

## Minister's Cabinet Brief

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**Cabinet Meeting Date:** 13 May 2019  
**Title of Submission:** ACT Water Strategy – Implementation Plan 2  
**Minister:** Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Shane Rattenbury MLA

### Submission recommendations

The submission recommends that Cabinet endorses the ACT Water Strategy Implementation Plan 2.

### Issues/comment

The submission itself is expected to be non-controversial and is anticipated to be supported by other Ministers.

Funding for implementation of the water strategy will be secured through the normal budgetary processes of government. It was proposed by Treasury that funding for implementation be linked to Cabinet consideration of the Water Omnibus package for the 2019-20 ACT Budget and specifically to Budget Initiative EPSDD E39: Implementation of the ACT Water Strategy. With the budget offset by revenue collected by the Water Abstraction Charge. This component of the Water Omnibus represents a request for funding of \$10.263 million over four years, equivalent to approximately 7.5% of Water Abstraction Charge revenue over the corresponding period. This is considered to represent a modest investment in comparison to Water Abstraction Charge (WAC) revenues.

Utilising the WAC for this purpose was rejected by Budget Cabinet with a modest \$3 million dollar budget proposed.

The EPSDD and Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) Directorates have provided a number of additional budget bids for consideration as part of the Water Omnibus that also identify the Water Abstraction Charge (WAC) as an offset for expenditure.

Irrespective of the budget allocation Implementation Plan 2 remains relevant as an indication of the government's strategic direction and priorities for water planning and management over the period 2019-2023, and can be accelerated or slowed, based on the level of available funding available at any point over its lifetime. For example, many of the actions under the former IP1 were unfunded at the outset but opportunities and/or funding to progress were identified and the actions completed during the relevant 5 year period.

The need for long term funding for water and catchment management has been highlighted recently by the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment (and previously by the ICRC and Auditor General) and this needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

Current work to explore revenue options from other sources such as water trading and/or efficiency measures is contingent on intergovernmental negotiations and agreements with the New South Wales Government, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and/or the Commonwealth Government. EPSDD is still exploring these options but they are not advanced enough to support the delivery of the Water Strategy at this time. Regardless of these outcomes funds from the Commonwealth Government should not be seen as a panacea for ACT investment in water security (quality and quantity)

### Context and consultation

Endorsement of the ACT Water Strategy Implementation Plan 2 is considered important as it signals the government's priorities in water and catchment management for the next five years and will serve to allocate financial and human resources towards priority actions.

The ACT Water Strategy Implementation Plan 2 was developed with extensive consultation that included:

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**Cleared:** Ian Walker, Executive Director, Environment  
**Prepared by:** Chris Glennon, Manager Catchment Management and Water Policy

## **SENSITIVE: CABINET**

- a public review of Implementation Plan 1. A report card on progress with the first Implementation Plan was released in June 2018;
- the Water Sensitive Cities Index which was developed with strong government and industry input that benchmarked Canberra against other cities in Australia using the Water Sensitive Cities Index developed by the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities; and
- Community and Stakeholder Workshops - Four community and stakeholder workshops based around the three outcomes of the Water Strategy and the integration of these themes.

The ACT Water Strategy Implementation Plan 2 also has strong policy alignment as it:

- Supports the Auditor-General's Report on Acceptance of Stormwater Assets (1/2018). The Auditor-General made 17 recommendations to improve the acceptance arrangements and the ACT Government has accepted all but one recommendation. Actions to complete all accepted recommendations are referenced in IP2.
- Aligns with the "Better Suburbs" project being conducted by TCCS which identified the improved management of lakes and waterways and being the main concern of community representatives.
- Plays a complimentary role assisting in the implementation of the ACT Planning Strategy 2018, specifically the - 'Integration of water cycle management and green infrastructure into the planning and design of urban development'.