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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE REPORT ON THE
CANBERRA NATURE PARK (NATURE RESERVES) MOLONGLO
RIVER CORRIDOR (NATURE RESERVES) AND GOOGONG
FORESHORES INVESTIGATION**

**Presented by
Mr Simon Corbell, MLA
Minister for the Environment and Sustainability Development**

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Government Response to the Report on the Canberra Nature Park (Nature Reserves), Molonglo River Corridor (Nature Reserves) and Googong Foreshores Investigation

Foreword to the Government Response

The Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development, Mr Simon Corbell MLA, requested the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (the Commissioner) undertake an investigation into Canberra Nature Park, Molonglo River Corridor and Googong Foreshores on 13 October 2009 pursuant to section 12(1)(b) of the *Commissioner for Environment Act 1993* under eight Terms of Reference.

The Background and the Terms of Reference for the investigation are reproduced below.

Background

Canberra Nature Park, the Molonglo River Corridor and Googong Foreshores are important natural areas for the ACT that contain a diversity of ecosystems and social values. They provide for, to varying degrees, biodiversity conservation, the maintenance of soil health and water quality, ecological connectivity, visual amenity, low-key recreational activities and education and research.

The Territory Plan defines the public land overlays for the nature reserves of Canberra Nature Park and the Molonglo River Corridor. The strategic objectives for management are provided in the *Planning and Development Act 2007* and in statutory management plans. The management objectives for Public Land Nature Reserve are primarily to conserve the natural environment and, secondarily, to provide for the public use of the area for recreation, education and research.

Googong Foreshores is situated in NSW and is therefore not covered by ACT statutes. It is, however, subject to lease arrangements between the Commonwealth and the ACT Government.

The nature reserves of Canberra Nature Park, Molonglo River Corridor and Googong Foreshores are managed by the Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), an agency within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS). The rural areas in the ACT that adjoin nature reserves are generally managed under a rural lease subject to a Land Management Agreement (a mandatory requirement of the lease) or under an agistment licence issued by PCS.

Canberra Nature Park

Canberra Nature Park is made up of 34 different land management units that occur in the undeveloped hills, ridges and buffer zones throughout Canberra. The management for Canberra Nature Park seeks to:

- retain the generally undeveloped character of the reserves;
- encourage rehabilitation of the natural environment and protection of biodiversity values; and
- provide community opportunity for recreation, social well being, cultural appreciation and scientific research.

Many units are of high conservation value containing threatened ecological communities and species and rare and unusual species, and providing ecological connectivity across the urban landscape of Canberra.

The Molonglo River Corridor

The Molonglo River Corridor is made up of both nature reserves and a special purpose reserve. This investigation focussed on two nature reserves, which have been set aside for protection of the river corridor and its biodiversity values and for low key recreational use. The reserves are situated at the northernmost and southernmost reaches of the river. The Molonglo Gorge Nature Reserve is situated near the Kowen Escarpment and the other reserve extends through the Lower Molonglo from Coppins Crossing to the junction with the Murrumbidgee River. There are also adjoining areas of leased Public Land Nature Reserve, which are of high conservation value and are managed by rural lessees in conjunction with the Public Land Nature Reserve through a Land Management Agreement.

Googong Foreshores

Googong Foreshores is a 6000 hectare parcel of land situated in NSW and managed by the ACT Government under a lease arrangement with the Commonwealth. Here the primary objective of land management is to protect and maintain the water supply of Googong Dam. Secondary objectives are to protect biodiversity and provide for low-key recreational use.

Terms of Reference

An investigation is to be undertaken into Canberra Nature Park (nature reserves); Molonglo River Corridor (nature reserves) and Googong Foreshores, that:

1. assesses the condition of the forests, woodlands and grassy woodlands in these areas, including the effects of grazing by stock and/or kangaroos, vertebrate pests and weeds;
2. identifies actions to protect and enhance these areas, including land use or boundary changes while taking into account their purpose, values and location and the status of indigenous species and communities protected in the nature reserve system;
3. reviews existing land management programs and practices for these areas and areas that adjoin them. This is to include but will not be limited to agistment, leasing, culling arrangements, land management agreements or plans of management which may apply;
4. identifies any urgent actions and longer-term changes that are needed to improve the management of these areas. This is to include identifying successful management measures that should be retained;
5. identifies knowledge gaps, research or survey needs, and compliance and monitoring requirements that may be necessary to support improved management programs and practices while taking into account the context of the areas and effects of climate variability;

6. identifies ways for ensuring effective communication and involvement of stakeholders, including Aboriginal people, whose actions potentially, indirectly or directly affect these areas;
7. identifies potential biodiversity offset management actions or sites; and
8. identifies the evidence justifying the need for managing grazing pressure in the context of sound reserve management practices.

