

2021

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

**Update on the Assembly Resolution of 13 February 2020 on the development of a Smoke and
Air Quality Strategy – Letter from the Minister for Health to the Speaker**

**Presented by
Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health
February 2021**



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Families and Community Services

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Member for Kurrajong

Ms Joy Burch MLA
Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO BOX 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear ~~Madam Speaker~~ *Joy*

I am writing in regard to a resolution passed by the previous Legislative Assembly on 13 February 2020 which called on the government to:

- a) create a whole-of-government strategy on smoke and air quality in the ACT, to be completed and released before the beginning of the 2020-21 fire season; and
- b) report to the Assembly on the progress of the strategy in August 2020.

The Government responded to the Legislative Assembly resolution in a statement in August 2020 outlining the range of work that had occurred to respond to and prepare for extreme smoke pollution events.

The statement noted that the development of an air quality strategy was severely impacted by a range of factors, including ongoing disaster management and recovery efforts, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (RCNDA), which was established in March 2020 and brought down its final report at the end of October 2020. The statement also foreshadowed the need to progress this work in the context of the RCNDA, whose terms of reference extended to smoke and air quality.

I would like to assure you that it remains the Government's intention to develop an Air Quality Strategy, as called for in the February 2020 motion. It is also my intention to provide an update and further advice to the Legislative Assembly through a statement in early 2021 informing members that while an Air Quality Strategy was not delivered prior to the 2020-21 ACT bushfire season for the reasons outlined in August 2020, the Government intends to release a strategy prior to the 2021-22 season.

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I trust this information provides a clear indication of the government's commitment to a substantive response to this resolution.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RSSH' followed by a horizontal line.

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA