

MEDIA RELEASE

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Facing the challenges - positioning our nature reserves for the 21st century

'Our reserves are very important to me' was a strong message received by the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment during the investigation into Canberra's nature reserves. The 'me' includes a very diverse range of people, including many residents, neighbours of nature reserves, environmentalists, ParkCarers, runners, walkers and riders - all of whom put a very high value on the ACT's reserves.

The Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, Mr Simon Corbell, MLA has released the Commissioner's *Report on the Investigation into the Canberra Nature Park (nature reserves); Molonglo River Corridor (nature reserves) and Googong Foreshores*. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing our nature reserves in the 21st century.

The report makes six main recommendations and twenty nine sub-recommendations to respond to the challenges confronting our nature reserves and position them for the 21st century.

There are significant advantages to implementing the six high priority recommendations soon, as they are likely to have both immediate and long-term effects. These are to:

- **Strengthen community awareness and involvement** by developing and implementing a community education and awareness program promoting the ecological, health and social values and benefits, and appropriate uses of our nature reserves (Recommendation 1.3).
- **Improve the condition and resilience of our nature reserves** by:
 - taking action now as warned:...*Do not wait for improved climate and impact information before taking further action that will enhance the resilience of the Nature Reserves*¹ (Recommendation 2.1);
 - giving priority to those routine management actions identified in this Investigation for each nature reserve (refer to Table 7 in the Report) (Recommendation 2.2);
 - implementing a nature reserve restoration program which would be additional to routine management actions (Recommendation 2.3); and
 - strengthening connectivity between nature reserves (Recommendation 2.4).

¹ Webb, B., 2011, *Impacts of Climate on the Canberra Nature Park: Risks and Responses*, Report for the ACT Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, page 8.

- **Better direct and inform the management of nature reserves** by:
 - preparing a Nature Reserve Operational Plan for each nature reserve (Recommendation 3.1); and
 - developing and implementing a nature reserve monitoring strategy (Recommendation 3.2).
- **Strengthen the management framework and strategically position our nature reserves** by developing and implementing an ACT Rabbit Pest Management Plan (Recommendation 4.3).
- **Integrate community health and well-being with nature reserve protection** by:
 - developing and implementing an ACT Nature Reserve Recreation Strategy (Recommendation 5.1); and
 - improving the provision and management of appropriate recreation infrastructure in nature reserves (Recommendation 5.2).
- **Increase the protection and restoration of our nature reserves by sourcing new funding** by:
 - establishing the Capital Woodland and Wetland Conservation Trust and monitor its effectiveness in sourcing additional funds (Recommendation 6.1); and
 - identifying new sources of funding (Recommendation 6.2).

The community's views conveyed through many submissions and strong attendance at workshops and the material supplied by all the various agencies was examined thoroughly. This collective wisdom and experience helped greatly in preparing this report. The willingness of the community to invest their time to assist our Investigation is appreciated.

Material from community workshops, forums and technical papers are provide Part 2. Appendices. Public submissions are provided in Part 3. Submissions.

The Summary and Recommendations; Part 1. Report; Part 2. Appendices; and Part 3. Submissions are available on the Commissioner's website at www.envcomm.act.gov.au.

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