: settlements and infrastructure.

### Reducing impact of severe storms

NARCLIM projections indicate the ACT will be exposed to more intense rain events in the warmer months of late spring and summer with localised heavy rain occurring in short periods of time. These events are likely to overwhelm standard stormwater infrastructure in homes and suburbs, resulting in flooding. This could potentially lead to loss of life, injuries and property damage.

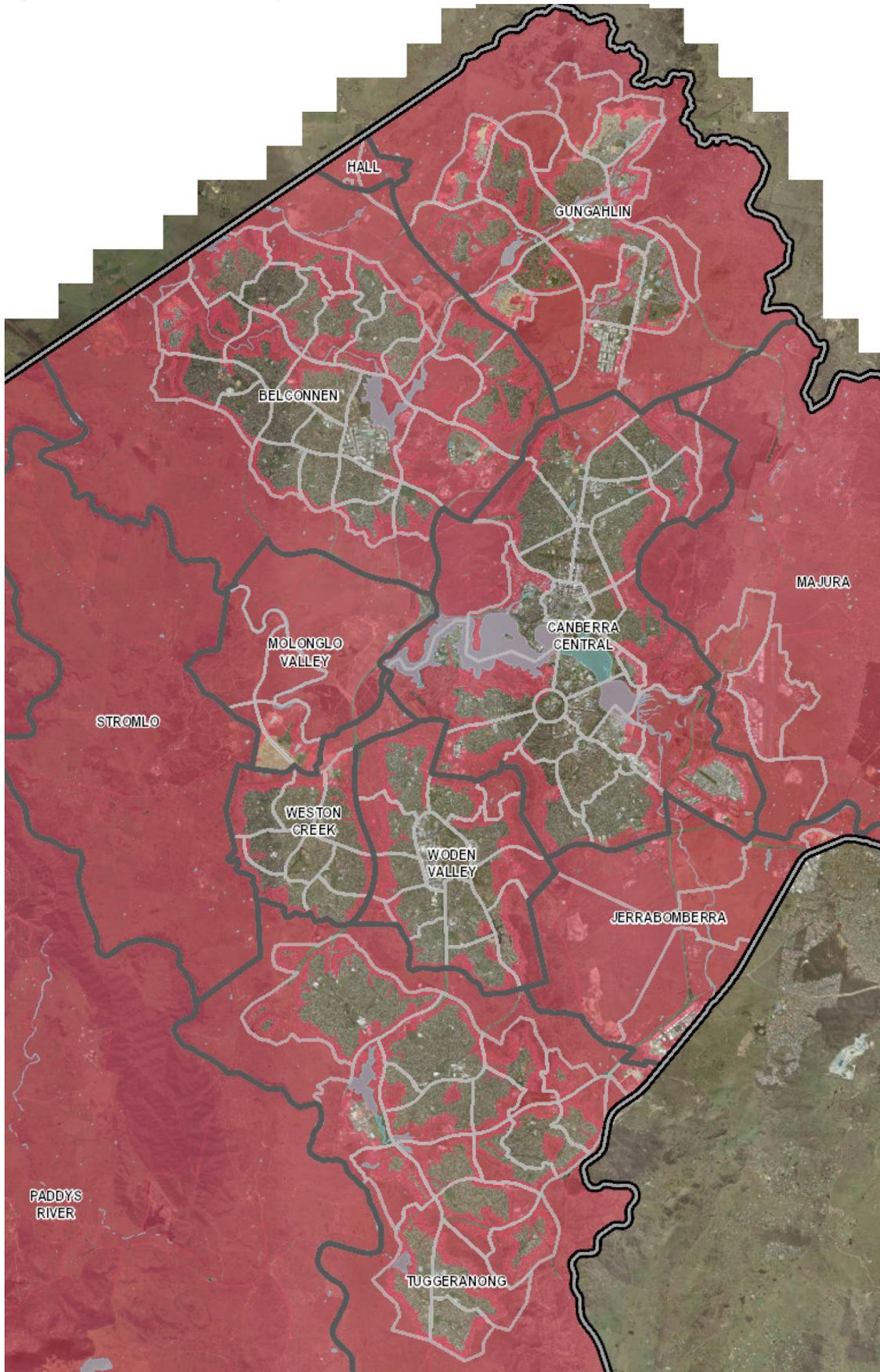
### Managing risks

Preparation for and responding to emergencies and disasters is a core role of government. The impacts and costs of recovery from severe weather events and natural disasters in the ACT is lower than many places in Australia, due to our legacy of good design and planning. However, the cost of the 2003 fires was significant, and as climate changes are not static, emergency and disaster management must be ongoing.

As such, risk assessments of ACT Government services, assets and operations are routinely undertaken and technological advances such as predictive modelling, fire detection and automated response systems also help in managing the risks from extreme weather and natural disasters. With the new climate projections, these assessments need to be routinely updated and remedial actions taken.



Figure 17: Canberra's bushfire prone areas shown in red.





## Sharing responsibility

Responding to more fires, heatwaves and storms has obvious capacity, resource and management implications for governments across the region. These can be partly met by increasing the capability and capacity of the emergency services. Harnessing the community's local knowledge and experience through volunteerism is a realistic way to increase the 'surge capacity' of the services to prepare and respond to events. Combined with the harmonisation of systems and training across jurisdictional borders, volunteerism is one of a number of ways the government can increase its frontline capability to respond to emergencies.

Private owners and occupants of all types of property are responsible for taking the necessary risk reduction measures on their property. While grazed farmland on the western edges of Canberra can help as a fire buffer for urban residents, all urban-edge properties need to respond each year, as seasonal conditions change, to minimise the risks from bushfire. Hazard reduction burning is undertaken as weather and seasonal conditions permit in the parks, reserves and farmlands around Canberra, with collaboration between the land owners and managers, the government fire crews and Rural Fire Service volunteers.



**Hazard reduction burning in autumn 2015 (ACT Government photo)**

The commercial property sector and insurance industry are already re-assessing the risks; nationwide there are higher costs for flood and inundation insurance resulting from the recurring Queensland flooding.

The NARClIM projections indicate high fire fuel danger index (FFDI) in months traditionally used for control burns. Consequently this aspect of land management, along with all others, will need to be flexible to respond to seasonal conditions.

The State Emergency Service (SES) states that homeowners have the responsibility to take all necessary steps to protect their property from storms and flash flooding. Although the ACT SES does emergency repairs, permanent repairs are the homeowners' responsibility ([www.esa.act.gov.au](http://www.esa.act.gov.au)).



**Street flooding in Belconnen in 2014 (ACT Government photo)**



## Assessment Table Sector 1: Disaster and emergency management

POTENTIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More death and injury in Canberra with more frequent heatwaves and more bushfires. In extreme events resources are stretched and response options are limited, so not all are able to be managed or mitigated (e.g. large-scale bushfire).</li> <li>• More people become adversely affected as a result of extreme events when services are not able to meet demand.</li> <li>• Existing buildings, gardens and open spaces within the ACT's bushfire prone areas are not renovated or maintained to meet revised standards and present a safety risk to the whole neighbourhood.</li> <li>• Property insurance costs (to households and business) are increased as more buildings are affected by more extreme climate events, particularly storms.</li> </ul>
ACTIONS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the ACT's Emergency Management Plan, a suite of hazard specific sub plans are regularly updated to address climate projections including the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, Extreme Heat Sub Plan, Flood Emergency Plan and Storm Emergency Sub Plan.</li> <li>• Public announcements and awareness campaigns on risks from natural disasters are undertaken regularly and routinely each year, with additional education and services provided to higher risk sectors in the community.</li> <li>• Collaboration within government utilises existing community facilities to provide sufficient and adequate refuges at times of extreme events and disasters.</li> <li>• The revision of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan 2014 sets out 12 objectives with 71 specific actions to reduce bushfire risk. The implementation and reporting on these actions is underway.</li> <li>• Review and updating of the ACT's Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure and Building Code (considered with National Construction Code amendments).</li> </ul>
EMERGING ISSUES AND RESIDUAL RISK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACT Government buildings and facilities need to be kept fit-for-purpose in the changed climate. To ensure government assets are compliant with risk assessment recommendations, programs of renewal and refurbishment need to be ongoing.</li> <li>• To reduce the risk to the whole community, all householders and property owners need reminders to allow for risk assessment and remedial actions and residents of all ages need to be trained and reminded about what to do in an emergency and maintain proficiency in risk responses.</li> <li>• Cross-border emergency responses would be enhanced by ensuring there are enough volunteers to provide surge capacity in emergency situations and that all volunteers have standardised training and equipment.</li> <li>• The impacts of climate change on the existing building stock will remain a safety issue for many years, with triggers for upgrading only likely when significant changes to a building are proposed.</li> </ul>
DESIRED OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Canberra and region community is resilient because residents are well informed about and prepared for all kinds of emergencies and individuals take responsibility for undertaking sufficient upgrading and management of their property to make it safe ('climate wise').</li> <li>• Across the region, emergency services have compatible systems and staffing, and well-trained volunteers provide regional surge capacity including first aid (triage for non-acute health services).</li> <li>• Canberra's public assets, infrastructure and buildings are low risk to climate change impacts. Consequently, essential services such as water and power are provided with minimal cuts or 'brownouts'.</li> <li>• Property insurance premiums in the ACT are reflective of effective management of climate risks.</li> </ul>



## Proposed actions

The existing emergency and disaster policies and plans, including the ACT Emergency Plan 2014 with its suite of sub-plans, and the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan 2014 address the current and future risks. However routine updating of these documents needs to continue. To better address and take account of the emerging issues and move towards the desired outcomes, the work of all other ACT Government agencies will be ramped up to revise agency specific plans for services and assets with overt consideration of how these will remain fit-for-purpose over time.

As Canberra, Queanbeyan and neighbouring NSW villages, towns and lifestyle estates continue to grow and change, there needs to be an enhanced focus on the management of the rural lands that surround them. To enable effective and sufficient disaster and emergency responses, it is critical to identify the land characteristics and how to manage them, and to have the necessary capacity, capability and interoperability. As fire ignores boundaries, increasing cross-border collaboration is required.

ACT and NSW volunteers provide invaluable services to keep us safe in times of need. The continuing climate changes will bring an increasing need for such help in the event of disasters and emergencies. Increasing the number and training of our volunteers is an important adaptation action that individuals and businesses can participate in to make our wider community more resilient.

The priority short-term actions for ACT Government are:

### By 2016

#### **Bushfire prone areas**

Make changes to regulatory settings to:

- recognise Canberra's expanded bushfire prone area
- introduce higher Bushfire Attack Level standards for new buildings and major extensions.

#### **Reducing impacts from the warming climate**

Increase awareness of climate risks and what we all can do in our daily lives by expanding existing:

- Emergency Services Agency outreach to households in the Bushfire Prone Area
- Actsmart programs to households in the bushfire prone area.

### By 2017

#### **Climate risk assessments**

The updating or undertaking new assessments of climate risks and hazards with upgrade proposals for:

- ACT Government owned and leased buildings
- ACT owned utility and services infrastructure and essential services delivery.

