



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair), Ms Leanne Castley MLA

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
1 March 2022

Asked by JO CLAY MLA on 1 March 2022: ANDREW BARR MLA took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Proof Transcript 1 MARCH 2022, PAGE 46]

In relation to:

MS CLAY: Chief Minister, the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment has listed one of her recommendations: “budget appropriation for climate change mitigation and adaptation policies will be significant, cannot be postponed and must be consistent”. I understand CMTEDD has responded to that recommendation. Can you talk me through the response to that?

Mr Barr: Certainly that is an important area of investment across a number of asset classes that the territory owns. It will be necessary to both reflect a changing climate and also the age and design of infrastructure that probably was not built with current emerging climatic events in mind. There is both a question of new infrastructure standards and a question of repair and maintenance and, indeed, replacement of some infrastructure to reflect a different circumstance. That is at a high level.

The question of what level of appropriation will be possible remains to be seen, based upon the territory’s fiscal position and other competing priorities. The point is acknowledged that an ever-increasing proportion of the territory’s infrastructure funds will need to go to replacement, renewal and adaptation, as opposed to new build. That is pretty clear in a now two-decade long planning framework and approach that talks more about urban consolidation than urban sprawl, which is in part about utilisation of existing infrastructure; but it also means that money is freed up to renew ageing infrastructure and, I guess, futureproof it against a changing climate. They are all factors to contemplate. I will ask Mr Engele if he wants to add anything more specific. This is not something that is resolved in one budget, in one parliamentary term.

I suspect it will be an ongoing issue for the territory for the rest of time.

Mr Engele: The only thing I would add is that there is work underway across the commonwealth and states and territories on climate-related financial disclosures, which is to understand the public reporting requirement for those risks as it relates to assets and state and commonwealth government budgets. That work is still being undertaken.

Mr Barr: Just to round off my comments, I would observe that, regardless of climate change, some of the territory’s infrastructure is reaching end of life; it is more than 100 years old. I think there was always going to be a need to make a switch from

ever-expanding outwards to focusing on the renewal, replacement and adaptation of the infrastructure that we have now. That balance has been shifting for some time. It goes to a more substantive discussion that we had with the public accounts committee this morning about ensuring that there is a revenue base, and a sustainable one, with which to make this transition. But it is a long-term proposition and, as I say, it is not resolved in any one budget, parliamentary term or even a decade. I think this will be an ongoing challenge, really, into the foreseeable future and beyond.

MS CLAY: I absolutely agree with you. Did we get the government response to that recommendation? Has that been publicly listed? We could not find it where most of the government responses were publicly listed.

Mr Barr: I will track that down for you. There certainly is work underway in that regard

ANDREW BARR MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

The Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment (OCSE) Annual Report provides a regular update on the implementation status of the five recommendations arising from the *Implementation Status Report on ACT Government's Climate Change Policy (2017)* (the Report).

A summary of Directorate responses to recommendation 1 of the Report, can be found on pages 69 – 72 of the [2020-2021 OCSE Annual Report](#).

This information is publicly available online.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Signature: 

Date: 16.3.22

By the Minister for Climate Action, Andrew Barr MLA