



Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment,
Climate Change and Biodiversity

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Approved for publication

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About the Committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity on 2 December 2020.

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

- Climate change
- Climate action
- Environment
- Heritage
- Water and energy policy and programs
- Emissions reductions
- Environment and ecological sustainability
- Commissioner for the Environment
- Environment Protection Agency

You can read the full establishing resolution [on our website](#).

Committee members

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA, Chair

Ms Jo Clay MLA, Deputy Chair (from 9 December 2022)

Ms Leanne Castley MLA

Secretariat

Ms Joanne Cullen, Acting Committee Secretary (from 15 March 2022)

Dr Frieda Scott, Acting Committee Secretary (16 April 2021 to 11 March 2022)

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About this inquiry

Clause 3A of the establishing resolution refers all calendar and financial year annual and financial reports for 2020-2021 to the relevant standing committee for inquiry and report by 31 May 2022 of the year after the presentation of the report to the Assembly pursuant to the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*.

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Acronyms

| Acronym | Long form |
|----------|---|
| ACT | Australian Capital Territory |
| CMTEDD | Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate |
| COVID/19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS/CoV/2. |
| EDO | Environmental Defenders Office |
| EOI | expression of interest |
| EPA | Environment Protection Authority |
| EPSDD | Environment, Planning, and Sustainable Development Directorate |
| EV | Electric vehicle |
| FTE | full time equivalent staffing |
| MDBA | Murray Darling Basin Authority |
| MLA | Member of the Legislative Assembly |
| OCSE | Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment |
| PAGA | Parliamentary and Governing Agreement |
| QON | Question on Notice |
| QTON | Question Taken on Notice |
| REVS | Realising electric vehicle-to-grid services |
| SLA | Suburban Land Agency |
| SoER | State of the Environment Report |
| VHESS | Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme |

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government respond as soon as possible to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's recommendations on scope 3 emissions and take a proactive response to track and reduce these given that scope 3 emissions account for 94% of Canberra's carbon footprint.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase the uptake of active travel and particularly cycling for women and girls through:

- incentives to switch to public and active travel;
- provision of more separate cycle infrastructure;
- better end-of-trip facilities in workplaces; and
- improved facilities for e-bikes, including more charging infrastructure.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that before commencing planning for land release or development of western edge land, including Bluetts Block, that the ACT Government publish any report recommendations for public comment and consultation.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure invasive species management, invasive weed management and woody weed management is adequately resourced and funded.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver its gas transition plan by 2024.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver the VHEES as soon as possible to provide ACT Housing tenants with the benefits of energy efficiency and efficient electric heating in their homes.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider requiring end-of-life battery and solar panel recycling under the contracts for the Big Canberra Battery and under all government contracts involving procurement of large batteries.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider commissioning the development of a framework for budget reporting on line items in the budget for tonnes of Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 carbon produced, avoided and reduced, particularly for budget expenditure involving construction or demolition.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clarify policy and procedures for scraping and levelling of land in new suburb developments, with a focus on whether the entire suburb, or individual blocks, should be routinely scraped and levelled, or whether builders should work within the contours of the existing landscape and only dig as needed to provide slabs, basement car parks and sunken garages.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clarify how topsoil will be managed to prevent sediment run off and to ensure healthy soils remain for trees, vegetation and food growing.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider the EDO report *Implementing Effective Independent Environmental Protection Agencies in Australia* and if the nine key recommendations are agreed, how these will be implemented.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure the EPA's resources and FTEs in line with increasing development and population growth.

1. Introduction

Presentation of 2020-2021 annual and financial reports

- 1.1. All annual and financial reports for the territory were tabled between 8 October 2021¹ and 2 December 2021² in the Legislative Assembly. A collated list of annual and financial reports is available online.³
- 1.2. During its inquiry the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity was required to examine all or part of the following annual and financial reports for 2020-2021;
 - climate change;
 - climate action;
 - environment;
 - heritage;
 - water and energy policy and programs;
 - emissions reductions;
 - environment and ecological sustainability;
 - Commissioner for the Environment; and
 - Environment Protection Agency EPA).

Conduct of inquiry

- 1.3. The Committee's inquiry was undertaken amid the COVID/19 pandemic. In light of this, all annual and financial report hearings were conducted via videoconference. On 16 September 2022 the Assembly amended the resolution of establishment for standing committees to set a reporting date for the committee inquiries into annual and financial reports for the financial year 2020-2021 of 31 May 2022.⁴

Public hearings

- 1.4. The Committee held public hearings on 25 February 2022, 1 March 2022 and 3 March 2022. At the hearings the Committee heard from ACT Government Ministers and their accompanying Directorate officials and statutory officers.

¹ ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 27, 8 October 2021, p 334.

² ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 36, 2 December 2021, pp 451–453.

³ Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate, *Annual Reports*, 2 December 2021, https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/report/annual-reports (accessed 21 March 2022).

⁴ ACT Legislative Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 24, 16 September 2021, p 272.

- 1.5. Witnesses who appeared before the Committee are listed at Appendix A. Transcripts from the hearings are available on the Assembly website. Footage of the hearings is available via video on demand on the Legislative Assembly website.

Questions taken on notice at hearings and questions placed on notice

- 1.6. A total of 26 questions were lodged during the inquiry, 13 questions were taken on notice by Ministers and statutory office holders during the hearings, and 13 questions on notice were submitted by Committee members and visiting MLAs following the hearings.
- 1.7. The answers to questions, and a list of questions (by subject, submitter, recipient) are available at Appendix B, and on the inquiry webpage.

Acknowledgements

- 1.8. The Committee thanks everyone who participated in, or otherwise assisted, this inquiry. This includes the ACT Government Ministers, Directorate officials, and statutory officers. The Committee extends a special thanks to the Hansard and Broadcasting staff of the Office of the Legislative Assembly.

2. Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

- 2.1. The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (the Commissioner) is an independent statutory position established by the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993* (the Act)⁵.
- 2.2. The Commissioner role and functions include:
- State of the Environment Reporting for the ACT (s19 of the Act); and
 - investigations:
 - as directed by the Minister (s12(1)(b) of the Act);
 - at the discretion of the Commissioner, into agencies where actions would have a substantial impact on the environment of the ACT (s12(1)(c) of the Act); and
 - of complaints about the management of the environment by the Territory or a territory authority, or about issues relating to ecologically sustainable development (s13 of the Act).⁶

Matters considered

- 2.3. During the Commissioner's appearance before the Committee on 25 February 2022 the following matters were considered:
- community engagement;⁷
 - scope 3 emissions;⁸
 - state of the lakes and waterways investigation report;⁹
 - *State of the Environment Report* (SoER);¹⁰ and
 - education resources.¹¹

⁵ OCSE, *Annual Report 2020-2021*, p 4, <https://envcomm.act.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OCSE-Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2022).