In undertaking the investigation, the Commissioner is to consult with all relevant experts and key stakeholders, including staff in the Departments of Territory and Municipal Services and

Grassland Nature Reserves not within Scope of the Investigation

The management of grassland nature reserves in Canberra Nature Park was investigated as part of a separate inquiry by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment and are not included in this study. The ACT Government Response to the Report on ACT Lowland Native Grassland Investigation by the then Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment was presented in the Legislative Assembly in March 2010.

Completion of the Report

The former Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment, Dr Maxine Cooper, delivered the completed Report of the Investigation in to Canberra Nature Park (reserves); Molonglo River Corridor (nature reserves) and Googong Foreshores Investigation to the office of the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development on 3 August 2011.

Structure of the Report

The complete Report comprises four volumes:-

- (a) Summary and Recommendations
- (b) Part 1. Report
- (c) Part 2. Appendices
- (d) Part 3. Submissions

The work of the Commissioner also included other information from public submissions, community forums, discussions with experts, commissioned technical papers and a survey of the Canberra community's attitudes and values.

The complete Report and contributing ancillary reports and studies may be viewed on the Commissioner's website at:-

http://www.envcomm.act.gov.au/investigations/nature_reserves_investigation

Tabling the Report

Pursuant to section 22 of the *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993* the Minister, must within 15 sitting days of receiving a report under section 19 or 21, table the report in the Legislative Assembly. Minister Simon Corbell MLA tabled the reports on 25 October 2011.

The Recommendations

The Commissioner made six main recommendations, where each of the six recommendations is made up of separate sub-recommendations. For example, the first main recommendation is made up of five sub-recommendations, the first two of which (i.e. 1.1 ,1.2) are:

‘Strengthen community awareness by:

- 1.1 Expanding the membership of the Parks, Conservation and Lands Recreational Users group and reducing the number of consultative groups;
- 1.2 Holding a biennial nature reserves forum with representation by all stakeholders that promotes: 1) information exchange, (2) community education and awareness; and (3) planning’ ... and so on.

The six main recommendations, when broken down, amount to 29 sub-recommendations overall.

The Government Response

The Government Response to the Report’s recommendations is presented in table form, see below.

Column 1 of the table records each of the Commissioners 29 sub-recommendations in full grouped together in the six main recommendation categories.

Twelve of the Commissioners’ sub-recommendations were given a ‘High Priority’ designation by the Commissioner.

In the Commissioner’s opinion, the ‘High Priority’ recommendations offer significant advantages if implemented soon, as they are likely to have both immediate and long term effects.

The Commissioner’s ‘High Priority’ recommendations are identified by the hatch ‘#’ symbol in Column 1 of the table which appears, if relevant, at the end of the text of a recommendation.

Column 2 of the table records the Government Response as either ‘Agreed’, ‘Agreed in Principle’, ‘Agreed in Part’ or ‘Noted’. There were no sub-recommendations with which the Government disagreed. Where a recommendation has been agreed in part, or agreed in principle, implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.

Column 3 of the table records the Government’s comments on the Commissioner’s recommendations.

Summary of Key Issues

(Recommendations of the Commissioner’s Report are referred to by number e.g. ‘R 1.1’).

A key message from the Commissioner’s Report is the high value that is placed by the Canberra community on the existence, accessibility and amenity of Canberra’s network of nature reserves and the contribution they make to community health and well-being. The

Government's responses to Rs 1.1-1.6 directly address the community's involvement in active management, awareness and education about Canberra's nature reserves.

The Report was particularly concerned with improving the condition and resilience of nature reserves. The Government's responses to Rs 2.1 and 2.3 refer to restoration programs such as the Government's four year \$1m woodland restoration program focussing on five nature reserves from Aranda Bushland via Belconnen Hills and Kama Reserve to the Molonglo River.

