



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair),
Dr Marisa Patterson MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into
Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and Appropriation
(Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023

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AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

2022-23 Budget Estimates

OPENING STATEMENT

**Rebecca Vassarotti MLA
Minister for the Environment**

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present and acknowledge their long connection to this land and their continuing contribution to the life, culture and wellbeing of our city. I also pay my respects to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are with us today.

Thank you for the opportunity to inform the Committee on environmental matters for this budget estimates hearing.

Investing in measures that protect, conserve and enhance the ACT's environment and biodiversity remains a priority for me as Minister and for this government.

The ACT continues to witness significant pressures on the environment from a growing City, climate change, pollution, extreme weather events, and finally invasive pests and animals. These pressures risk damaging the environment and the extinction of critically endangered ecosystems, plants and animals.

The recently published Australian State of the Environment 2021 is a confronting reading. The report identifies that our environment holds the key to our survival and wellbeing. Sadly, all aspects of the Australian environment are under pressure, and many are declining.

This is why the ACT Government is pleased to once again invest in measures to protect and enhance the ACT's environment for the benefit of all Canberrans.

Urban Biodiversity

The ACT Government is investing almost three million over two years to strengthen and enhance the ACT's urban biodiversity.

This initiative will deliver on a range of key government commitments across biodiversity, climate adaptation and wellbeing in an integrated, cost-effective, and future-proof way.

Ngunnawal knowledge will be better incorporated into the design and delivery of projects.

Urban habitat connectivity mapping will support the new planning system, and when combined with biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design guidelines will help the ACT move towards best practice sustainable development and strengthened delivery of the Living Infrastructure Program.

The government will expand and improve the Canberra Nature Map platform to boost the ability of citizen science to provide accurate data to build biodiversity and landscape knowledge which the ACT could not afford to otherwise collect, and

The government will also work to restore 20 identified priority urban sites that will deliver urban cooling, habitat protection and community amenity.

Environment protection

The protection of the environment remains a key priority for this government.

\$722,000 in funding will be provided over two years to strengthen the ACT's Environment Protection Authority through additional resources.

This funding including a review of the environment protection framework in the ACT and additional resources to support compliance monitoring and regulatory oversight activities.

Other priority areas

The 2022-23 budget will also focus resources on a large body of work that will also:

- Increase ecosystem resilience and adaptation to a changing climate.
- Protect and conserve ecosystems and threatened flora and fauna
- Provide people with greater access to nature for their enjoyment and wellbeing
- Targeting invasive plants and animals, and progressing the development of a new biosecurity bill to better protect the ACT from the growing biosecurity risks.
- Conserve and celebrate the ACT's Heritage.

I am pleased to provide this update for the Committee on the work the government is doing to protect and enhance the ACT's wonderful environment and biodiversity.