⁶ OCSE, *Annual Report 2020-2021*, p 4, <https://envcomm.act.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OCSE-Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2022).

⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 1–3 and 7.

⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 3–4.

⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 4–6.

¹⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 6.

¹¹ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 7.

Key Issues

Scope 3 emissions

- 2.4. In August 2020 the ACT Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Shane Rattenbury MLA, asked the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment to evaluate scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions for the ACT.¹²
- 2.5. The *Scope 3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the ACT: An investigation of current scope 3 emissions and potential future reductions* report stated that the:
- ACT has an ambitious greenhouse gas reduction target of net zero emissions by 2045. Currently, this considers only direct emissions in the ACT and emissions from purchased electricity, known as scope 1 and 2 emissions, respectively. Emissions produced by goods and services brought in from outside the ACT (scope 3 emissions) are not currently included.¹³
- 2.6. The Commissioner told the Committee that 94 per cent of the ACT's total emissions fall into the category of scope 3 emissions, noting that when a jurisdiction talks about meeting net zero by 2045, only scope 1 and 2 emissions are included in reporting against such a target.¹⁴ She also noted that scope 2 emissions are now reported as zero since 100 per cent renewable electricity in the ACT was achieved in 2020.¹⁵
- 2.7. The *Scope 3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the ACT: An investigation of current scope 3 emissions and potential future reductions* report highlighted the top six scope 3 emissions groups in the ACT as:
- transport (14.7%)—public and private transport by road, rail, air and sea;
 - food (11.9%)—includes agriculture, fishing and forestry;
 - retail trade (11.7%)—international trade, manufacturing and transport;
 - construction (9.3%)—includes manufacturing, electricity, gas, water and waste services;
 - public administration and safety (9.1%)—defence force and services such as police and fire and emergency; and

¹² OCSE, *Scope 3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the ACT: An investigation of current scope 3 emissions and potential future reductions*, p 10, <https://envcomm.act.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Scope-3-Greenhouse-Gas-Emissions-in-the-ACT-FINAL-Report-A30648089.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2022).

¹³ OCSE, *Scope 3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the ACT: An investigation of current scope 3 emissions and potential future reductions*, p 8, <https://envcomm.act.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Scope-3-Greenhouse-Gas-Emissions-in-the-ACT-FINAL-Report-A30648089.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2022).

¹⁴ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 3.

¹⁵ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 4.

- manufacturing (9.1%)—international and Australian, includes fuels burnt and gases released for the manufacture of energy intensive materials such as aluminium, steel and cement.¹⁶
- 2.8. The ACT's scope 3 emissions originating from outside Australia account for approximately 30 per cent of the total, while within Australia emissions originating from Queensland (19%), New South Wales (18%) and Victoria (13%) account for more than 50 percent of the ACT's total scope 3 emissions.¹⁷
- 2.9. The Minister told the Committee that he is responsible for coordinating the government response to the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (OCSE) scope 3 emission report. The Commissioner made 12 recommendations covering a range of government areas, so he is working with other ministers to put a response together. Formally the government response has to be done within six months of receiving the report from the commissioner, the deadline is now getting fairly close. He also noted that:
- I think it is a really valuable report that the commissioner has given us, because it is one of the first times that anybody has really looked at scope 3 emissions, certainly in Australia. Even globally, there has not been a lot of work on this. I think it puts the ACT in a good position to really start thinking about how to tackle scope 3 emissions.¹⁸
- 2.10. A series of questions on notice (QON) were asked of ministers in relation to scope 3 emissions reporting. In their answers to [ECCB QON No. 06](#), [QON No. 8](#), [QON No. 9](#), [QON No. 11](#), [QON No. 12](#) and [QON No. 13](#) all confirmed that current government reporting only includes scope 1 and 2 emissions.

Committee comment

- 2.11. The Committee is of the view that for the ACT to reach its goal of net zero by 2045, targets for all emissions need to be set (scope 1, 2 and 3), noting scope 2 emissions were reduced to zero when the ACT achieved 100 per cent renewable energy supply in 2020. Future emissions reporting by the government should include scope 3 emissions.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government respond as soon as possible to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's recommendations on scope 3 emissions and take a proactive response to track and reduce these given that scope 3 emissions account for 94% of Canberra's carbon footprint.

¹⁶ OCSE, *Scope 3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the ACT: An investigation of current scope 3 emissions and potential future reductions*, p 26, <https://envcomm.act.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Scope-3-Greenhouse-Gas-Emissions-in-the-ACT-FINAL-Report-A30648089.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2022).

¹⁷ OCSE, *Scope 3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the ACT: An investigation of current scope 3 emissions and potential future reductions*, p 29, <https://envcomm.act.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Scope-3-Greenhouse-Gas-Emissions-in-the-ACT-FINAL-Report-A30648089.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2022).

¹⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 61–62.

State of the Environment Report

2.12. The Committee noted recommendation 16 of the 2019 SoER as follows:

explore incentives to increase the uptake of public transport, car and ride sharing options, and active travel, including cycling amongst women and girls.

2.13. The OCSE *Annual Report 2020-2021* stated that the:

ACT continues to use a range of options to increase public transport uptake and reduce access barriers, including free off-peak travel periods, better stop and station infrastructure and interchange facilities, simplified timetabling, route classification and passenger information services, expanded park and ride facilities, improved lighting, integrated ticketing between public transport modes, as well as marketing aimed at attracting more users, more often.¹⁹

2.14. The Commissioner stated in her answer to Question Taken on Notice (QTON) [No. ECCB1](#) (received 7 March 2022) that the Government agreed to recommendation 16 in its response to the report. She noted the following actions had been undertaken to address this recommendation:

- delivery of the ACT Transport Strategy 2020;
- completion of projects to encourage walking and cycling in town centres such as the Tuggeranong Town Centre, Belconnen Bikeway and Woden Cycle Loop; and
- installing more passing distance signage in high cycling traffic areas.²⁰

2.15. The Commissioner also noted however that the:

...actions taken to address the recommendation do not specifically target women and girls and their unique barriers to uptake of active transport (e.g. from childcare and household labour leading to 'trip-chaining'). Further progress is required to increase uptake for this demographic.²¹

Committee comment

2.16. The Committee is of the view that further actions need to be identified to improve the uptake of active travel by women and girls who can perceive such travel as unsafe, or inconvenient for family reasons such as travelling to and from work via childcare.

