

2021

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

APPROPRIATION SPEECH (Water input)

**Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA
Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction**

Madam Speaker, water security and water quality are critical for the health and wellbeing of all Canberrans. Clean and secure water for drinking, agriculture, biodiversity and for greening the city requires action to protect our water supply catchments and to reduce nutrients entering our waterways along with actions to improve water efficiency.

Long-term nature-based solutions are needed to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate, and the subsequent impacts on our water security. We only have to look back over the past couple of years to see the impacts of drought and floods. These types of events will become more commonplace and their effects more pronounced.

The actions we take today to secure water and protect catchments will influence all life in Canberra and regions for decades to come.

The ACT Government has strengthened its resolve to future proof our region and will consider the best administrative arrangements to provide a holistic and coordinated approach to water programs and policies.

We cannot allow ourselves to become complacent because our storage is currently full. While water storage levels in the ACT are currently at 100%, this is only one aspect of water security.

Permanent Water Conservation Measures will remain in force and the Government is continuing to examine measures to improve water use efficiency.

In partnership with the Commonwealth Government, we are continuing to identify a suite of water efficiency measures aimed at reducing our demand and returning up to 7 gigalitres to the Murray Darling System for environmental flows. This work will be critical for long term water security.

In addition, Madam Speaker, I am pleased we are continuing to undertake important work to reduce nutrients entering our waterways.

ACT Healthy Waterways began in 2014 as a \$93.5 million joint initiative of the Australian and ACT Governments to protect and improve long-term water quality in the ACT and the Murrumbidgee River system by reducing the level of gross pollutants, sediments and nutrients entering ACT lakes and waterways.

The project was extended in the 2019-20 mid-year budget, when \$1 million was committed to continue research into ways to combat outbreaks of algal blooms in the lake, fix a malfunctioning gross pollutant trap, and trial new infrastructure to prevent nutrient pollution from entering stormwater during large storms.

An additional \$1.538 million has been committed by the ACT Government in 2020/21 to complete some remaining capital works and to fund experimental floating wetlands in Lake Tuggeranong. An extension of the Healthy Waterways program called the Clean Catchments, Clean Waterways Program will be seeking additional funding in the 2021/22 Budget.

These Healthy Waterways assets now intercepting approximately 1900 tons of pollutants comprised from entering our waterways including 1,885 tons of sediments, 14 tons of nitrogen and 2.4 tons of phosphorus.

Madam Speaker, in summary – water security and water quality are critical to the health and wellbeing of all life. Concerted effort to conserve this precious resource and improve its quality is why this Government are continuing to invest healthy waterways, and water efficiency initiatives.