#### **Framework for Flood Management**

The revision of the framework is completed and being implemented.

#### **Strategic Bushfire Capability Framework**

Complete the capability framework under the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan.



## Sector 2: Community health and wellbeing



'At present the social determinants of health (housing, food and disadvantage) present greater everyday risks to general population health and wellbeing than climate change. However the future climate extremes may well change this.'

*Dr Andrew Pengilly, ACT Deputy Chief Health Officer 2015*

### Climate change impacts

Of the four key climate impacts identified for the ACT, extreme heat and bushfire present the most serious direct threat to lives in Canberra. Beyond direct risk to life, prolonged heat waves and drought can have physical and mental impacts.

A 2015 report *No Time for Games: Children's Health and Climate Change* from Doctors for the Environment states, "Extreme weather events and increasing temperatures are already causing childhood illness in households throughout Australia. Furthermore gastro-intestinal diseases, respiratory and heat related illnesses, and the physical and mental health impacts of floods, bushfires and droughts are all expected to rise".

Generally, climate extremes and related natural disasters most impact those who are least resilient to stressors and shocks of any kind. People's ability to be resilient to climate change is directly related to their vulnerability, which is influenced by age, health and demographic characteristics. For example, if you are a healthy young working person you are more likely to be resilient to the stress or shock from an extreme event than a homeless older person.

### Green space and health outcomes

Several studies have shown linkages between green spaces and positive health outcomes. That is, exposure to green spaces can be psychologically and physiologically restorative. Observed health outcomes include improved mental health, increased physical activity and reduced deaths from blood pressure and stress.

Given this, actively managing green space can be an approach to build resilience to climate change. Notwithstanding this, in a hot and dry environment the green and shady areas that provide shelter, relief and areas for amenity and social cohesion are also stressed and must be proactively managed through appropriate tree and plant species selection and supportive infrastructure that allows for water capture and recycling.



Canberra's open space network is critical to health and wellbeing. Photo Rob Homer published Canberra Times 22 July 2014.



## Medical services and community health

Provision of health services to support the resident population is a core responsibility of government. Our health care provides for all demographics with a focus on the most vulnerable.

The ACT Population Health Strategic Framework and its subsidiary operational plans include how the ACT will respond under climate change impacts. The framework is regularly updated as the city grows and climate risks are better understood. Additionally, a range of government policies and programs contribute to general population health and wellbeing, for example the Healthy Weight Action Plan with its health promotion information and incentives for an active lifestyle.

Increasing community-wide resilience is, however, more social than medical. A caring community is where people actively help each other. Such social cohesion is a marker of community wellbeing and an effective measure of resilience. The provision of facilities and services, education and even the design of urban Canberra can contribute to fostering social interaction. Achieving the government's priority for a caring community that helps the vulnerable with fairness and equity is the best way to ensure the Canberra community maintains resilience to extreme events.

## Local fresh food

The health of any community is enhanced by access to affordable fresh food. The people of the Canberra region will continue to be reliant on food produced elsewhere and transported here; however, it makes good sense to encourage more to be produced and sold locally to support diversification of the sector and support local business.

Around Australia the popularity of community gardens and school kitchen gardens is increasing, as is community interest in growing fresh food in and close to urban areas. Globally, many cities are allocating land for 'urban farming' to supply locally-produced fresh food. With a warming climate the existing challenges to production will continue, but information and knowledge will become more important to support farmers as they adapt. Taking a collaborative regional approach will assist the successful adaptation of this sector.



Kitchen garden at Gundaroo restaurant 'Grazing' (photo by Australian Capital Tourism)



## Assessment Table Sector 2: Community health and wellbeing

POTENTIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death from heat through exacerbation of existing underlying health conditions and illness from excess exposure to heat and dehydration. This can affect those who are sick but also those who are well but are outdoor workers, sports people and children being active outdoors.</li> <li>• Loss of productivity, with outdoor workers and school children sent home during heatwaves and extreme events.</li> <li>• Safety, productivity and cost issues arising from buildings that are not designed and constructed to be resilient to climate impacts (bushfires, severe storms or heatwaves).</li> <li>• Canberra's liveability depleted when urban open spaces and residential gardens that are not suited to climate extremes decline in health and amenity, thus affecting human health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
ACTIONS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community service announcements and notifications are made in advance of hot days, heatwaves, and other predicted extreme weather events as part of implementing the ACT's Emergency Plan.</li> <li>• Current policies and programs such as the Healthy Weight Action Plan help the whole community keep healthy through elevated awareness and incentives to eat well and stay active.</li> <li>• To help housing be functional, comfortable and affordable year round, the ACT Government promotes the benefits of good design and the Actsmart programs assist the most disadvantaged with energy and water efficiency.</li> <li>• With an increasing percentage of the community having higher medical needs (under 14 and over 65 years), health system services are routinely recalibrated to respond to demand, such as community health services suiting the needs in each district and different delivery models for non-acute services such as nurse practitioner clinics. Additionally a new hospital is being built in Belconnen to serve patients from the ACT and region.</li> </ul>
EMERGING ISSUES AND RESIDUAL RISK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community awareness of climate impacts needs to be high to inform and promote individual and collective actions by everyone to increase population resilience.</li> <li>• The community, health and refuge facilities need to be routinely evaluated for distribution, capability and capacity given changing demographics and climate impacts.</li> <li>• Urban centres, metropolitan parks, places and pathways need to be fit-for-purpose in a warmer climate with sufficient shade and drinking water.</li> </ul>
DESIRED OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Canberra and region community has fair and equitable access to health and community services and facilities sufficient for their needs; during extreme events surge capacity is assisted by community-based facilities and volunteers.</li> <li>• Canberra remains a liveable city for all seasons, with its streets, centres and urban open spaces providing year round amenity, shade, shelter, and/or solar access as appropriate.</li> <li>• All Canberra buildings are designed and built to be 'climate wise', operating efficiently to keep people safe and comfortable year round in an energy and water efficient manner.</li> <li>• The design of urban areas, access to parks and recreation, and provision of public transport, walking and cycling facilities, encourages people to maintain a level of fitness which assists with climate change resilience.</li> <li>• Canberrans are informed, aware and resilient to climate impacts and, as a caring and cohesive community, support family, friends and neighbours in the lead up to, during and after extreme events.</li> </ul>



## Proposed actions

The existing work of government needs to continue, through existing plans and policies such as the Healthy Weight Action Plan, but also by mainstreaming adaptation in the daily work of all parts of the ACT Government. Therefore, an immediate action for all ACT Government agencies is to ramp-up communications and publicise what is being done and what roles the community can contribute.

Our community, individuals, business and organisations require more knowledge and awareness to enable them to know what to do to be more prepared for a changing climate. Therefore, work under the Community Engagement Strategy on Climate Change can refocus on this need and address the desired outcomes.

The priority short-term climate adaptation actions for the ACT Government are:

### By 2017

#### Increasing healthy living

- Progressive implementation of the Active Travel Strategy through expansion of pathways with appropriate support infrastructure such as drinking fountains, parking, seating and shower facilities.
- Assess opportunities for investment in community gardens in new estates and urban renewal areas.

### By 2020

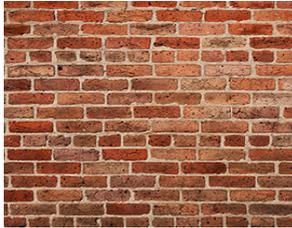
#### Regional collaboration

Work with the region to:

- Improve awareness of climate change impacts to build resilience and adaptive capacity
- Improve awareness of climate-suitable practices for agriculture.



## Sector 3: Settlements and infrastructure



*'...urban planning decisions have long legacies...decisions made in 2014 will shape future urban living, with the future retrofitting of the built environment a more expensive endeavour than forward planning.'*  
Canberra Urban and Regional Futures (CURF) Working paper 4  
November 2014

### Climate change impacts

The projected increases in extreme events of heat, bushfire and storms will have increasingly significant impacts on settlements and infrastructure. For example, the warming climate and the increasing number and duration of heatwaves will compound the existing urban heat island phenomenon in cities.

The expanded assessment of bushfire prone areas of Canberra, with the climate-induced increase in high fire danger days, means the city's public and private buildings and landscapes need to be 'fire wise'. This means modifications to building design and construction to reduce the risk from the assessed Bushfire Attack Level. The majority of Canberra's homes at the urban edge are well established. To varying degrees they will require transitioning through renovation and maintenance to increase safety and resilience in the event of bushfires. These activities are critical, alongside continued activities to educate householders.

The increasing number of storms with intense rain and high winds will also affect the city's infrastructure and buildings. The risk of adverse outcomes is well recognised by the insurance industry. To keep life and property safe (and premiums low) site-specific risks need to be addressed.

The ACT Government's 'rules' that determine how the city and its buildings are designed, built and managed is a suite of guidelines, codes, standards, regulations and practices. These rules need to be enhanced in light of the climate projections.

### Climate-wise buildings

Climate-wise buildings are those that provide safe and comfortable living and working conditions, now and into the future. Relatively simple changes to the design, construction and maintenance of the city's buildings can significantly reduce adverse impacts from the changing climate. For example, increasing the size of gutters and downpipes reduces the risk of intense rain inundating a building. Similarly, a well-insulated building will keep people cooler during periods of prolonged heat.

A climate-wise building has three essential components:

- passive cooling through cross ventilation and night purging of hot air (some mechanical ventilation and cooling systems may be necessary for extreme events and for basements)
- passive heating through solar access with high thermal mass components to capture, store and release the sun's energy (heating systems may be necessary for colder periods)
- quality construction, detailing and materials (including sealing and insulation) to maximise heating and cooling and be resilient to bushfire and the intense rain and high winds of storms.

Converting existing buildings to be more 'climate wise' will cost money in the near term, but will save owners' money through lower operating costs (e.g. less energy and water use) for the life of the building. The co-benefits of climate-wise buildings are a safer community with reduced demands on emergency services.