¹⁹ OCSE, *Annual Report 2020-2021*, p 43, <https://envcomm.act.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OCSE-Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf> (accessed 9 May 2022).

²⁰ Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Dr Sophie Lewis, answer to [QTON No. ECCB1](#), received 7 March 2022.

²¹ Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Dr Sophie Lewis, answer to [QTON No. ECCB1](#), received 7 March 2022

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase the uptake of active travel and particularly cycling for women and girls through:

- incentives to switch to public and active travel;
- provision of more separate cycle infrastructure;
- better end-of-trip facilities in workplaces; and
- improved facilities for e-bikes, including more charging infrastructure.

3. Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

- 3.1. The Environment, Planning, and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) is responsible for 'areas such as built environment, land strategy, planning policy, urban renewal, building policy, development and leasing applications, environment, water policy, heritage, nature parks, nature conservation, climate change and energy'.²²
- 3.2. The Committee held a public hearing with Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage and directorate officials on 25 February 2022 in relation to her portfolio responsibilities.
- 3.3. The Committee held a public hearing with Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA, Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction and directorate officials on 1 March 2022 in relation to his portfolio responsibilities.

Output class 2: Environment

- 3.4. Output 2.1, Environment, helps protect the ACT's natural environment through:
- the implementation of programs responding to natural resource management as part of the Commonwealth's National Landcare Program;
 - manage, review and implement legislation/action and plans to better protect and conserve critically endangered grasslands, woodlands and associated fauna and key waterways;
 - sustainable use of water, best practice approaches to water management through water sensitive urban design, water security and catchment management including through implementation of Striking the Balance, the ACT's Water Strategy;
 - establish and support an ACT and region catchment management governance framework;
 - administer the annual funding of the ACT Environment Grants Program;
 - promotion and involvement of the community in caring for the ACT's natural environment; and
 - develop, review and implement legislation, policies, strategies, plans and standards to protect the natural and built environment.²³

²² ACT Government, EPSDD, *Annual report 2020-2021*, p 16, https://www.planning.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1910603/2020-21-EPSDD-Annual-Report.pdf (accessed 9 May 2022).

²³ ACT Budget 2020-21, *Budget Statement E, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development*, p 17, https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1698938/2020-21-Budget-Statements-E.pdf (accessed 9 May 2022).

3.5. Output 2.2, Conservation and Land Management includes:

Planning and management of the ACT's parks, reserves, unleased public land and plantations, including associated community infrastructure. The land manager role includes management of land for recreational use; conservation management; including management of national parks, nature reserves; fire management; and pest and weed control as well as the management of the Territory's softwood plantation and oversight of rural production areas. Conservation includes partnering with Traditional Custodians to proactively manage the ACT's natural and cultural environment.²⁴

3.6. Output 2.3 Heritage includes:

Administration of the heritage provisions of the *Heritage Act 2004* and assistance in the conservation of the ACT's heritage assets to ensure their recognition, registration and conservation. The area provides administrative and operational support to the ACT Heritage Council and its projects, support for the National Trust in the delivery of its programs, and administers the annual funding of the ACT Heritage Grants Program, the annual Canberra and Region Heritage Festival and Capital Works projects as they relate to heritage conservation works. A key function is also the promotion and education of the community regarding heritage assets of the ACT.²⁵

Matters considered

3.7. The Committee discussed the following matters during Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage and directorate officials appearance before the Committee on 25 February 2022:

- wombat mange management;²⁶
- food and fibre strategy;²⁷
- bushfire recovery;²⁸
- protected areas management;²⁹
- access for education businesses using ACT parks (e.g. Outward Bound);³⁰
- Western edge investigation and Bluetts Block;³¹

²⁴ ACT Budget 2020-21, *Budget Statement E, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development*, p 18, https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1698938/2020-21-Budget-Statements-E.pdf (accessed 9 May 2022).

²⁵ ACT Budget 2020-21, *Budget Statement E, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development*, p 18, https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1698938/2020-21-Budget-Statements-E.pdf (accessed 9 May 2022).

²⁶ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 9–10.

²⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 10–12.

²⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 12–13.

²⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 13–14.

³⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 14–15.

³¹ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 15–19.

- heritage;³²
- animal-friendly netting;³³
- hut heritage;³⁴
- EPSSD staff training;³⁵
- environment grants;³⁶
- invasive weeds;³⁷
- koalas and endangered species funding;³⁸
- Woodland Learning Centre, Throsby;³⁹ and
- tree protection.⁴⁰

Key Issues

Western Edge investigation and Bluetts Block

- 3.8. The Committee heard from the Minister for the Environment and officials about the Western Edge Investigation and Bluetts Block.
- 3.9. EPSDD states that ‘the Western Edge investigation area is approximately 9,800 hectares in extent. It is bordered by the Murrumbidgee River, and the existing urban areas of Weston Creek, Molonglo Valley and Belconnen’, see figure 1:⁴¹

³² *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 19–20.

³³ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 20–21.

³⁴ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 22–23.

³⁵ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 24–25.

³⁶ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 25–27.

³⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 27–28.

