

MINISTERIAL BRIEF

To:	Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management	Tracking No.: Add Obj. No.
Date:	16/07/2024	
From:	Executive Group Manager, Environment, Heritage and Parks	
Subject:	Release of first Climate Adaptation for Nature Initiative study on Fire	
Critical Date:	30/07/2024	
Critical Reason:	In the normal course of business	

- DDG, Environment, Water and Emissions Reduction 23/07/24

Recommendations

That you:

1. **Agree the publication** of the "Future Fire in the ACT - Report on the Climate Adaptation for Nature initiative case study on the implications of future fire regimes in the ACT" (Report) Attachment A.

Agreed / Not Agreed / Please Discuss

2. **Note** that the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) will use the Report to guide and inform the development of the ACT's Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, Regional Fire Management Plan, Nature Reserve Plans of Management, the ACT's Nature Conservation Strategy and other climate change response policy work.

Note / Please Discuss

3. **Agree** to share this brief with Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Water Energy and Emissions Reduction, and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services noting the relevance of the Report to their portfolios.

Agreed / Not Agreed / Please Discuss

Rebecca Vassarotti MLA



19/8/2024

Minister's Office Feedback

Background

1. The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) is leading the development of the *Climate Adaptation for Nature Initiative* (the initiative).
2. The objective of the initiative is to develop a systematic and effective response to the impacts of climate change on nature and nature conservation and management, in which the knowledge, capacities and processes for effective adaptation are embedded firmly within the mainstream of ACT Government work.
3. The initiative explores approaches to sectoral adaptation planning for nature conservation through case studies – “deep dives” in specific adaptation contexts. These case studies enable collective exploration of what climate-ready management and policy looks like, barriers and enablers to get there, and identification of near-term interventions we can embed in current planning and policy.
4. Nature is fundamental to human health and wellbeing, provides services including fresh air, carbon sequestration and recreation, and is intrinsic to First Nations’ culture and spirituality. Current natural values and their benefits for people are threatened by climate change.
5. Climate adaptation in the context of conserving and managing nature is complex, challenging, and highly context specific. It requires learning and capacity-building, reassessment of management and policy, and – more fundamentally – reassessment of our core nature conservation objectives and targets.
6. On 15 June 2023, you discussed the initiative, including next steps, with the Climate Action Sub-Committee of Cabinet.

Issues

7. The first publication of the initiative titled ‘Future Fire in the ACT - Report on the Climate Adaptation for Nature initiative case study on the implications of future fire regimes in the ACT’ (Report) Attachment A is ready for publication.
8. As part of the report, two sectoral case studies have now been completed. The first case study examined how to manage the impacts of more severe and frequent fire danger under climate change in the ACT. The second case study, focused on Namadgi National Park (NNP), examined how to embed climate adaptation into the forthcoming new NNP Plan of Management.
9. The Report summarises insights from the first case study, focused on preparing for a long-term scenario of significantly elevated fire risk under climate change. It presents adaptation pathways for climate-ready management and policy focused around three themes:
 - Landscape-scale fire to maintain a mosaic of different times since fire
 - Stronger protection of built, cultural, and ecological assets from more frequent occurrence of uncontrolled fire
 - Reawakened Ngunnawal fire management.

A range of potential near-term interventions are identified across a range of domains including addressing critical knowledge gaps and building specified capacity and skills.

10. The Report includes discussion of key aspects including anticipation and dialogue, the need to prepare now for long-term change, Ngunnawal burning, uncertainties, ambiguities and trade-offs, nature conservation, and reducing future risk.
11. The Report does not make recommendations, rather exploring and presenting potential options and possibilities, including for example, across domains such as addressing critical knowledge gaps and building specified capacity and skills.
12. Insights from the report are currently being presented to and discussed within the ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and EPSDD's Regional Fire Management Plan policy processes.
13. The Report will be published on the EPSDD website.

Financial Implications

14. There are no immediate financial implications.
15. In coming years there will be considerable financial implications of both adapting to climate change and failure to adapt to climate change. In general, planning ahead to prepare for climate change in the management and conservation of natural values is likely to be considerably more cost-effective than ad-hoc crisis responses.

Consultation

Internal

16. EPSDD Office of Nature Conservation; EPSDD Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) Fire Management Unit, EPSDD Traditional Custodian Engagement Team.

Cross Directorate

17. Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. The Climate Action Steering Committee was briefed on 1 May 2024. The ACT Scientific Committee and the Biodiversity Conservation Forum will be briefed.

External

18. The Commonwealth, Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) was a key partner in this work. The ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council Secretariat has been provided with the report (June 2024) and has provided comment.

Work Health and Safety

19. There are no specific work health and safety implications of this work.

Benefits/Sensitivities

20. There is considerable community interest in the way EPSDD is responding to the pressures of climate change on the environment. The Initiative and case study is a key response to this challenge.
21. The issue of fire management is sensitive and multiple perspectives exist on the science and management options of current and future fire regimes. This report does not take a stand on key debates or make specific recommendations.

Communications, media and engagement implications

22. No media engagement is foreseen. The report will be shared directly with key relevant stakeholders.
23. The report will be published on the EPSDD website, and the CSIRO website.

OFFICIAL

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Attachments

Attachment	Title
Attachment A	Future Fire in the ACT - Report on the Climate Adaptation for Nature initiative case study on the implications of future fire regimes in the ACT