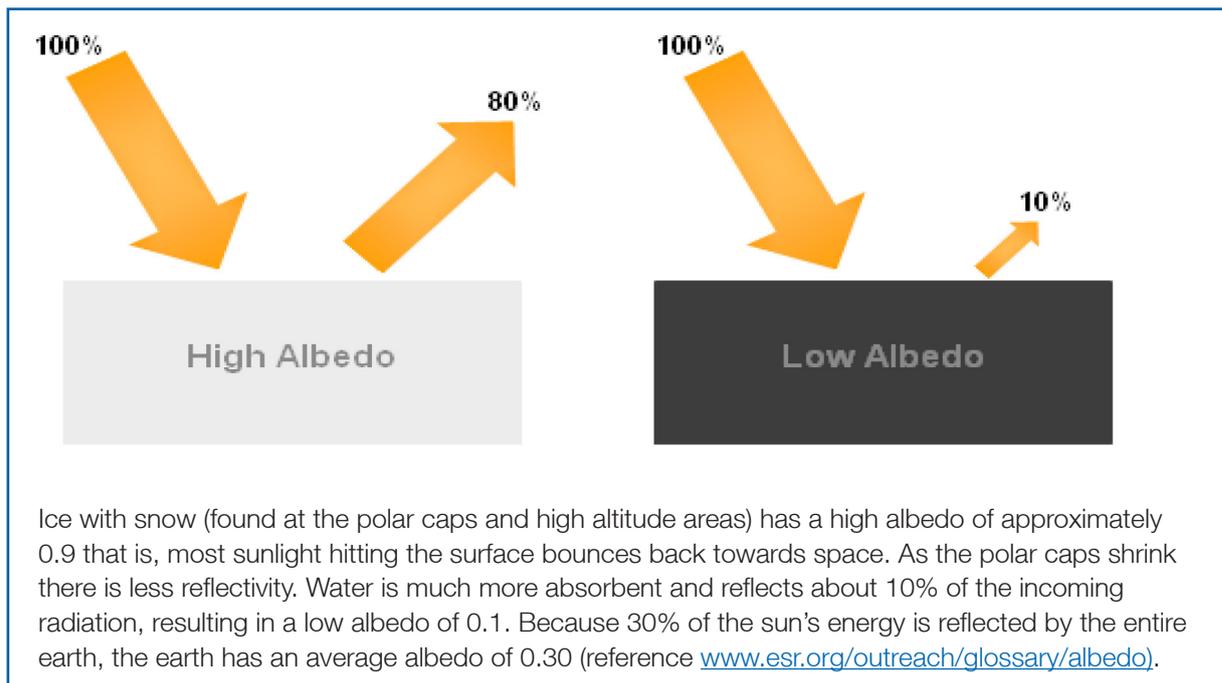
## Reducing urban heat with the albedo effect

To support the ACT Climate Change Strategy (AP2) vision for a more sustainable city, the government has committed to a number of transformative projects in urban renewal and transport, such as *Capital Metro* light rail, *Northbourne Corridor*, and *City to the Lake*. As our city's density increases, more people will be dependent on the design and management of the city's public spaces. To maintain Canberra's status as one of the world's most liveable cities, and to make sure Canberra's centres are safe, pleasant and inviting for people all year round, the design and management of public and private open spaces will have to adapt to the warmer climate.

Highly developed areas such as city centres can experience higher average temperatures than surrounding suburban or rural areas, a phenomenon known as the "urban heat island effect." This is caused by the large quantity of materials (bricks, concrete, asphalt) that capture daytime heat and re-radiate it at night, warming the temperature in the day and night. Urban heat is frequently exacerbated by urban intensification and, under a warming climate this will become a problem for Canberra's major centres unless preventative action is taken.

One of the ways to reduce heat absorption is by using light colours and heat reflective surfaces in buildings and pavements, referred to as the albedo effect.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The diagram below illustrates the way the albedo effect works. Further information on the albedo effect is in Appendix 2.

Figure 18: The way the albedo effect works



Highly reflective materials or colours also increases glare, which can make places less pleasant. Conversely, this reflectivity is a benefit at night, as less lighting is needed for safety and amenity. Although the albedo effect could be most beneficial in places where development intensity is greatest, data is needed about the existing urban fabric to provide the most suitable and site specific response.



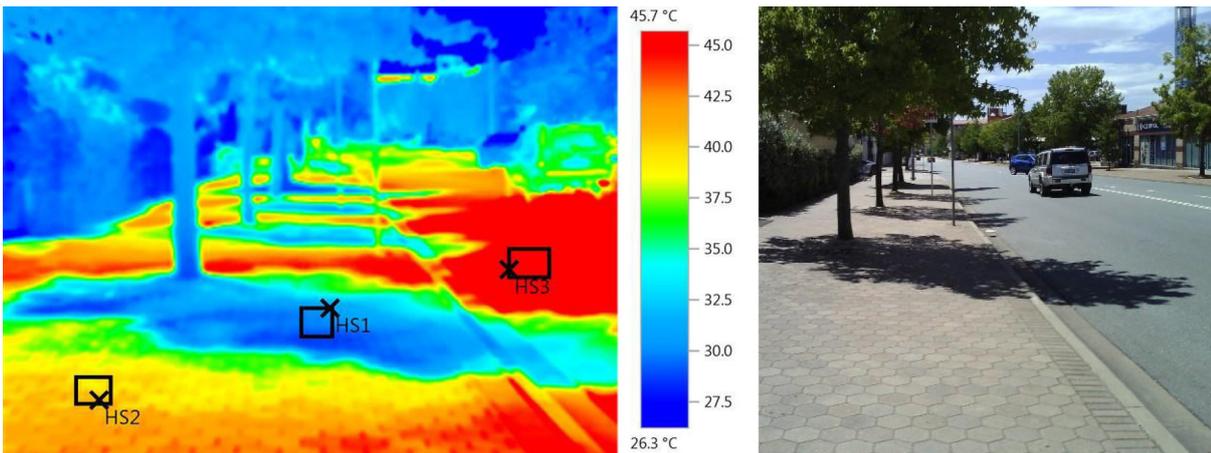
## Reducing urban heat with plants and water

Vegetation such as large trees and watered grass contribute significantly to reducing the urban heat island effect by providing shade, and circulating moisture in the atmosphere by evapo-transpiration which has a cooling effect (trees and plants release moisture through natural processes).

Providing shade is the most effective way to avoid pavements and buildings heating up, for example canopy trees to shade pedestrian and vehicle pavements, or plants on sun exposed roofs and walls. It is important that the city's urban open spaces, parks and plazas keep the city cool and assist in bushfire protection. This means ensuring maintenance of the urban forest provides sufficient plant health requirements (water and soil). Canberra's extensive open spaces and predominant low density makes room for large trees, however across the city their distribution is not uniform and more trees are needed to avoid localised 'hot spots'.

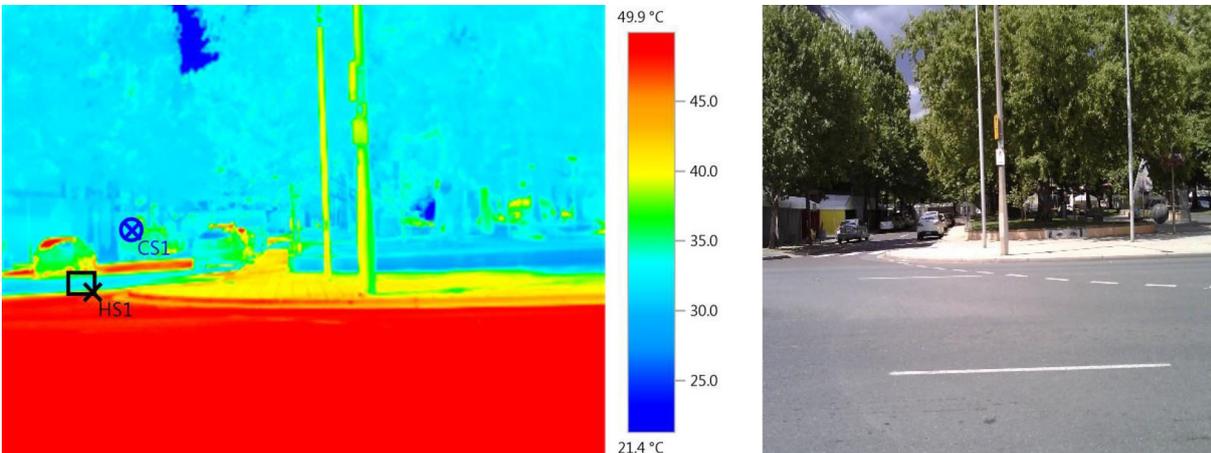
The ACT's temperature records indicate that Canberra city can be up to 4°C warmer than its surrounding rural areas in winter and in summer localised temperatures differences can be over 12°C between pavements in sun or shade. Thermal imaging photos below taken by ACT Government on a 35°C day in February 2015 show the benefits of trees and lighter colour surfaces in reducing the temperature.

Figure 19: Anketell Street, Tuggeranong town centre



Pavement temperatures in Hot spot 2=41°C (yellow) Hot spot 1=30°C (blue) and Hot spot 3=47°C (red).

Figure 20: Ainslie Avenue, Civic across from Civic Square



The ambient air temperature in the shade was less than 30°C but 43°C on the pavement in the sun. Note the lower temperature of the lighter coloured pavements. Canberra metropolitan area 2014 high tree cover

Figures 20–21, prepared by CSIRO from 2014 satellite imagery of Canberra’s metropolitan area, show where the city’s trees are, and how trees and large bodies of water are providing a cooling effect.