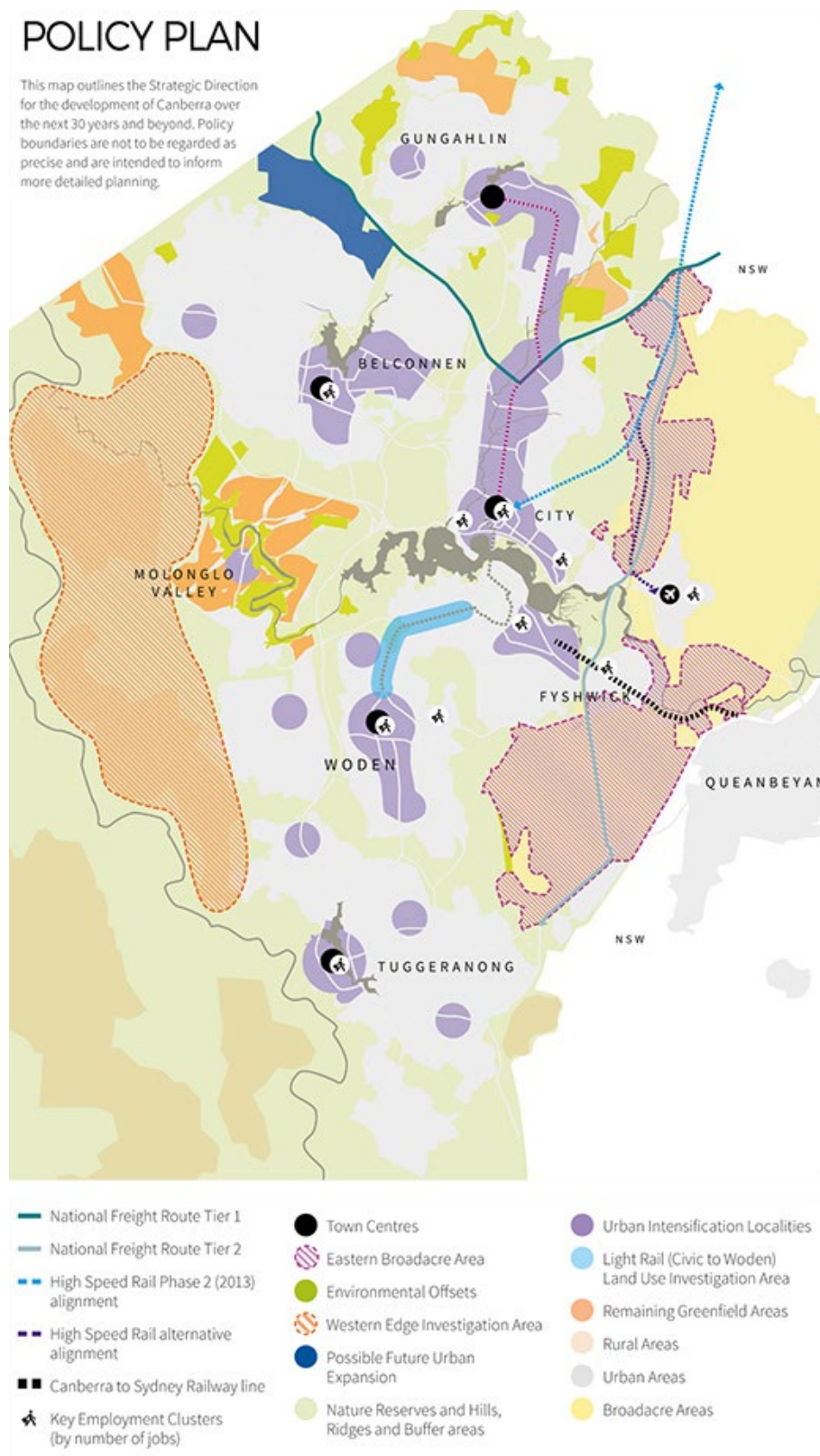
³⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 29–31.

³⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 31–32.

⁴⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 32–33.

⁴¹ ACT Government, EPSDD, *Western Edge Investigation*, <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/planning-our-city/planning-studies/western-edge-investigation> (accessed 11 May 2022).

Figure 1: Western Edge Investigation



Source: EPSDD, Western Edge Investigation.⁴²

⁴² ACT Government, EPSDD, *Western Edge Investigation*, <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/planning-our-city/planning-studies/western-edge-investigation> (accessed 11 May 2022)

3.10. The Conservation Council ACT Region stated that 'Bluetts Block' or 'Piney Ridge' is an area of woodland and dry forest, known for its rich diversity of plants and animals, located to the west of Denman Prospect in Molonglo Valley. It also states that 'the ecosystem runs through Stromlo Blocks 402 and 403, and into Denman Prospect Section 1 Block 12'.⁴³

3.11. The Minister noted the significant community interest in Bluetts Block and told the Committee that:

- a new forum has been established, the biodiversity and environment forum, that aims to bring together conservation groups to provide a good connection into government;
- there is work happening through the environment and planning forum to look at both planning and environment issues; and
- there are both formal processes and statutory requirements included as part of the processes being undertaken.⁴⁴

3.12. The Minister also observed that it can be a bit confusing from a community perspective, noting that the government has a role in supporting community engagement on issues, stating that:

I think it is about encouraging the community to get involved in those processes and ensuring that they are well informed and they know what is coming up and when.⁴⁵

3.13. Mr Ben Ponton, Director-General, EPSDD told the Committee in evidence that the Western Edge investigation, which includes Bluetts Block, is being done through the planning portfolio. However, EPSDD is working closely with the planning colleagues to ensure scoping for the various studies being undertaken to ensure a full understanding of the environmental values of the land under investigation.⁴⁶

3.14. Mr Ian Walker, Conservator of Flora and Fauna and Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Water told the Committee in evidence that:

From the evidence base and the ecological information that we have gathered from our community members, there is strong recognition of those areas referred to as Bluetts Block for their important woodland community and associated bird species...It contains very significant endangered box-gum woodlands and also some orchids...there are some good ecological values.⁴⁷

⁴³ Conservation Council ACT Region, *Protect Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge*, <https://conservationcouncil.org.au/our-campaigns/nature-waterways/protect-bluetts-block-piney-ridge/> (accessed 11 May 2022).

⁴⁴ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 16.

⁴⁵ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 16.

⁴⁶ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 15.

⁴⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 16.

- 3.15. Mr Walker also told the Committee that ‘the conservator has a statutory function to provide advice to the planning authority. There are a number of gateways by which information flows through to the planning process, which involves the conservator providing information and advice to the planning authority. The community also has the ability, through the conservator, to provide input into the planning group’.⁴⁸
- 3.16. The Minister advised that Committee that the environmental assessment of an area is always the first assessment done. The government also has obligations, under both national and local environment protection laws, to identify areas of key environmental value that must be protected.⁴⁹
- 3.17. Mr Ponton told the Committee that the western edge investigation ‘is about understanding all of the inputs and what land will actually be available, if any—I am sure there will be some—for residential development or commercial or community land development’.⁵⁰ He also noted that work being undertaken through the planning portfolio aims to understand what the land values are, the study is not just to get to the point of land development, stating that:
- Once we understand those values—because there will be varying elements in terms of how important the values are; we will work with the conservator and Mr Walker’s team more broadly in relation to understanding all of that—and we can set aside certain parts for reserve, we can start having the other conversations around servicing. As we start to work our way through, we will end up at a point of understanding how much land is even available for development.⁵¹
- 3.18. Mr Ponton also observed that planning looks at many different things and investigations need to work through the stages ‘in a logical and systematic way, to get to the point of understanding the values, so that we can then make a series of recommendations to government’.⁵²

Committee comment

- 3.19. The Committee is of the view that it is important for the government to continue the Western Edge investigation and the assessment for Bluetts Block with a view to environmental assessment and protection first, rather than simply taking a pragmatic view through the prism of land for future potential land release.

