

2023

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND
BIODIVERSITY**

REPORT 7 - INQUIRY INTO ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2021-22

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**Presented by
Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

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Introduction

On 11 February 2021, the Legislative Assembly passed an amendment to the 2 December 2020 Resolution of Establishment (clause 3) referring the Annual and Financial Reports to the relevant Standing Committee for inquiry and report by 9 April of the year after the presentation of the report to the Assembly pursuant to the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*.

The 2021-22 Annual and Financial Reports were reviewed by the relevant Standing Committees, and each Committee held hearings and reported separately.

The below Government Response addresses the recommendations which relate to the 2021-22 Annual and Financial Reports.

The following Annual and Financial Reports or sections of annual reports, were referred to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity (the Committee):

- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate;
- Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate; and
- Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity – Report 7 - Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-22

RECOMMENDATION	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE (AGREED/AGREED IN-PRINCIPLE/EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY/NOTED/NOT AGREED)
<p>Recommendation 1 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review staff retention rates of First Nations people and identify if there are any areas that the ACT Government could improve, to ensure First Nations people are ongoingly supported.</p>	<p>AGREED IN PRINCIPLE The Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy (OIRWS) will examine available workforce data sources for whole of government separation rates of First Nations people in order to identify if the ACT Government could improve its ongoing support of First Nations people.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government examine other jurisdiction’s policies and procedures for best-practice and innovative land management in relation to hazard reduction burns and fire abatement and offer training for EPSDD staff to expand their knowledge base.</p>	<p>AGREED The ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) is a member of the National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC). Through this, PCS engages with other jurisdictions and New Zealand to identify, develop, implement and review best practice approaches to fire management including hazard reduction burns. Policy, procedural and training improvements are also shared. PCS will continue to engage through AFAC with other conservation land managers to ensure the ACT Government’s fire abatement programs and fire training aligns with best practice.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government advise the projected date for when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all roads at Namadgi National Park and repaired; and • full public access will be restored to Namadgi National Park. 	<p>AGREED The ACT Government (through the Parks ACT website) makes information available to the public on access to Namadgi National Park (NNP). Work to repair roads in NNP have been planned and commenced in some areas. However, significant areas of the landscape still require drying before works can occur. It is expected that works and upgrades will continue through 2024-25. The ACT Government will make information public on the website as it becomes available. Rectification works to the Orroral Road Crossing were completed in late April 2023. Work is also being undertaken to replace signage and complete road repairs.</p>

<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop a conservation plan for Callam Offices as a matter of urgency and look to invest in the modernisation and restoration of the buildings.</p>	<p>AGREED</p> <p>ACT Government (EPSDD) commissioned an updated Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Callam Offices. The final draft CMP was submitted to the Heritage Council for consideration. A body of work was undertaken in 2022 to assess the extent of work and costs required to carry out a range of rectification works at Callam Offices. Based on this work the Government has asked for a feasibility study to be undertaken within the 2023-24 financial year to investigate the potential divestment of Callam Offices which will take into account the heritage nature of the site.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government seek to collaborate and learn from other jurisdictions on how to proactively identify biosecurity risks and continue to support the biosecurity rapid response team.</p>	<p>AGREED</p> <p>The ACT Government benefits from a strong and collaborative working relationship with the Commonwealth and all other jurisdictions responsible for biosecurity to ensure that there is a collective understanding of the ACT’s local, regional and national biosecurity risks.</p> <p>The ACT actively participates in the National Biosecurity Committee and other working groups.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve its protection measures for native species, such as burrowing animals like wombats, that are not considered threatened but are at high risk due to urban development and encroachment.</p>	<p>AGREED</p> <p>The ACT Government is working collaboratively with community groups and species experts to develop guidelines to minimise the impacts of developments on burrowing native fauna, including wombats, goannas and echidnas.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide half-yearly updates to the Assembly on the progress of environmental assessments at Bluett’s Block-Piney Ridge (specifically Stromlo Blocks 402 and 403) and ensure that the community has the opportunity to input citizen science and observations.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>The ACT Government has undertaken surveys of ecological values and will consider further surveys in the future.</p> <p>The ACT Government will continue to keep the community updated on progress and significant milestones. Members of the public are encouraged to report sightings via the Canberra Nature Map.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment provide more details on the impacts of urban development and encroachment on the environment in its next ACT State of the Environment report.</p>	<p>AGREED</p> <p>The 2023 State of the Environment Report will include a chapter on Canberra’s urban boundary, in which the impacts of urban expansion on the natural environment are discussed.</p>

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement a standard contract provision that contracts involving solar panels and large battery systems require end-of-life reuse or recycling.

AGREED

There is current provision in the Next Gen Battery Storage program guidelines which requires retailers to follow best practice end of life processing operations and give priority to onshore recycling facilities through the manufacturer or other avenues.

For the Big Canberra Battery project, all contracts can require suppliers to provide the Territory with decommissioning plans for batteries and associated infrastructure that meet strict reuse and recycling criteria.