Figure 21: Canberra’s metropolitan area 2014 high tree cover

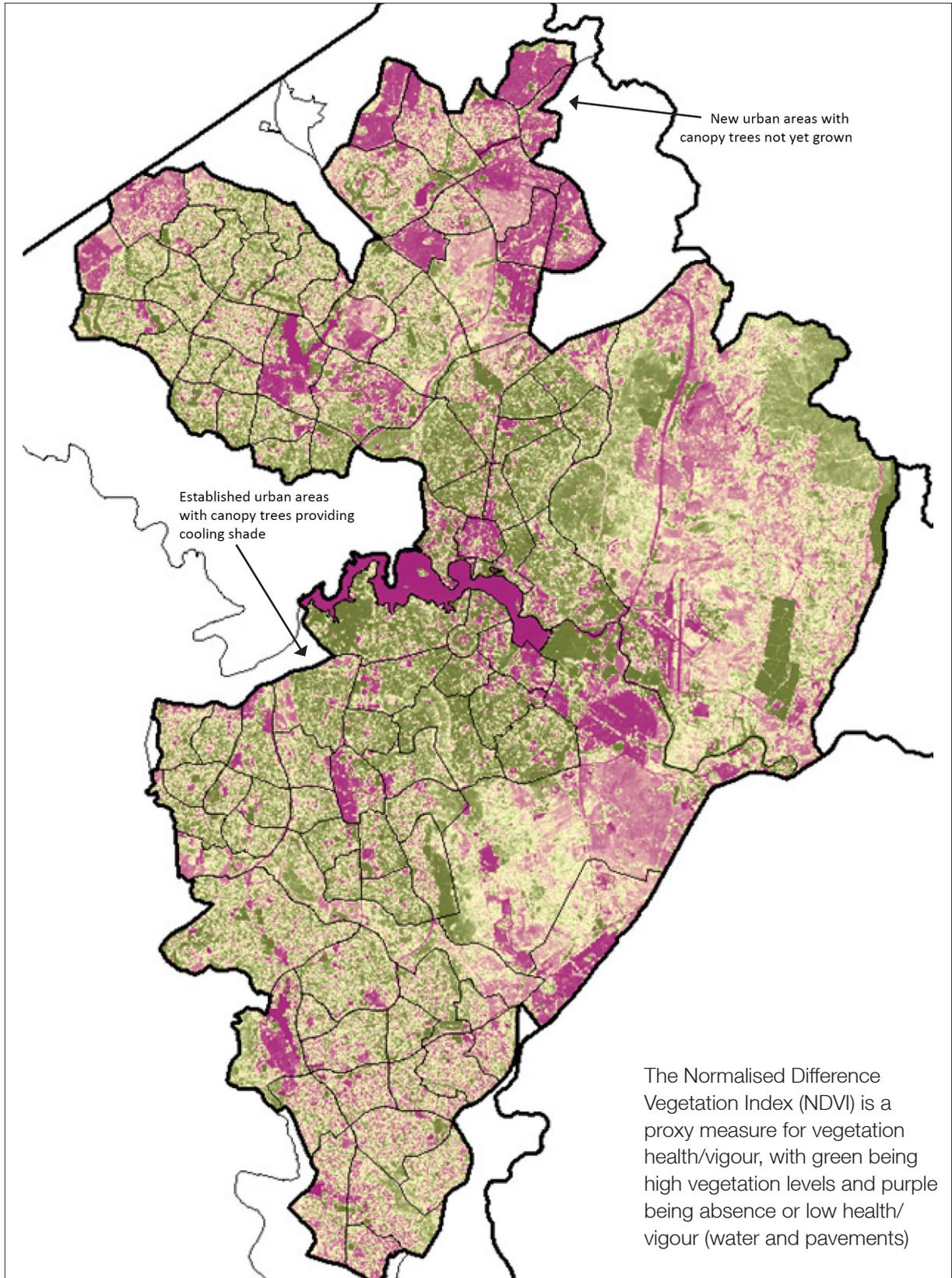
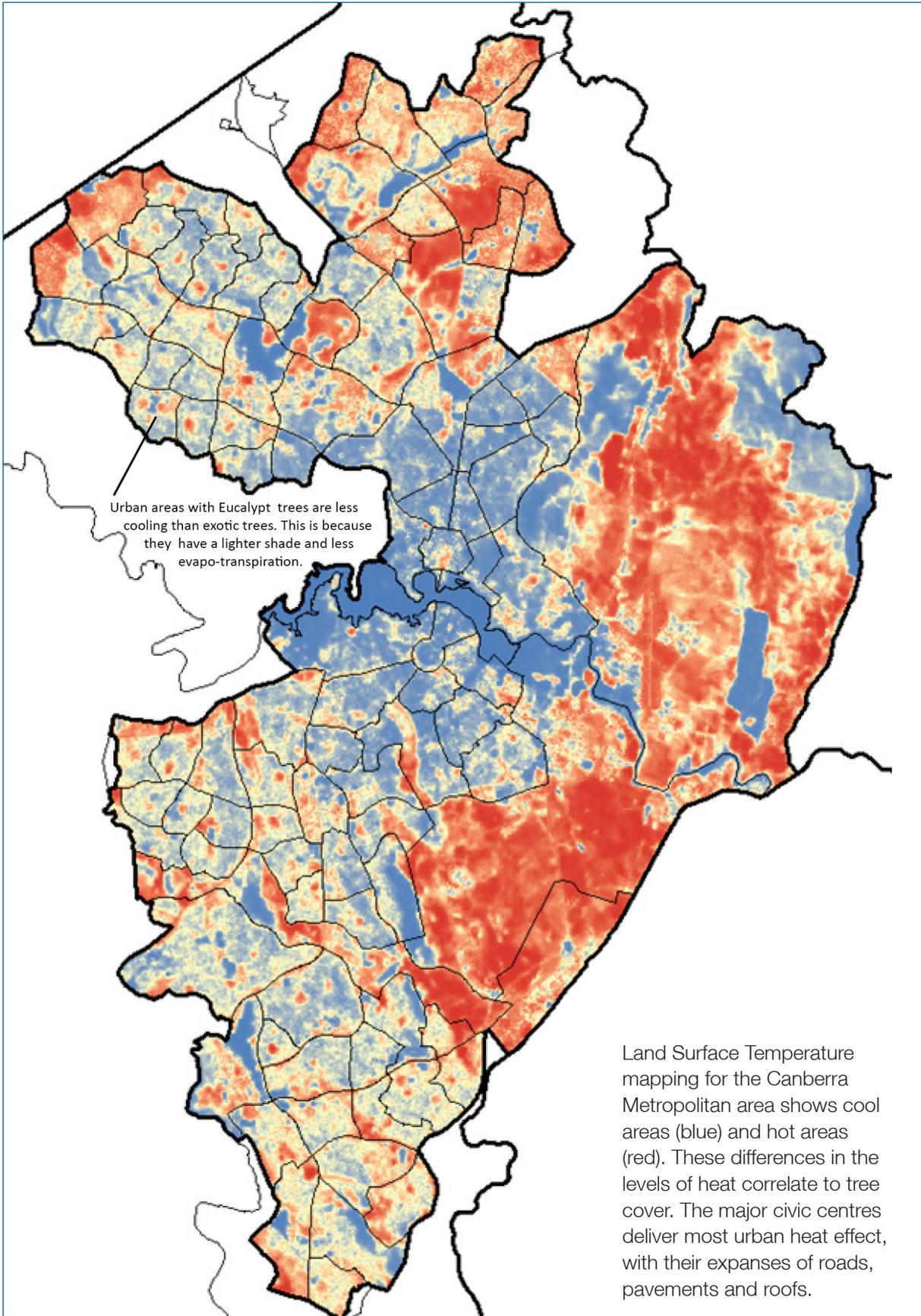




Figure 22: Canberra metropolitan area 2014 land surface temperatures





## The coolest little city – reinvesting in living infrastructure

Canberra's open space system of verges, parklands and waterways provide amenity and places for travel, recreation and play. These places also provide environmental services such as clean air, clear water, healthy soils, shade and cooling. The integration of 'green' vegetation and public spaces, 'blue' stormwater and waterways and 'grey' soils, surfaces and structures is commonly called 'living infrastructure' or 'green infrastructure'.

Living infrastructure not only increases thermal performance and saves energy costs, but can also detain stormwater and add to the city's biomass. Bringing more vegetation into cities has multiple micro-climatic, social and economic benefits, including increases in personal wellbeing through increased connections to the natural environment (the biophilic city<sup>xxxv</sup>). The beneficial outcomes from living infrastructure include:

- a cooler city and reduced risk of urban heat
- enhanced amenity of public open spaces with improved air quality and outdoor comfort
- increased use of stormwater to irrigate the landscape and recharge groundwater
- reduced bushfire risk
- improved water quality in lakes and waterways with healthier aquatic ecosystems
- increased wildlife habitat in urban areas.

The natural and planted trees in our gardens, parks and bushland reserves are living assets that we value highly for amenity and habitat values. However, heatwaves and drought will adversely affect their ability to provide their environmental services and maintain their amenity. During a drought, trees and other vegetation can become fire fuel 'wicks' that take bushfire further into the city. Therefore the design and maintenance of open spaces needs to be both water wise and fire wise. The ACT Water Strategy: Striking the Balance (2014) recognises the need to ensure there is sufficient water in the urban landscape to sustain vegetation and provide amenity and ameliorate climate risks.



American Elms in Grant Crescent Griffith are a spectacular part of Canberra's urban forest. This living infrastructure makes this a desirable place to be day and night and in every season. (Photo by ACT Government)



The city's trees are an integral part of Canberra's living infrastructure and an evaluation is needed of the urban forest for its vulnerability and/or resilience to the projected climate. The 2020 Vision report in 2014 identified that Canberra has the greatest tree canopy cover of all capital cities in Australia, but the trees are not evenly distributed across all districts. This information, with the recent urban forest audit, can inform a revised Urban Forest Plan to direct future strategies to sustain healthy growth, including provision of water and enhancement of soil.

Access to parks with shade giving trees is important for human health and wellbeing. Therefore, as the city's population density increases, the provision of quality open spaces becomes more important. In addition to high-use urban parks, Canberra's national capital open space system is a metropolitan scale framework that provides the landscape setting for the city. People experience this interconnected system in their daily lives, whether as the backdrop or views and vistas in travelling around, or in recreational visits to reserves.

While native trees will continue to provide canopy and wildlife habitat in Canberra, the use of deciduous trees is increasingly important. Their dense, shady summer canopy and higher evapo-transpiration rates, which enhance humidity and cooling of the air below them, make them particularly useful for pedestrian routes and parklands. An assessment of climate impact resilience of the parks and their vegetation (the urban forest) is needed to guide the planning, design and renewal of Canberra's landscape.

This is not only important for ameliorating the climate, it is a key strategy for economic resilience. Having Canberra widely known as the bush capital and a garden city is a drawcard to attract tourists and 'point of difference' knowledge workers.



## Assessment Table Sector 3: Settlements and infrastructure

### POTENTIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS

- The amenity, character and liveability of Canberra are at risk from the impacts of climate change. The man-made landscape setting for the city, with its open space system and urban forest, needs significant investment to remain healthy and resilient. Over time the depletion of soil moisture would cause decline in health and amenity of public and private open spaces.
- There are no current mechanisms to make Canberra's existing buildings 'climate wise', but the government is considering raising construction standards at the urban edges.
- The property insurance industry recognises increasing climate risks and may increase premiums.
- The increasing urban density in some parts of the city can be accompanied by increasing urban heat, exacerbated by the warming climate.
- Increasing variability of rain with warmer temperatures can deplete the basic resource of pasture for grazing enterprises. The consequences of decreased farmland viability include declining rural communities and increasing pest plants and animals under reduced management effort.
- There is increased potential for physical and mental health issues associated with climate induced pressures on agricultural business.

### ACTIONS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY

- To achieve a liveable 'city for all seasons' and enhance resilience of the public spaces, the revision of the Territory's regulations, plus preparation of a living infrastructure strategy is proposed.
- The urban forest, already facing health and longevity issues, will be under further pressure from a warming climate. The review of the ACT's Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure (including Tree Species List for Canberra) is to include climate resilience considerations.
- Climate risk assessments of ACT Government assets, operations and services are commencing.
- Some Canberra households and commercial developers are building to higher sustainability standards. To maximise voluntary change towards climate-wise building design and construction, peak industry bodies are collaborating with government and academia to determine the desirable changes for new and existing buildings.
- Peak industry bodies continue awareness raising, training and up-skilling of practitioners.
- The ACT Government has introduced a 25% remission on Lease Variation Charges for commercial buildings that are built to the Green Building Council of Australia's 'Greenstar' standards and for residential buildings constructed at higher NABERS standards.
- Tourism agencies and non-government organisations in the region are fostering peri-urban food production and local markets.
- The ACT Government continues financial assistance to create community gardens.
- Landcare awards recognise best practice and innovation to encourage sustainability in food and fibre production across the region.

### EMERGING ISSUES AND RESIDUAL RISK

- Implementing revised standards for building design and construction in the bushfire prone areas, based on Bushfire Attack Level assessments and new national construction codes, with a phased approach for the application of new standards, codes and regulations.
- Awareness raising to encourage climate-wise development and alteration of existing and new buildings by owners and developers. Achieving sufficient knowledge and up-skilling of building and construction practitioners, plus built environment design professionals.
- To encourage active travel, the off-road walking and cycling networks are being improved for connectivity. Under a warming climate, provision of shade and water needs to be part of the upgrade to improve safety and function.
- Canberra's existing living infrastructure needs to be well managed and sustained into the future. New areas need to be supported by adequate living infrastructure targeted to respond to climate impacts, making the city safer and more resilient.



## DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Canberra is still the 'bush capital' with wildlife reserves, productive farms and the national capital open space system through the city. The threat from bushfire is managed by: appropriate infrastructure and management and maintenance regimes along the urban edge; appropriate landscape treatment; and ensuring adequate water in the urban landscape.
- Canberra's urban open spaces are designed and maintained to be 'climate wise' and to provide year round amenity, a city for all seasons. The urban forest will be watered with harvested stormwater wherever feasible.
- Canberra is Australia's leading city for active travel with its routes for off-road walking and cycling providing travel to destinations through a safe, shady and pleasant environment.
- Canberra's major centres and higher density urban areas do not make city heat worse because of active preventative measures taken by public and private sectors.
- Living infrastructure is used to keep the urban environment resilient and minimise climate impacts.
- Canberra buildings are 'climate wise', using contemporary building materials and techniques and reducing heat by introducing lighter coloured materials and surface treatments.
- Urban and peri-urban food production is increasingly adopted by home-owners and supported by housing estate developers and unit corporations.



The Nishi building in New Action demonstrates use of plants to cool buildings and pavements. by John Gollings, courtesy of the Molonglo Group.



## Proposed actions

The recently released Ministerial Statement of Planning Intent (2015) identifies the multiple synergies possible in developing Canberra in accord with the existing strategic policies. The priority short-term climate adaptation actions for ACT Government are:

### By 2017

#### **Climate impact and planning**

Introduce requirements to planning for new estates and urban renewal in Territory plan and Sub-Division guidelines and design standards to ensure climate change adaptation considerations in planning discussions.

#### **City resilience**

To increase sustainability in adapting to climate change:

- review design standards for public infrastructure to ensure climate change adaptation is considered
- invest in the urban forest to provide sufficient public area shade and shelter across all districts
- introduce requirements to reduce heat absorption of building surfaces and pedestrian pavements.

#### **Sustainable procurement**

Introduce mandatory minimum sustainability requirements to ACT Government capital works and asset upgrade projects to ensure assets and services will be 'climate wise' and carbon neutral by 2020.

#### *Climate adaptation training and education*

Collaborate with peak bodies and local knowledge brokers on new or innovative delivery of:

- programs for education, training and up-skilling of builders and trades people
- continuing professional development for Canberra and region built environment professionals
- a web-based tool for self-assessment of household climate adaptation and resilience.

#### **Tree lined pathways**

Add to the Strategic Cycle Network Plan a program of shade tree planting for walking and cycling routes.

### By 2020

#### **Climate-wise buildings**

Introduce ACT region specific 'climate-wise' guides for buildings and estate planning.



## Sector 4: Water



*'A sustainable water supply used efficiently provides for the optimal mix of supply options, encourages efficient use of water and is resilient to climate variability. It supports the social, economic and environmental needs of the ACT community.'*

ACT Water Strategy 2014-44 Striking the balance, ACT Government 2014.

### Climate change impacts

Recent climate modelling indicates total average rainfall in the ACT may not significantly change in the near future, but changes to the seasonality (when it falls) is likely to result in drier conditions in the winter and spring months. There will be continuing high variability of rain in any given month, however warmer temperatures are expected to increase evaporation, contributing to more frequent and more severe droughts.

The warming temperatures and increases in evaporation, accompanied by an increase in the rates of water use by plants and animals, means the ground will become drier. The consequences will be reduced regular in-flow of water into streams, ponds and lakes and, with drier soil, the health and growth of plants and soil organisms will be affected.

The water resources for both drinking (potable) and non-potable uses will be under pressure in a warming climate due to increased consumption in hotter weather. This will be compounded by an expanding population.

The projected increasing frequency and severity of extreme storms is likely to impact on both quantity and quality of water in dams, rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands. This is because intense rain events have higher rates of runoff compared to gentle rain which soaks into the ground (infiltration). Fast runoff (stormwater) can have higher pollutant loads, which combined with warmer temperatures, increase the likelihood of algal blooms and the need to do more to improve water quality. Intense rainfall also means the potential for more flash flooding and erosion in waterways.

### ACT Water Strategy

The ACT's waterways flow into the Murrumbidgee River, which is part of the Murray–Darling Basin. The ACT has obligations under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan to maintain its environmental assets and ecosystems. The ACT manages its water resources through a framework of set environmental flow guidelines. The ACT has the target to safeguard downstream use and environmental water needs so that the water entering the Murrumbidgee River is of no lesser quality than when it entered into the ACT.

The ACT Water Strategy 2014-44: Striking the Balance (2014)<sup>xxxvii</sup> sets out how the ACT Government will manage the Territory's water resources over the next 30 years to meet urban and environmental needs, and regional responsibilities. The strategy covers catchment management, stormwater and flood management, water supply and services, water for the environment, recreational water use, and public health. The strategy aims to deliver security of water supply, improved water quality and catchment health, and a 'water smart' community.

The strategy's implementation plan for the first five years is underway with the three key outcomes: healthy catchments and water bodies; a sustainable water supply used efficiently; and a community that values and enjoys clean, healthy catchments.



## Ecosystem health

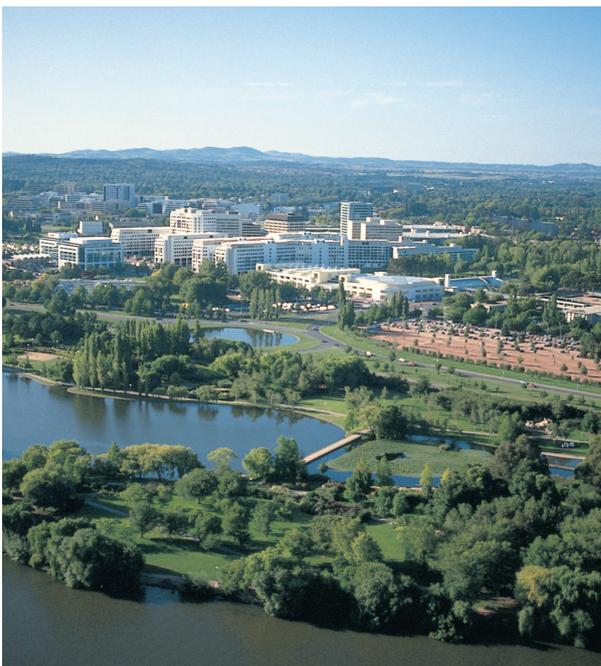
The ACT's aquatic, riparian and wetland ecosystems will experience significant pressures from climate change. These ecosystems will have to adapt to both fluctuating water availability and to a changing and more variable flow regime. Potential consequences include insufficient water for fish spawning at critical times and increased likelihood of weed invasion.

Drier conditions may lead to loss of riparian systems with disconnected pools of water limiting the ability of plants and animals to disperse and reproduce. Combined with warmer water temperatures, this could potentially cause the destruction of entire fish populations because certain fish can only spawn within narrow temperature ranges or habitats. Small bodies of water may experience fish 'kills' from poor water quality, particularly where there are low levels of dissolved oxygen.

Aquatic, riparian and wetland ecosystems in urban and non-urban areas provide many human amenity and recreation opportunities. Other benefits include local temperature buffering, flood and erosion protection and water quality improvement by filtering pollutants. Greater understanding of the processes of aquatic ecosystems and the climate-related threats is required to ensure they remain functional while providing this range of services.



The Lake Burley Griffin foreshore near Scrivener Dam is 'out of the way' and provides a diversity of aquatic and riparian habitats.



Commonwealth Park's Nerang Pool is an ornamental pond beside Lake Burley Griffin designed for human appreciation of nature (aesthetics and recreation) as well providing water quality functions.

## Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)

In 2009, the ACT Government introduced the Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) general code into the Territory Plan to encourage reduced use of mains water, improve water quality and manage stormwater flows in urban areas. WSUD also plays a key role in reducing the impacts and risks from storms and flash flooding. The WSUD code includes targets to reduce per capita potable water use by 25% from the entire network. This will be achieved through a 40% water use reduction target in all new urban development (when compared to 2003 developments), including new urban renewal projects.

A review of the WSUD code, released in August 2014, highlighted the importance of WSUD in managing urban stormwater. An updated WSUD code and associated guidelines are currently being developed. This work, when completed, will directly contribute to the living infrastructure strategy.



## Murray–Darling Basin and the Basin Priority Projects

The water resource allocated to the ACT is a finite amount under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan, 2012. Within this ‘limit’, the ACT’s water use is dependent upon capacity to capture and store water; rate of use (extraction) and the opportunity to acquire water rights from outside the ACT. For example, the government recently launched the Inner North Reticulation Network to capture stormwater for later re-use and to also enhance water quality and reduce dependence on potable water.

Under the ACT Basin Priority Project, the Australian and ACT governments are funding up to \$93.5 million for improvements in water quality in the ACT’s waterways, which will impact downstream in the Murrumbidgee River. This project is focussed on six priority catchments and is to be completed by 2019.

The initial phase of the project includes monitoring and assessment of water quality and the effectiveness of existing water quality infrastructure, leading to a feasibility investigation for works that most effectively improve water quality outcomes. The second phase will see the construction of the infrastructure <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/water/act-basin-priority-project>. The Territory is also considering options to improve water quality through the use of gutters and drains, including community behaviour change.

## Catchment approach

Taking a regional approach is necessary for the water sector to address the water quality obligations under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan.

An ACT priority is to reduce the amount of nutrients and other pollutants entering rivers, lakes and aquifers, particularly from urban areas. The ACT Government is taking a whole-of-catchment management approach to water quantity and quality issues, with involvement of the community through catchment bodies, the Australian and NSW Governments, Icon Water and surrounding local governments.

This work is being supported by improved governance arrangements with the establishment of the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group under the *Water Resources Act 2007* to provide a forum for stakeholders to promote better coordination and alignment of effort in the ACT and region. A priority for the Coordination Group is to prepare an ACT and Region Integrated Catchment Management Strategy to guide its work.



**Using WSUD means mimicking nature with areas of slow flow and cascades to change level. This investment in living infrastructure allows water to be retained in the landscape and water to be cleaned naturally (photo by ACT Government).**



## Assessment Table Sector 4: Water

### POTENTIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS

- Insufficient reliability of seasonal rainfall brings drought like conditions resulting in unirrigated city landscapes declining in health and amenity. In declared droughts, water restrictions for irrigation of public and private land result in further loss of amenity plus increased fire risk.
- Stormwater harvesting and re-use opportunities not realised, leading to increasing use of potable water for irrigation and possible cost increases.
- Protracted drought means insufficient water for environment needs and aquatic systems decline, with Canberra's lakes increasingly unfit for human contact and use.
- Warmer temperatures provide more suitable conditions for a greater range of insect and water borne illnesses and diseases.

### ACTIONS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY

- ACT's suite of policies and action plans for potable and non-potable water have taken climate impacts into consideration. Flood risk management planning is also underway (including stormwater capacity and infrastructure vulnerability) for public and private land that incorporates climate impacts.
- ACT Government has committed to reduce per capita water use by 25% in Canberra by 2023 from 2004 levels, and 40% in new developments and renewal (including extension and refurbishment). Noting that, whilst these are being met, the challenge will be to continue to meet targets as climate pressures increase.
- An ACT and Australian Government funded Basin Priority Project has commenced to address water quality issues in the Territory under current and future climate scenarios.
- An ACT Water Resource Plan is currently under development to manage the ACT's water resources under the sustainable diversion limit set for both surface water and groundwater resources.
- To achieve more strategic and efficient investment and coordination of effort, an ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group has been established.

### EMERGING ISSUES AND RESIDUAL RISK

- Water sensitive urban design needs to be integrated as part of living infrastructure into the design and development of new (greenfields) and urban renewal (brownfields) areas to detain, retain and re-use stormwater and to protect aquatic ecosystems. This is increasingly important under climate change.
- New stormwater management and infrastructure requires new standards for design with investment for construction and commitment to maintenance and operations.
- Upgrading of watering for public open spaces using sub-surface stormwater systems and drip irrigation requires new standards for design investment in construction and commitment to ongoing management.
- To reduce the flood risk and reduce property insurance premiums, buildings and infrastructure may need to be designed and constructed to cope with intense rainfall and localised flooding.
- Alternative management and funding models are needed to recognise, publicise and fund water sensitive urban design and smart stormwater systems including stormwater harvesting.
- Water needs that are not specifically allocated under the Murray–Darling Basin cap are met though the inter-state water trading market.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- The ACT has water security through investment in infrastructure, water trading and use of stormwater.
- Water and aquatic habitat monitoring continues with greater involvement of volunteers and landholders in regional water catchment management.
- Governance mechanisms in catchment and water management ensure water quality improvements.
- Priority public spaces and sporting facilities are effectively and efficiently watered to ensure amenity.
- The water cycle is visible in the landscape, with wetlands and lakes throughout the city being key attractions for recreation as well as wildlife habitat, while dependent ecosystems are resilient.
- Through education and awareness the community's behaviour ensures water is conserved and used efficiently.



## Proposed actions

Addressing the emerging issues and working towards the desired outcomes at the catchment scale are largely enabled through the current strategies and plans. However, the best way to ameliorate city heat and retain urban liveability is to keep urban landscapes green and healthy. To keep water in the landscape under a warming climate with extreme events of drought and intense rain means increasing the detention, capture and use of stormwater. This needs to be across all districts of the city, in greenfields developments and urban renewal and intensification projects.

The priority short-term climate adaptation actions for ACT Government are:

### By 2017

#### **Water for life**

Evaluate stormwater infrastructure and initiatives for potential further expansion of:

- stormwater irrigation of priority public open spaces
- mitigation of nuisance flooding through increasing on-site retention and infiltration
- protection of aquatic habitats and prevention of waterway scouring.

#### **Integrated Catchment Management Strategy**

The preparation of the plan for the catchments of our region is completed and being implemented.

### By 2019

#### **Basin Priority Project**

Complete the construction of approved water quality improvement projects incorporating new approaches to catchment 'treatment trains' in six priority sub-catchments.

## Sector 5: Natural resources and ecosystems



*'Evidence over the last decade has shown that ecological change in response to climate change is unavoidable; it will be widespread and it will be substantial...the potential is for between 30% and 50% change in species composition over most parts of the ACT by 2030 and up to 70% change<sup>xxxviii</sup> by 2070.'*

CSIRO 2011 Implications of climate change for biodiversity 2014<sup>xxxix</sup>.

### Climate change impacts

The magnitude and extent of a changing climate across Australian landscapes is a major issue for conserving wildlife biodiversity and the continuing provision of ecosystem services.

In our region the increased number of hot days and heatwaves, decreased number of frost days and changes to rainfall patterns will impact on species and ecosystems in different ways. CSIRO research indicates that half the species in our region may have changed by 2050. Knowing how best to respond to these changes is limited by our ability to predict the associated ecological changes.

### Other threats and limits to adaptation

Natural resource managers in our region need to consider the interactions with other processes that threaten the resilience of local biodiversity. For example, stressed plant and animal communities are more susceptible to decline from invasion by weeds and pests, attack by disease and/or damage from catastrophic bushfires.

Natural ecosystems will evolve under climate change, but there are limits to adaptation. Although some ecosystems may change in form, function or composition, some species may not survive. The primary aim of human intervention in the adaptation of natural systems is to avoid transformation to undesirable states where critical ecological functions degrade and ecosystems are lost.



The Golden Sun moth is a species of our region's treeless grasslands which are a threatened ecosystem. The ACT has a focus on remnant grasslands conservation and the Corroboree frog is restricted to alpine bog habitats. As the climate warms this species is at great risk in our region. The ACT funds a captive breeding program to support this species.



## Planning for resilience

We need to plan and act now towards a transition to a warmer and drier climate, preferably without significant species losses.



The Murrumbidgee River log jam near Tharwa village is an example of working with nature to re-create living infrastructure to improve habitat (in this case for fish) (photo by ACT Government).

The ability of biodiversity and ecosystems to adapt is dependent upon improving their resilience by minimising negative interactions from other stressors such as weeds, pest animals, disease and inappropriate fire regimes. The ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013–2023<sup>xi</sup> outlines the way to manage the ACT’s natural resources at the landscape scale and to enhance the resilience of our ecosystems by improving habitat condition and connectivity as a priority. The ACT Biosecurity Strategy 2015–25<sup>xii</sup> addresses threats to both biodiversity and productive landscapes.

The identification of ‘tipping points’ or critical thresholds will be an important part of monitoring the impacts of climate change. Taking an adaptive management (learn-as-you-go) approach means the routine evaluation of management actions, with some needing to be modified, reprioritised or abandoned.

In managing natural resources it is important to recognise the multiple values the landscape holds for the community, particularly for Indigenous people, the traditional owners. Respecting their culture and ability to live with nature, includes learning from their past practices of land management. The modern application of traditions such as mosaic burning will enhance biodiversity and human safety.

“Feral animals are the bane of every park management service in the country.”  
ACT Parks and Conservation Director, Daniel Iglesias, January 2015



Continuing to monitor and record the state of our local ecosystems (in this case, waterways) is important to inform future climate adaptation actions and The Murrumbidgee River log jam near Tharwa village is an example of working with nature to re-create living infrastructure to improve habitat (in this case for fish) (photos by ACT Government).



## Assessment Table Sector 5: Natural resources and ecosystems

### POTENTIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS

- The rate of projected climate change threatens the ability of species and ecosystems to adapt. The magnitude and extent of change across ACT landscapes is unknown, which limits our ability to predict potential ecological changes.
- Some species will decline and become rare or extinct as they cannot accommodate the frequency or severity of extreme events such as heatwaves and bushfires.
- Climate change adds to the existing pressure on habitats from human land management.
- Competition from non-native species may intensify, causing decline of native species and/or ecosystems.
- The ecosystems that adapt are likely to have a different composition of flora and fauna and may have different functions and structure.

### ACTIONS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY

- To improve conservation effectiveness with a changing climate, the knowledge and capacity of people and organisations involved in biodiversity management in reserves and in urban and rural communities is being strengthened by government programs.
- To enhance the resilience of natural landscapes across the ACT and into surrounding NSW, support for on-ground action for rehabilitation and connectivity is given by governments to catchment groups, Greening Australia, ParkCare, rural landholders and community volunteers.
- To improve monitoring and management of invasive species, new tools and strengthened partnerships with NSW and communities are being applied.
- The ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013–23 sets priorities for conservation action and the ACT Biosecurity Strategy 2015–25 addresses threats to both biodiversity and productive landscapes.

### EMERGING ISSUES AND RESIDUAL RISK

- The ability of ecosystems to adapt is dependent upon improving their resilience by minimising negative interactions from other stressors such as weeds, pest animals, disease and inappropriate fire regimes.
- Improvements in monitoring and forecasting climate change impacts, including species distribution, is needed to develop risk-based approaches to landscape scale adaptation.
- Good management of nature reserve land is fundamental to allowing biodiversity conservation across the landscape. However, only doing this in reserves is insufficient now and in future; therefore potential climate refuges for wildlife across the landscape and across state boundaries need to be identified, protected and managed.
- To be effective, biodiversity conservation needs to go beyond the reserves into sympathetic management of adjoining lands. Working with rural landholders and urban communities is an increasingly important conservation strategy.
- To conserve the most endangered ecosystems, transformational measures such as translocation and assisted migration need to be considered where they are feasible, cost-effective and likely to succeed.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- All land managers work collaboratively to develop appropriate strategies to identify, protect and manage potential climate refuges across the landscape and across state boundaries.
- Long-term planning and risk-based decision making increases the capacity of community and landholders to adaptively manage the landscape.
- People and organisations have the capacity and skills to effectively manage for biodiversity across all land uses under changing conditions.
- The resilience of native species and ecosystems across the region is supported by a cross-tenure and cross-border approach to landscape conservation.
- There is investment in species and ecosystem conservation to assist critical functions and ecosystem services under changing climate conditions.
- Critical ecosystem services of clean air, clear water and healthy soils are continued throughout the region through good land management.



## Proposed actions

The ACT is well placed to take leadership at the landscape scale in our region to ensure sufficient knowledge by all land managers to sufficiently and consistently assist nature conservation and lead by example within the Territory. The ACT Government priority short-term climate adaptation actions are:

### By 2017

#### **Landscape scale conservation**

Support key landholders and land managers to collaboratively identify, protect and strengthen:

- potential climate wildlife refuges (biodiversity refugia) across the landscape of the region
- adaptive capacity of ecosystems (wildlife communities) in our bioregion.

#### **Caring for land and water**

Implement:

- education of land managers about climate impacts and adaptation actions
- more effective control of pest animals and plants that may become more critical under climate change
- measuring and monitoring of climate impacts on ecosystems in our bioregion.



## 3.1 Integration

To ensure coordination across government, and to influence and inspire change to climate change adaptation, actions must be specifically designed to integrate and reach out to business and the community. A suite of 'integration actions' is described below.

### Awareness and information

Adapting to our warming climate will require actions across the entire local community. The government knows that the best chance we have of maintaining a productive and liveable city into the future, at lowest cost, is to work with the community, stakeholders and key partners to deliver the required changes.

It is anticipated the community will increasingly seek information on practical measures to increase their resilience and to refer to government as one of the key sources for this advice. Equally, the government will continue its efforts to engage effectively with the community.

In delivering the Government's Community Engagement Strategy on Climate Change sources of information and opportunities for community engagement include:

- the Actsmart sustainability portal ([www.actsmart.act.gov.au](http://www.actsmart.act.gov.au)), a central hub for the community providing information on climate change, energy and sustainability, including local environment-related events
- the Environment and Planning Directorate web page ([www.environment.act.gov.au](http://www.environment.act.gov.au)), where detailed information on climate change policy is available to the public and stakeholders
- increasing use of interactive media, including YouTube, Facebook and Twitter and enhanced coordination of digital media across government
- knowledge groups including the ACT Climate Change Council, the body advising the government on local climate change matters, and the city's universities, Canberra Institute of Technology and research institutions in close proximity, including CSIRO.