⁴⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 17.

⁴⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 17–18.

⁵⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 18.

⁵¹ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 18.

⁵² *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 19.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that before commencing planning for land release or development of western edge land, including Bluetts Block, that the ACT Government publish any report recommendations for public comment and consultation.

Invasive weeds

- 3.20. The Committee heard from the Minister for the Environment and officials about invasive weeds.
- 3.21. The Minister told the Committee that the ACT has seen significant growth of invasive weeds due to the high rainfall events experienced under La Nina. She noted that both the paid workforce and the volunteer workforce is really important in managing weeds and invasive species. The government has worked with a forum of stakeholders to discuss the work on weeds across different tenures and the environment volunteer workforce; invested in ParkCare rangers aimed to support the important work done by environment volunteers; and looked at alternative options than the use of pesticides.⁵³
- 3.22. Mr Walker informed the Committee that the work done by volunteers, supported by EPSDD and other areas of government, is substantial.⁵⁴ In relation to weed management he noted support provided to:
- ParkCare Group—a new ParkCare ranger has been established in North Canberra to support park carers in the ACT;
 - Catchment groups—three additional groups are being supported with additional funding;
 - FrogWatch and Waterwatch—engagement with volunteers includes activities for pulling weeds and weed control; and
 - Biosecurity rapid response officers—five have been recently employed to tackle new and emerging weeds before they become established.⁵⁵

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure invasive species management, invasive weed management and woody weed management is adequately resourced and funded.

⁵³ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 27.

⁵⁴ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 27.

⁵⁵ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, p 28.

Output 3 Climate Change and Sustainability

3.23. Output 3.1 Climate Change and Sustainability, develops policy and advice in relation to:

- the ACT's climate change agenda as outlined in the ACT Climate Change Strategy and the Living Infrastructure Plan;
- investments in renewable electricity to achieve the government's 100% renewable electricity target and delivery of local industry development strategies;
- policies and programs to encourage and transition to zero emission vehicles in the ACT;
- frameworks to ensure the ACT's energy systems (electricity, fuel and liquid fuels) are reliable, sustainable and affordable;
- measures to help households, businesses, schools, and transport manage their energy better to reduce emissions and costs, including administration of the ActSmart programs;
- the ACT Zero Emissions Government framework; and
- administration of the Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Scheme.⁵⁶

Matters considered

3.24. The Committee discussed the following matters during Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA, Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction and directorate officials appearance before the Committee on 1 March 2022:

- research and innovation in renewable energies;⁵⁷
- Sustainable Household Scheme⁵⁸ and Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme (VHESS);⁵⁹
- electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure;⁶⁰
- realising electric vehicle-to-grid services (REVS) project;⁶¹
- rental property energy performance;⁶²
- recycling technology investment;⁶³
- water quality in lakes;⁶⁴

⁵⁶ ACT Budget 2020-21, *Budget Statement E, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development*, pp 18-19, https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1698938/2020-21-Budget-Statements-E.pdf (accessed 9 May 2022).

⁵⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 48-49.

⁵⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 49-50.

⁵⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, p 59.

⁶⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 50-52.

⁶¹ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 52-53.

⁶² *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 53-54.

⁶³ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 54-55.

⁶⁴ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 54-56 and p 59.

- energy efficiency programs for local business;⁶⁵
- gas transition;⁶⁶
- energy efficiency improvement scheme;⁶⁷
- water basin plan, Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA);⁶⁸ and
- wholesale electricity prices.⁶⁹

Key Issues

Gas transition

3.25. The Committee notes the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement (PAGA) has a number of items about getting off gas, including a commitment to no new gas mains network connections to future infill by 2023, and ACT government buildings and facilities becoming fossil fuel and gas free.

3.26. The Committee heard from the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction and officials about the transition to zero gas in the ACT.

3.27. The Minister noted the government's commitment to have a gas transition plan completed by 2024, stating that he:

actually hoped to and expected to deliver that gas transition plan earlier than that. There is a large amount of research and policy work going at the moment, including working closely with Evoenergy, as the gas network provider, sharing modelling, background information and the like to help government think that through carefully. On the big picture strategy, that is the time line for that piece of work. On the specifics, so things like the mandate to stop the future rollout of the gas network, each of those pieces of policy work is on track.⁷⁰

3.28. The Minister also stated that population growth will potentially have a bigger impact on the electricity grid than transitioning away from gas. The ACT Government will need to:

- increase the supply of electricity for the ACT by purchasing more renewable supplies;
- improve energy efficiency because this is the cheapest way to manage energy demand; and
- think about the future of the grid, including how we will use batteries across the city to stabilise the grid.⁷¹

⁶⁵ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 56–57.

⁶⁶ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, p 57.

⁶⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 57–59.

⁶⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 60–62.

⁶⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 62–63.

⁷⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, p 57.

⁷¹ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, p 58.

- 3.29. Mr Sam Engele, Coordinator-General, Office for Climate Action, Chief Ministers, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) also noted that the government is working with Evoenergy to understand what implications the government's 2045 target will have on the gas network. This includes modelling work underway by Evoenergy and EPSDD to better understand the cost to both consumers and the government of the zero gas target and the impact on the ACT's electricity network and required electrical upgrades.⁷²

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver its gas transition plan by 2024.

Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme

- 3.30. The Committee heard from the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction and officials about the VHESS.

