



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

### SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2024-2025

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

### ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked By: Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Addressed to: Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management

Redirection: Special Minister of State

Reference: Economic Development

Hearing Date: 31/07/2024

In relation to: Environment (Arboretum)

QON lodgement Date: 01/08/2024

Answer Due date: 08/08/2024

1. Given the increase in visitation to the Arboretum compared to initial expectations, what plans are in place to upgrade public facilities, including toilets and refreshment areas, to better accommodate the growing number of visitors?
2. What steps are being taken to enhance educational facilities and resources at the Arboretum to support the high volume of school visits and educational programs?
3. With only one entry/access point for cars currently in use, how does the government plan to address access constraints and facilitate the hosting of larger public events at the Arboretum? Are there any plans for additional access points or improvements to the existing infrastructure?
4. What plans are in place to provide permanent and adequately sized facilities for the staff, including provisions for future expansion?
5. Are any steps are being taken to establish a dedicated scientific position within the Arboretum to coordinate and promote national and international research on threatened tree species?
6. how is the government planning to leverage the Arboretum's research and educational potential to promote the Arboretum's biodiversity conservation and ecological goals more effectively?
7. What discussions or negotiations have taken place with the Federal Government regarding increased investment, and what are the outcomes or expected outcomes of these discussions?
8. How and when does the government plan to upgrading facilities, supporting staff needs, and enhancing research and education capabilities?

9. How does the government envision the future development of the Arboretum to ensure it continues to meet both public and research needs effectively?

**Chris Steel MLA:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. In 2023-24 the National Arboretum upgraded the public toilets in the Visitor Centre. This included new and improved wash basin and drying facilities, as well as toilet seat upgrades.

The progression of the National Arboretum Masterplan will continue over the coming years, which outlines several projects to develop and upgrade new onsite public facilities, subject to funding and other practical considerations.

2. The progression of the National Arboretum's Masterplan over the coming years includes potential research facilities. The National Arboretum will continue to pursue research and education opportunities to enhance its mission to 'create and nurture a living collection of forests of international significance for recreation, education, research and conservation'.

An assistant education officer has also been employed to support the high volume of school visits.

3. The National Arboretum is currently exploring options for a second access road. The initial priority is to provide a second emergency access and egress road. A long-term solution is being explored to facilitate improved road access to the Arboretum as part of the development of the adjacent suburbs immediately to the west.

4. In 2023-24, the ACT Government funded an extension to the administration building which has just been completed to allow better working conditions for staff. More long-term and permanent infrastructure will be considered in future years.

5. A Research Coordination Committee is currently being re-established to place increased focus on the research arm at the Arboretum. The role of the Research Coordination Committee is to promote, assess and coordinate research projects consistent with the Arboretum's vision and priorities.

6. In recent times, National Arboretum staff have been in discussions with the Australian National University (ANU) regarding previous research partnerships and their reinvigoration. Arboretum staff, the ANU and a representative from the Friends of National Arboretum have met to discuss immediate steps in re-establishing research at the Arboretum. Outcomes of this discussion are now being progressed including engaging with the University of Canberra on a suitable lead from this institution to form a future Research Coordination Committee.

7. The ACT Government welcomes the recent report by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories which identifies the significance of the National Arboretum to our national capital. The ACT Government will work with the Federal Government to consider future opportunities for joint collaboration at the National Arboretum.

8. The ACT Government will continue to support the progression of the Masterplan, which details a range of projects aimed to improve facilities, research and education capacity, subject to funding and other practical considerations.
9. The ACT Government will continue to work closely with its key stakeholders, including research partners and committees, to ensure the Arboretum continues to meet the needs of current and future generations.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025

Signature:



Date:

8/8/24

By the Special Minister of State, Chris Steel MLA