### Proposed action

**By 2016**

#### **Awareness raising**

Achieve effective sharing of information across all stakeholders through sustained promotion and engagement efforts, including providing periodic updates on local climate impact assessments and emerging research outcomes.

### Working in partnership

To affect meaningful and sustainable adaptation action, collaboration is required as "successful adaptation activities require the cooperation of a wide range of organisations and individuals"<sup>xiii</sup>. Furthermore, in the Australian context, evidence suggests that "for adaptation to be successful collaboration will have to become the new standard model for governance in Australia"<sup>xiii</sup>. Governance in this respect is not seen as the institutions/instruments of government per se, but more the arrangements and processes for steering and managing a new trajectory that is systemically viable in a climate-changing situation<sup>xiv</sup>.

Seeking collaboration between the public, private, civil society and research sectors and the wider community for adaptation action is also consistent with the national Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2007), which states, "There is an important role for business and the community in addressing climate change risks, and governments will pursue a partnership approach to adaptation to manage risks and identify opportunities"<sup>xiv</sup>.



The impetus for collaboration is a vested interest among the participants in understanding and resolving the challenges and opportunities presented by a changing climate. Specifically, participants are drawn together by a ‘shared responsibility to act’<sup>xvii</sup>. This approach sees the collaborators as active participants in a value chain of activities ranging from exploration and discovery of issues/opportunities and the resultant conceptual design of responses, through development and delivery to evaluation and future planning. The participants bring to these processes diverse yet relevant knowledge, skills, resources and values specific to their sector, organisation and/or location.

In practice, this form of collaboration requires a ‘true’ partnership approach. True partnerships are about shared agendas as well as combined resources, risks and rewards. They are voluntary collaborations that build on the respective strengths and core competencies of each partner, optimise the allocation of resources and achieve mutually beneficial results over a sustained period. They imply linkages that increase resources, scale and impact<sup>xviii</sup>.

The ACT Government’s approach is to work in partnership to ensure we all have the information and support we need to play our part and to share in the benefits of a city that is responding to, and adapting to, a warming climate. Through working in partnership we will also engage across the border with other governments in the Canberra region<sup>xviii</sup>, as well as the Australian Government.

## Proposed action

### By 2016

#### Sustainability Alliance

Build on existing engagements with peak bodies and local knowledge brokers to create a cross-sector partnership providing an efficient and effective vehicle to:

- share climate change and sustainability information across diverse groups to build understanding, support informed decision making and inspire action
- seek input on relevant ACT policy and program issues
- facilitate collaboration between sectors on challenges and opportunities of mutual interest

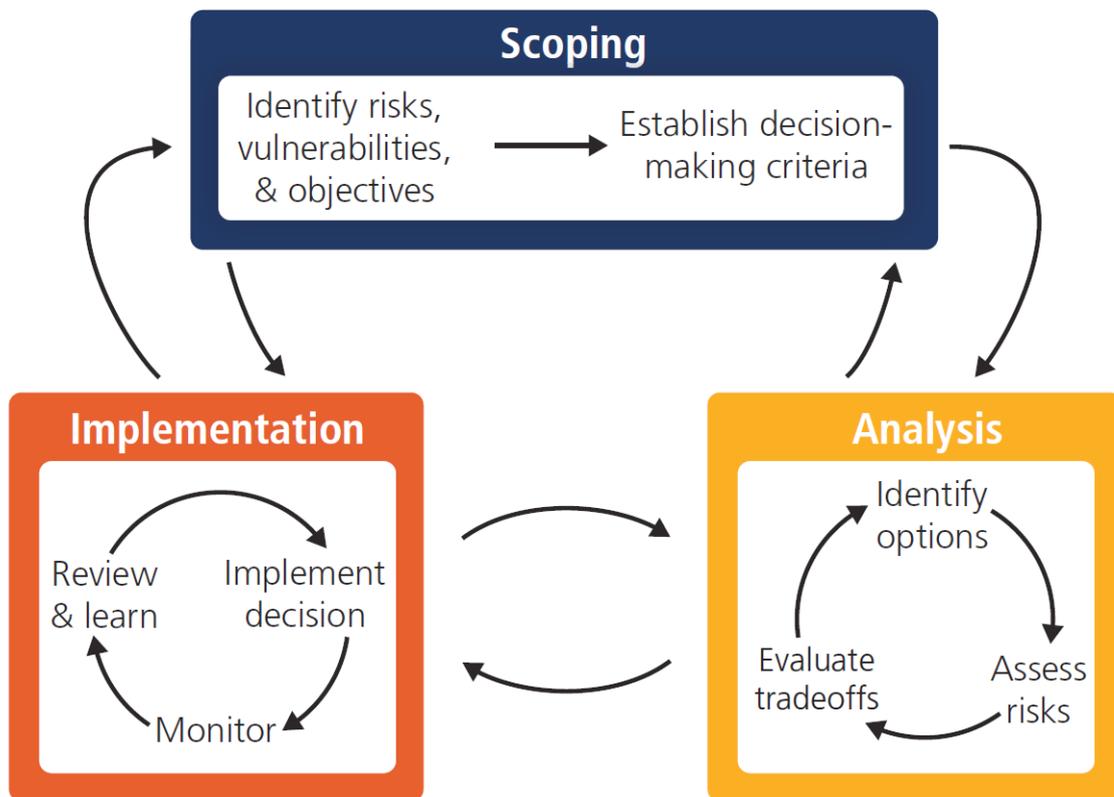
## Indicators for measuring resilience

To measure outcomes, the OECD 2015 publication National Climate Change Adaptation: Emerging Practices in Monitoring and Evaluation<sup>xix</sup> states:

- The broad nature of adaptation demands a portfolio of monitoring and evaluation tools that, when combined, provide an overview of the larger resilience picture. The composition of the tools used will be most effective if they reflect domestic (place specific) circumstances and capacities.
- Climate change risk and vulnerability assessments can provide a baseline of domestic vulnerabilities to climate change against which progress on adaptation can be reviewed. If repeated, such assessments can also demonstrate how risks and vulnerabilities are changing over time.
- Indicators facilitate an assessment of progress made in addressing adaptation priorities. On their own, indicators cannot explain how the change came about. Reporting on, and using, indicators is resource intensive. They must therefore be carefully defined and, when possible, draw on existing data sources.
- Project and program evaluations can help identify what approaches to adaptation are effective in achieving agreed adaptation objectives and to understand what some of their enabling factors for success may be.

In addition to these factors, there are inter-relationships between scoping vulnerabilities, analysing response options and implementing actions. Furthermore, as changes in climate are not static, the approach to monitoring and evaluation needs to be adaptive over time. Given this, effective implementation of the Adaptation Strategy, and its ongoing monitoring and evaluation, will be an iterative process requiring periodic updates through to 2020. It should be noted that a review of the ACT's climate change strategy and action plan is also scheduled for 2020.

Figure 23: Climate change adaptation as an iterative risk management process



### Proposed action

#### By 2016

##### Monitoring and evaluation framework

Monitor resilience as an outcome of successful adaptation, including:

- Establishing a longitudinal community survey (commencing in 2016 and repeated in 2020)
- measurable and repeatable indicators to evaluate resilience across community sectors.



# 4. MAKING PROGRESS

*Ragnarok*. Entry by Paul Cowled into the Challenge Accepted climate change competition



## 4.1 Focus on outcomes

The analysis of projected climate change impacts and associated risks for the ACT has resulted in action by multiple ACT Government agencies to manage, mitigate and minimise those risks for the future. This work is ongoing by each agency.

Adaptation needs a whole-of-government approach and the objectives of this Adaptation Strategy are to:

1. mainstream climate change adaptation
2. enhance climate resilience of the community
3. demonstrate leadership by the ACT Government
4. take effective adaptation action.

Reflecting the need to ramp up our existing adaptation work, high priority short-term (between 2016 and 2020) actions are proposed for the five sectors, with integrating actions to ensure cross-agency coordination. The actions have been aggregated under four outcome areas:

- **Outcome 1: Territory-wide resilience**  
A focus on people and community resilience through ramping up actions on risk and vulnerability, health and wellbeing, disaster and emergency preparedness.
- **Outcome 2: A city for all seasons**  
A focus on place and increasing Canberra's sustainability through renewed investment in living infrastructure and new requirements for 'climate' wise buildings and landscapes.
- **Outcome 3: Opportunity for adaptation innovation**  
A focus on prosperity through increasing economic diversity and innovation that responds to climate and sustainability drivers.
- **Outcome 4: Integration**  
A focus on ensuring that action is effective and integrated across all sectors.

## 4.2 Proposed actions

The suite of proposed high priority short-term (between 2016 and 2020) actions reflect the immediate need to accelerate change to transformative adaptation and achieve our objectives, and are drawn from the sectoral assessments and integrating actions (Table 7-10). To demonstrate linkages between actions and outcomes, each action has been categorised relative to the desired outcome it is intended to deliver. The majority of actions are shown for completion by 2017. Some are due for completion by the end of 2020, reflecting the longer timeframes needed for these to be achieved.

At this draft stage of the Adaptation Strategy, these actions are proposed and are not yet adopted by the ACT Government. The consultation on this draft will inform the ACT Governments consideration of the final Adaptation Strategy in 2016. Some new ACT Government actions are subject to budget funding.



Table 7: Outcomes 1

<b>Outcome 1: Territory-wide resilience</b>	
<b>Actions by end 2016</b>	
<b>1. Bushfire prone areas</b>	<p>Make changes to regulatory settings to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. recognise Canberra's expanded bushfire prone area</li> <li>b. introduce higher Bushfire Attack Level standards for new buildings and major extensions.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Reducing impacts from the warming climate</b>	<p>Increase awareness of climate risks and what we all can do in our daily lives by expanding existing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Emergency Services Agency outreach to households in the Bushfire Prone Area</li> <li>b. Actsmart programs to households in the Bushfire Prone Area.</li> </ul>
<b>Actions by end 2017</b>	
<b>3. Climate risk assessments</b>	<p>Update or undertake new assessments of climate risks and hazards with upgrade proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ACT Government owned and leased buildings</li> <li>b. ACT owned utility and services infrastructure and essential services delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Climate impact and planning</b>	<p>Introduce requirements to planning for new estates and urban renewal in Territory Plan and sub-division guidelines and design standards to ensure climate change adaptation considerations in planning discussions.</p>
<b>5. Framework for flood management</b>	<p>The revision of the framework is completed and being implemented.</p>
<b>6. Strategic Bushfire Capability Framework</b>	<p>Complete the capability framework under the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan.</p>
<b>7. Sustainable procurement</b>	<p>Introduce mandatory minimum sustainability requirements to ACT Government capital works and asset upgrade projects to ensure assets and services will be 'climate wise' and carbon neutral by 2020.</p>
<b>8. Landscape conservation</b>	<p>Support key landholders and managers to collaboratively identify, protect and strengthen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. potential climate wildlife refuges (biodiversity refugia) across the landscape of the region</li> <li>b. adaptive capacity of ecosystems (wildlife communities) in our bioregion.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Caring for land and water</b>	<p>Implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. education of land managers about climate impacts and adaptation actions</li> <li>b. more effective control of pest animals and plants that may become more critical under climate change</li> <li>c. measuring and monitoring of climate impacts on ecosystems in our bioregion.</li> </ul>
<b>Actions by end 2020</b>	
<b>10. Climate wise buildings</b>	<p>Introduce ACT region specific climate wise guides for buildings and estate planning.</p>
<b>11. Regional collaboration</b>	<p>Work with the region to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. improve awareness of climate change impacts to build resilience and adaptive capacity</li> <li>b. improve awareness of climate-suitable practices for agriculture.</li> </ul>



Table 8: Outcomes 2

## Outcome 2: A city for all seasons

### Actions by end 2017

#### 12. City resilience

To increase sustainability in adapting to climate change:

- a. review design standards for public infrastructure to ensure climate change adaptation is considered
- b. invest in the urban forest to provide sufficient public area shade and shelter across all districts
- c. introduce requirements to reduce heat absorption of building surfaces and pedestrian pavements.