- 3.31. The Minister told the Committee that the VHESS includes Housing ACT stock, stating that through the program:

we intend to roll out a range of measures, the details of which are not finalised yet, but that will include, for example, energy efficient hot-water systems, heating systems and potentially solar panels.⁷³

- 3.32. Mr Engele noted that the PAGA has a number of measures to combat climate change, one of which is a scheme for vulnerable households. This program is being delivered between EPSDD, CMTEDD and Housing ACT with funding of \$50 million for low-income households and public housing upgrades. The program aims to deal with the issue of energy poverty for a number of households. The government is working on public housing condition reports so we can understand the upgrade requirements in relation to insulation and also checking the gas-burning assets on those sites.⁷⁴

- 3.33. Mr Rutledge, Deputy Director-General, Environment, Water and Emissions Reduction, EPSDD advised the Committee that Housing ACT would keep the data on the energy performance of the whole of the Housing ACT stock and EPSDD is working with Housing ACT to improve its information on this issue.⁷⁵

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver the VHEES as soon as possible to provide ACT Housing tenants with the benefits of energy efficiency and efficient electric heating in their homes.

⁷² Committee Transcript, 1 March 2022, p 39.

⁷³ Committee Transcript, 1 March 2022, p 59.

⁷⁴ Committee Transcript, 1 March 2022, p 43.

⁷⁵ Committee Transcript, 1 March 2022, p 59.

4. Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- 4.1. The Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) is the ACT Government's central agency and is responsible for the provision of strategic advice and support to the Chief Minister, the Directorate's Ministers and the Cabinet on policy, economic and financial matters, service delivery, whole of government issues and intergovernmental relations.
- 4.2. The Committee held a public hearing with Mr Andrew Barr, Chief Minister and directorate officials on 1 March 2022 in relation to his role as the Minister for Climate Action.
- 4.3. The Committee also heard from Ms Tara Cheyne, MLA, Minister for Business and Better Regulation and directorate officials on 3 March 2022 to examine the annual annexed report of the Environment Protection Authority (the Authority) and the relevant areas of Access Canberra.

Output class 1: Government strategy

- 4.4. Output 1.1, Government Policy and Reform provides advice and support to the Chief Minister, the Head of Service and the Director-General on complex policy matters. CMTEDD performs a central agency coordination role in strategic planning, social, economic and regional policy, including high priority reforms and effective delivery of government policies and priorities.⁷⁶
- 4.5. Through this output, CMTEDD works with the 'the Coordinator-General, Climate Action, leading and coordinating the ACT's emissions reduction initiatives and undertaking climate adaptation policy analysis to improve Canberra's resilience to the effects of a warming climate'.⁷⁷

Matters considered

- 4.6. The Committee discussed the following matters during Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Minister for Climate Action and directorate officials appearance before the Committee on 1 March 2022:
 - Sustainable Household Scheme;⁷⁸
 - performance reporting and accountability;⁷⁹

⁷⁶ ACT Budget 2020-21, *Budget Statement B, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate*, p. 18, https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1698933/2020-21-Budget-Statements-B.pdf (accessed 12 May 2022).

⁷⁷ ACT Budget 2020-21, *Budget Statement B, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate*, p. 18, https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1698933/2020-21-Budget-Statements-B.pdf (accessed 12 May 2022).

⁷⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 34–38.

⁷⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 38–39.

- transport emission targets;⁸⁰
- Big Canberra Battery;⁸¹
- battery procurement and end-of-life recycling;⁸²
- Vulnerable Households Energy Support Scheme;⁸³
- grid capacity;⁸⁴ and
- budget appropriation for climate change.⁸⁵

Key Issues

Battery end-of-life recycling

- 4.7. The Committee heard from the Minister for Climate Action, the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction and officials about end-of-life recycling of batteries and solar panels.
- 4.8. The Minister for Climate Action told the Committee that there are three streams within the Canberra Big Battery project:
- batteries greater than 10 megawatts, which is the sort of transmission level; smaller batteries of 10 kilowatts to 500 kilowatts, on government sites and community sites; and smaller neighbourhood-scale ones between around 100 kilowatts and five megawatts. We had a call for expressions of interest for the first stream of batteries and that was introduced in December. The EOI [expression of interest] period closed earlier last month and officials are now in the process of short-listing those proposals.⁸⁶
- 4.9. The Committee asked if end-of-life battery recycling had included as part of the procurement process.
- 4.10. Mr Engele told the Committee that a site remediation plan and also other opportunities to recycle the key elements within the batteries were required as part of the EOI process. He noted that while he is not part of the assessment panel, the feedback that has been received indicated that there are some innovative responses.⁸⁷

Committee comment

- 4.11. The Committee noted that battery recycling feasibility studies are already under way and recycling options are already available.

⁸⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 39–40.

⁸¹ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 40–41.

⁸² *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 41–43.

⁸³ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, p 43.

⁸⁴ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 43–46.

⁸⁵ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, pp 46–47.

⁸⁶ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, p 40.

⁸⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, p 42.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider requiring end-of-life battery and solar panel recycling under the contracts for the Big Canberra Battery and under all government contracts involving procurement of large batteries.

Budget reporting

- 4.12. The Committee enquired if any analysis across the budget of dollars spent per tonne of carbon avoided or reduced had been done, noting this would be a useful ‘tool that you could use in our non-climate areas to see whether we are accidentally spending money that is increasing emissions in other areas’.⁸⁸
- 4.13. The Minister stated in his answer to [QTON No. 08](#) (received 16 March 2022) that the ACT Government has legislated greenhouse gas reduction targets against which emission reduction progress is reported, however this ‘is not tied to the individual carbon abatement arising from specific initiatives’.⁸⁹ He noted that:

The Office for Climate Action was established in 2021 to coordinate and support the ACT Government’s ambitious agenda for Climate Action. As part of its work program the Office is investigating a range of tools to support Government decision making.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider commissioning the development of a framework for budget reporting on line items in the budget for tonnes of Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 carbon produced, avoided and reduced, particularly for budget expenditure involving construction or demolition.

⁸⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 1 March 2022, p 42.

⁸⁹ Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Minister for Climate Action, answer to [QTON No. 08](#), received 16 March 2022.

5. Environment Protection Authority

- 5.1. The Environment Protection Authority (the Authority) is a statutory public servant position established by the *Environment Protection Act 1997*. The Office of the Environment Protection Authority (the EPA) within Access Canberra supports the Authority to carry out functions.⁹⁰
- 5.2. The Authority's responsibilities under the *Environment Protection Act 1997* are to:
- protect and enhance the quality of the environment;
 - prevent environmental degradation and risk of harm to human health;
 - achieve effective integration of environmental, economic, and social consideration in decision-making processes;
 - establish a single and integrated regulatory framework for environmental protection and provide for monitoring and reporting of environmental quality on a regular basis;
 - facilitate the implementation of national environment protection measures and laws;
 - ensure contaminated land is managed having regard to human health and the environment;
 - encourage responsibility by the whole community for the environment – general environmental duty of care.⁹¹
- 5.3. The Authority's responsibilities under the *Water Resources Act 2007* are to:
- ensure that management and use of the water resources of the Territory sustain the physical, economic, and social wellbeing of the people of the ACT while protecting the ecosystems that depend on those resources;
 - protect aquatic ecosystems and aquifers from damage and, where practicable, to reverse damage that has already happened; and
 - ensure that the water resources are able to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations.⁹²

⁹⁰ CMTEDD, *Annual Report 2020-21*, p. 262, https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1909951/Volume-1-CMTEDD-Annual-Report-2020-21-final.pdf (accessed 12 May 2022).

⁹¹ CMTEDD, *Annual Report 2020-21*, p. 262, https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1909951/Volume-1-CMTEDD-Annual-Report-2020-21-final.pdf (accessed 12 May 2022).

⁹² CMTEDD, *Annual Report 2020-21*, p. 263, https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1909951/Volume-1-CMTEDD-Annual-Report-2020-21-final.pdf (accessed 12 May 2022).

Matters considered

5.4. The Committee discussed the following matters during Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Business and Better Regulation and officials appearance before the Committee on 3 March 2022:

- construction site management of noise, obstructions and environmental damage;⁹³
- erosion, sediment controls and block scraping;⁹⁴
- Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) report *Implementing Effective Independent Environmental Protection Agencies in Australia*;⁹⁵
- EPA organisational structure;⁹⁶
- compliance actions;⁹⁷
- contaminated land notifications;⁹⁸
- EPA budget and full time equivalent (FTE) staffing;⁹⁹
- social media;¹⁰⁰ and
- environment management plans.¹⁰¹

Key Issues

Block scraping and sediment control

5.5. The Committee heard from the Minister for Business and Better Regulation and officials about block scraping, erosion and sediment control on ACT development sites.

5.6. Mr Rodney Dix, Acting Senior Director, EPA noted that development of a new housing estate requires a lot of land profiling to change the land profile. When developments start generally, the topsoil is taken off the site and stockpiled, the land is changed to the profile levels required, and then the topsoil is put back over the blocks. After a block sale the builder will need to cut the block again as part of construction, this could include for a basement car park or sunken garage. Sediment and erosion control is an issue as the topsoil is loose and it can wash away. To minimise the erosion of the topsoil which may come off these developments the EPA has been working with the Suburban Land Agency (SLA) and developers and has suggested that they ‘don’t put the topsoil back on’.¹⁰²

⁹³ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, pp 64–67.

⁹⁴ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 67.

⁹⁵ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, pp 68–69.

⁹⁶ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, pp 69–70.

⁹⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, pp 70–72.

⁹⁸ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 72.

⁹⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, pp 72–73.

¹⁰⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, pp 73–74.

¹⁰¹ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 74.

¹⁰² *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 67.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clarify policy and procedures for scraping and levelling of land in new suburb developments, with a focus on whether the entire suburb, or individual blocks, should be routinely scraped and levelled, or whether builders should work within the contours of the existing landscape and only dig as needed to provide slabs, basement car parks and sunken garages.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clarify how topsoil will be managed to prevent sediment run off and to ensure healthy soils remain for trees, vegetation and food growing.

Environmental Defenders Office report

- 5.7. The Committee heard from the Minister for Business and Better Regulation and officials about the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) report *Implementing Effective Independent Environmental Protection Agencies in Australia*. This report recommends:

that the focus of EPAs must shift to being more centered on protecting communities and the environment from environmental impacts, particularly ensuring there is environmental justice for individuals and communities that are disadvantaged by how society is structured. Individuals and communities can face structural disadvantage on the basis of race or colour, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender identity, disability or income.

Environmental burdens are also disproportionately felt by First Nations, through impacts to their Country, cultural practices and the resources that they depend on. Governance throughout Australia since colonisation has been highly destructive to First Nations and their culture, livelihoods and connection to Country and community. Decisions around land management, ownership and environmental impacts have been instrumental tools of this destructive colonisation. Any improvements to environmental governance in Australia must recognise that environmental racism is occurring in Australia and must ensure that environmental regulation is developed in a manner that recognises the unique status of First Nations as distinct communities with both individual rights and collective cultural rights. Environmental management and decision-making must also recognise and respect the self-determination of First Nations and be underpinned by the principle of free, prior and informed consent.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ EDO, *Implementing Effective Independent Environmental Protection Agencies in Australia: Best practice environmental governance for environmental justice*, January 2022, p 6, <https://www.edo.org.au/publication/implementing-effective-independent-environmental-protection-agencies-in-australia/> (accessed 12 May 2022).

- 5.8. The Minister observed that in relation to responsibility for the *Environment Protection Act 1997*, the policy settings sit with Minister for the Environment and EPSDD, whereas the operation of the act sits with her. The Minister stated that work is happening between EPSDD and EPA about some reform options for the EPA, both for the act and the operations of the agency, noting:

Our starting point is that we have had the act for some time, and there has been some tinkering with it, but I feel that it is time—and I think Minister Vassarotti agrees—to have a further look at it, in terms of what is going on with the environment generally and where we are finding ourselves in Australia as a whole, to ensure that it is up to date and operating as effectively as possible, including responding to general feedback and that specific feedback from the Environmental Defenders Office.¹⁰⁴

- 5.9. Mr David Pryce, Deputy Director-General, Access Canberra was of the view that this is a landmark report, and it provides some very good guiding principles for the ACT to consider.¹⁰⁵ He also noted that the Minister for the Environment EPSDD and have the lead on the policy position stating that ‘depending on the policy position, we follow from an implementation and operationalising point of view’.¹⁰⁶
- 5.10. The Minister for the Environment noted that the ACT Government is prioritising environment grants that include First Nations knowledge of the environment, particularly in relation to potential opportunities for food and fibre in the capital that also support our environmental and biodiversity outcomes.¹⁰⁷

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider the EDO report *Implementing Effective Independent Environmental Protection Agencies in Australia* and if the nine key recommendations are agreed, how these will be implemented.

¹⁰⁴ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 68.

¹⁰⁵ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 68.

¹⁰⁶ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 69.

¹⁰⁷ *Committee Transcript*, 25 February 2022, pp 25–26.