#### 13. Tree-lined pathways

Add to the Strategic Cycle Network Plan a program of shade tree planting for walking and cycling routes.

#### 14. Increasing healthy living

Support healthy living through:

- a. progressive implementation of the Active Travel Strategy through expansion of pathways with appropriate support infrastructure such as drinking fountains, parking, seating and shower facilities.
- b. assess opportunities for investment in community gardens in new estates and urban renewal areas.

#### 15. Integrated Catchment Management Strategy

The preparation of the plan for the catchments of our region is completed and being implemented.

Table 9: Outcomes 3

## Outcome 3: Opportunity for adaptation innovation

### Actions by end 2017

#### 16. Climate adaptation innovation

In projects across the city for new or existing public infrastructure, initiate the creation and or provision of trials to innovate in:

- a. materials, surfaces, structures, products or methods
- b. maximising capture and re-use of stormwater
- c. making public realm landscape treatments more climate resilient.

#### 17. Water for life

Evaluate stormwater infrastructure and initiatives for potential further expansion of:

- a. stormwater irrigation of priority public open spaces
- b. mitigation of nuisance flooding through increasing on-site retention and infiltration
- c. protection of aquatic habitats and prevention of waterway scouring.

#### 18. Climate adaptation training and education

Collaborate with peak bodies and local knowledge brokers on new or innovative delivery of:

- a. programs for education, training and upskilling of builders and trades people
- b. continuing professional development for Canberra and region built environment professionals
- c. a web-based tool for self-assessment of household climate adaptation and resilience.

### Action by 2019

#### 19. Basin Priority Project

Complete the construction of approved water quality improvement projects incorporating new approaches to catchment 'treatment trains' in six priority sub-catchments.



Table 10: Outcomes 4

<b>Outcome 4: Integration</b>
<b>Actions by 2016</b>
<p><b>20. Sustainability alliance</b></p> <p>Build on existing engagements with peak bodies and local knowledge brokers to create a cross-sector partnership providing an efficient and effective vehicle to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. share climate change and sustainability information across diverse groups to build understanding, support informed decision making and inspire action</li> <li>b. seek input on relevant ACT policy and program issues</li> <li>c. facilitate collaboration between sectors on challenges and opportunities of mutual interest.</li> </ol>
<p><b>21. Awareness raising</b></p> <p>Achieve effective sharing of information across all stakeholders through sustained promotion and engagement efforts, including providing periodic updates on local climate impact assessments and emerging research outcomes.</p>
<p><b>22. Monitoring and evaluation framework</b></p> <p>Measure resilience as an outcome of successful adaptation, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. establishing a longitudinal community survey (commencing in 2016 and repeated in 2020)</li> <li>b. measurable and repeatable indicators to evaluate resilience across community sectors.</li> </ol>

## 4.3 Monitoring and reporting

The ACT Government receives regular reports from agencies responsible for existing policies and strategies, for example on the Climate Change Action Plan 2 (AP2). An indication of progress is gained from monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the actions. It is proposed this existing mechanism be applied to include reporting progress on climate change adaptation.

When adopted, the final Adaptation Strategy will have a set of actions that, along with other existing climate-related government work, will be able to be routinely reported upon. This process is applied for the actions in AP2, with six monthly updates provided to the government and made accessible online.

Additionally, each year the ACT Minister for the Environment tables a report in the Legislative Assembly on actions taken in responding to the challenges of climate change. This annual report, required under section 15 of the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Reduction Act 2010*, is also where whole-of-government progress on the Adaptation Strategy will be reported.



# 5. HAVE YOUR SAY

*Colour of life.* Entry by Rupsa Neogy Kumar into the Challenge Accepted climate change competition



## 5.1 Provide your views

This draft ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: Living With a Warming Climate seeks to build resilience and adapt our city to future change. The ACT Government welcomes public comment on this draft.

The outcomes from public consultation on this draft Adaptation Strategy will be documented in a consultation report and will inform the preparation of the final Adaptation Strategy. All comments will be taken into consideration.

### You can provide your views by:

**Email:** write your submission and send to the climate change inbox [climatechange@act.gov.au](mailto:climatechange@act.gov.au).

**Post:** send your written submission to:  
Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy,  
Environment and Planning Directorate, PO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

**Call:** Contact the Draft Adaptation Strategy Policy Team for accessible feedback options.  
Access Canberra: 13 22 81.

### More information

During the consultation period, you can obtain more information about poster displays and other community events at:

- Actsmart Sustainability Portal [www.actsmart.act.gov.au](http://www.actsmart.act.gov.au)
- [www.environment.act.gov.au](http://www.environment.act.gov.au)
- [www.timetotalk.act.gov.au](http://www.timetotalk.act.gov.au)
- EPD facebook and EPD twitter
- Government shopfronts



# 6. APPENDIX 1

Summary of climate change adaptation responses around the nation (not including coastal work)

TYPE OF ACTION	INITIATIVES
<b>AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT</b>	
Research and information exchange	National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) Phase two of NCCARF (\$8.8 million over 3 years (to 30 June 2017) was announced in October 2014. Three major focus areas: Australian Coastal Climate Change Adaptation Framework, Synthesis and Communication and Managing Adaptation Networks.
CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology projections	National climate projections released in January 2015.
Natural Resource Management Adaptation Planning	'Cluster' adaptation planning for natural resource management with Catchment Management Authorities or peak Landcare bodies.
<b>NEW SOUTH WALES</b>	
Policy and planning	<i>NSW 2021: A plan to make NSW number one</i> sets goals and targets that support climate change action. Integrated regional vulnerability assessments (IRVA's)
Engagement and information	AdaptNSW web portal.
Research	New South Wales and ACT Regional Climate projections (NARCLIM) project covering NSW, ACT and most of Victoria. NSW Adaptation Research Hub with a \$2.75 m budget over three years.
<b>QUEENSLAND</b>	
Policy and planning	Climate adaptation strategy with a whole-of-government, whole-of economy approach is due by the end of 2015.
Finance	Climate Change Adaptation Fund. Funding program with a budget of \$15 million over 3 years to support local governments develop coastal hazard adaptation strategies and pilot projects.
<b>VICTORIA</b>	
Legislation	<i>Climate Change Act 2010</i> includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan every four years</li> <li>requirement for government decision makers to take climate change into account when making specified decisions under other Acts.</li> </ul> A review of the Act is due at the end of 2015.
Policy and planning	<i>Victorian Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2013)</i> . Focussed on state level management of climate-related risks. A mid-term review is currently underway. A second plan is due by the end of 2016. Climate science for Victoria Update of information about observed changes in climate and a summary of projections currently underway.
Engagement	Climate Change Local Government Mentors Provides support and guidance to local government.



TYPE OF ACTION	INITIATIVES
<b>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</b>	
Policy and planning	<p><i>South Australia's Strategic Plan</i> (2004, updated in 2011) – state level strategic plan, includes climate change considerations.</p> <p><i>Climate Change Vision – Pathways to 2050</i> (2014), a review by the Premier's Climate Change Council of policies and programs.</p> <p><i>Prospering in a changing climate: A climate change adaptation framework for South Australia</i> (2012), has a related government action plan and is the mechanism to develop Regional Adaptation Plans (12 regions), work ongoing. New Strategy for climate change action due by the end of 2015.</p> <p>Climate Adaptation Planning Guidelines for Councils.</p>
Legislation	<p>Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007. Establishes Premier's Climate Change Council as an independent advisory body. Act to be reviewed by end 2015.</p>
<b>TASMANIA</b>	
Policy and planning	<p><i>Climate Change Action Plan</i>, due by the end of 2015.</p> <p>Regional adaptation project.</p> <p>Regional and municipal risk assessments with adaptation plans are underway.</p> <p>Mitigating Natural Hazards through Land Use Planning Project, guidance in risk management and hazard adaptation.</p>
Engagement	<p>A 'one-stop-shop'.</p> <p>Sharing hazard information with the community.</p> <p>Disaster planning and preparedness for businesses provision of information to building capacity and resilience of small and medium-sized enterprises.</p>
<b>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b>	
Policy and planning	<p><i>Adapting to our changing climate</i> (2012).</p> <p>Climate change strategy focused on adaptation responses and recommended actions for key sectors.</p>



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- ACT Government, 2014, Fact Sheet: Avoiding Heat-Related Stress.
- ACT Government, 2013, ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-23.
- ACT Government, 2013, Triple Bottom Line Assessment Framework.
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- CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology, 2014, State of the Climate 2014.
- IPCC, 2014, Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, Summary for policymakers.
- NASA, 2015, 2014 warmest year in modern record, article is available at <http://climate.nasa.gov/news/2221/>.
- NSW Government, NSW and ACT Climate Modelling Project (NARCIIM)

## Useful links

- ACT Government climate change web site: <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/cc>
- IPCC website: [www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)
- UNFCCC website: <http://newsroom.unfccc.int>
- Australian Government Department of Climate Change: [www.climatechange.gov.au](http://www.climatechange.gov.au)
- Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research: [www.tyndall.ac.uk](http://www.tyndall.ac.uk)
- UK Climate Impacts Programme: [www.ukcip.org.uk](http://www.ukcip.org.uk)
- Stockholm Environment Institute: [www.sei.se](http://www.sei.se)
- UNFCCC on adaptation <http://unfccc.int/adaptation/items/4159.php>
- CSIRO Climate Adaptation Flagship: [www.csiro.au/org/ClimateAdaptationFlagship.html](http://www.csiro.au/org/ClimateAdaptationFlagship.html)
- Resilience Alliance: [www.resalliance.org](http://www.resalliance.org)
- WeADAPT: <https://weadapt.org/>
- Eldis page on adaptation: [www.eldis.org/go/topics/dossiers/climate-change-adaptation](http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/dossiers/climate-change-adaptation)
- Community based adaptation exchange – Eldis: <http://community.eldis.org/.59b70e3d/>
- AusAid webpage on adaptation: [www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/adaptation.cfm](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/adaptation.cfm)
- World Bank webpage on adaptation: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/climatechange>
- OECD work on adaptation: [www.oecd.org/env/cc/adaptation](http://www.oecd.org/env/cc/adaptation)
- NCCARF website: <http://www.nccarf.edu.au/>



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