Environment Protection Authority resources

- 5.11. The Committee heard from the Minister for Business and Better Regulation and officials about the budget and staffing levels of the EPA.
- 5.12. The Minister provided funding and staffing levels for the EPA in her answer to [QTON No. 12](#) (received 16 March 2022):¹⁰⁸

Table 1: EPA budget and staffing for last five financial years

| | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Budget | \$1,476,389 | \$1,689,812 | \$1,714,676 | \$1,758,771 | \$1,805,541 |
| Staff (headcount) | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |

- 5.13. Mr Dix stated that there are 17 nominal positions within the EPA, staff work across three teams:
- Environment Protection—deals with response to complaints such as neighbourhood noise and smoke complaints, it also administers some of the authorisations and licences, six people work in the team;
 - Environmental Quality—deals with contaminated sites, air quality, waste movement and waste tracking, seven people work in the team; and
 - Water Regulation—deals with management of the water asset within the ACT, three people work in the team.¹⁰⁹
- 5.14. Mr Pryce observed that the EPA operates ‘within the resources and budget allocated by the government. As the head of the agency, I would always welcome further investment and additional resources.’¹¹⁰ He also noted that an enhancement of the EPA focus on environmental protection matters is a priority because of ‘the continued development in our jurisdiction, as well as the greater focus more broadly on climate change and environmental factors’.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, answer to [QTON No. 12](#), received 16 March 2022.

¹⁰⁹ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 69.

¹¹⁰ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 73.

¹¹¹ *Committee Transcript*, 3 March 2022, p 73.

Committee comment

- 5.15. The Committee is of the view that increasing development is effectively increasing the burden on the EPA, as it increases the burden on our environment. The ACT is experiencing is population growth combined with an increasingly complex development environment, with more brownfields and less greenfields development.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure the EPA's resources and FTEs in line with increasing development and population growth.

Ms Jo Clay MLA

Acting Chair

20 May 2022

Appendix A: Witnesses

25 February 2022

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ms Rebecca Vassarotti, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services, Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction

- **Mr Ben Ponton**, Director-General
- **Mr Ian Walker**, Conservator of Flora and Fauna and Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Water
- **Mr Geoffrey Rutledge**, Deputy Director-General, Environment, Water and Emissions Reduction
- **Ms Edwina Jans**, Senior Director, ACT Heritage

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

Dr Sophie Lewis, Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

- **Mrs Miranda Gardner**, Assistant Director
- **Dr Connie Leon**, Project Officer

1 March 2022

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Mr Andrew Barr, Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism

- **Mr Sam Engele**, Coordinator-General, Office for Climate Action

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Mr Shane Rattenbury, Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction

- **Mr Geoffrey Rutledge**, Deputy Director-General, Sustainability and the Built Environment
- **Mr Ian Walker**, Executive Group Manager and Conservator of Flora and Fauna, Environment, Water and Emissions Reduction
- **Mr Daniel Harding**, Executive Branch Manager, Climate Change and Energy Policy

3 March 2022

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Ms Tara Cheyne, Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs

- **Mr Rodney Dix**, Acting Senior Director, Environment Protection Authority
- **Mr David Pryce**, Deputy Director-General, Access Canberra

Appendix B: Questions on notice and taken on notice

Questions on notice

| No. | Date | Asked by | Asked of | Subject | Response received |
|-----|----------|----------|----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| 1 | 01/03/22 | Lee | Rattenbury | Energy policy and energy efficiency programs | 16/03/22 |
| 2 | 02/03/22 | Clay | Office of CSE, Dr Lewis | Active transport | 07/03/22 |
| 3 | 02/03/22 | Clay | Office of CSE, Dr Lewis | Energy Storage and Microgrids | 07/03/22 |
| 4 | 02/03/22 | Clay | Barr | Sustainable Household Scheme | 21/03/22 |
| 5 | 04/03/22 | Lawder | Vassarotti | Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Program | 11/03/22 |
| 6 | 04/03/22 | Clay | Barr | CMTEDD Emissions reduction commitments | 21/03/22 |
| 7 | 04/03/22 | Clay | Barr | Solar contracts | 18/03/22 |
| 8 | 04/03/22 | Clay | Berry | ED Emissions reduction commitments | 21/04/22 |
| 9 | 04/03/22 | Clay | Rattenbury | EPSDD Emissions reduction commitments | 28/03/22 |
| 10 | 04/03/22 | Clay | Gentleman | JACS Emissions reduction commitments | unanswered |
| 11 | 04/03/22 | Clay | Steel | TCCS Emissions reduction commitments | 22/03/22 |
| 12 | 04/03/22 | Clay | Stephen/Smith | CSD Emissions reduction commitments | 14/04/22 |
| 13 | 04/03/22 | Clay | Stephen/Smith | HD Emissions reduction commitments | 22/03/22 |

Questions taken on notice

| No. | Date | Asked by | Asked of | Subject | Response received |
|-----|----------|----------|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | 25/02/22 | Paterson | Office of CSE, Dr Lewis | Cycling/active transport amongst women and girls | 07/03/22 |
| 2 | 25/02/22 | Clay | Office of CSE, Dr Lewis | The social cost of carbon mechanism | 07/03/22 |
| 3 | 25/02/22 | Paterson | Vassarotti | Co/funding arrangements / Heritage Grants | 09/03/22 |
| 4 | 25/02/22 | Lawder | Vassarotti | Veolia waste facility | 09/03/22 |
| 5 | 25/02/22 | Castley | Vassarotti | The protecting endangered species funding initiative | 09/03/22 |
| 6 | 01/03/22 | Castley | Barr | Sustainable Household Scheme | 16/03/22 |
| 7 | 01/03/22 | Clay | Barr | Climate Action Funding | 21/03/22 |
| 8 | 01/03/22 | Clay | Barr | Budget analysis of dollars spent per tonne of carbon avoided or reduced | 16/03/22 |
| 9 | 01/03/22 | Clay | Barr | Government Response to the Commissioner for Sustainability Recommendation | 16/03/22 |
| 9 | 01/03/22 | Lawder | Rattenbury | Music Software Model | 18/03/22 |
| 10 | 01/03/22 | Castley | Rattenbury | Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme | 22/03/22 |
| 11 | 01/03/22 | Lawder | Rattenbury | Basin Plan Annual Water Quality Report | 22/03/22 |
| 12 | 03/03/22 | Castley | Cheyne | EPA Budget and Staff Allocation | 16/03/22 |