The impact of climate change is being addressed promptly through enhancing connectivity between nature reserves. R 2.1, and through funding strategic research, R 2.4.

The Government's commitment to practical nature reserve management is supported by Nature Reserve Operational Plans, R 3.1; monitoring ecosystems, threatened species and prescribed burning, R 3.2, 3.3; further consideration of a northern national park proposal, R 3.5 and by fostering research partnerships to better inform nature reserve management, R 3.6.

Management planning at a strategic level will be progressed through updating of the Canberra Nature Park Management Plan 1999, R 4.2; and by development of the first statutory Pest Animal Management Plan (PAMP) for Rabbits, R 4.3.

The Government's ongoing commitment to strengthening the reserve management framework is evidenced by the review of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, R 4.1; work on the Code of Sustainable Land Management, R 4.4; consideration of Environmental Offsets for Development, Rs 4.5-4.7; and in development of Action Plan 2 under the ACT Climate Change Strategy 'Weathering the Change', R 4.8.

The value of nature reserves for recreation is recognised by the Government Rs 5.1-5.2; in preparation of an ACT Trails Strategy, a Mountain Bike Strategy and by provision of appropriate recreation infrastructure in nature reserves.

The Government agrees with the Commissioner's finding that increased protection and restoration of our nature reserves requires exploring new funding opportunities. The Government has established the Capital Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, R 6.1; using objects for the Trust Fund which are consistent with Commissioner's principles, R 6.3; and will pursue other options for identifying new sources of funds, R 6.2.

**Draft Whole-of-Government Response to the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment's Investigation Report:
Report on Canberra Nature Park (nature reserves); Molonglo River Corridor (nature reserves) and Googong Foreshores Investigation**

Note: '#' identifies the Commissioner's 'High Priority' Recommendations

Commissioner's Recommendation	Government Response	Comment
Strengthen community awareness and involvement by:		
1.1 Expanding the membership of the Parks, Conservation and Lands Recreational Users Group and reducing the number of consultative groups.	Agreed in Part	The membership of the Parks and Conservation Recreational Users Group can be expanded to include other recreational groups, however the other stakeholder forums in the ACT Parks Conservation Service will be maintained, namely the Conservation and Wildlife Forum and the Rural Landholders Forum. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.
1.2 Holding a biennial nature reserves forum with representation from all stakeholders that promotes: (1) information exchange (2) community education and awareness; and (3) planning.	Agreed in Principle	The ACT Natural Resource Management (NRM) Council will be approached to host forums in collaboration with TAMSD and ESDD that promote information exchange and awareness raising between key stakeholders. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.
1.3 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. #	Agreed in Principle	The benefits and appropriate use of our nature reserves are promoted through community education and awareness programs. The Government is developing a Canberra Centenary Trail which will open in 2013. The trail will travel through a significant part the Canberra Nature Park (CNP). The trail development will include an interpretative program to promote the ecological, health and social values and benefits of the reserves. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.
1.4 Improving on-nature reserve signage and information.	Agreed	The Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) will undertake a Signs Audit in 2012/13 and develop a Signs Strategy for CNP nature reserves funded from existing resources. Installation of additional signage will be subject to the availability of additional funding through budget processes.
1.5 Integrating information on nature reserves into the Australian Sustainable School Initiative and encouraging schools to	Agreed	The current biodiversity component of the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative broadly deals with issues of nature conservation and encourages school children to understand their local environment, including nature reserves.

adopt a nature reserve.		The Government will continue to promote collaboration between local schools and Park Care groups who are best placed to provide activities for schools.
1.6 Enhancing support for and encouraging the formation of new Park Care groups so that the majority of nature reserves are supported by such a group (currently 32 per cent of nature reserves have a Park Care group).	Agreed in Principle	ESDD is developing a Volunteering Strategy in collaboration with TAMSD and the local community, including Volunteering ACT. The aim of the Strategy is to attract and retain volunteers, build a stronger sense of place and connection, build wider connections in the community with our natural areas and make better use of the knowledge generated by volunteers who monitor the condition of our natural resources. New groups require staff support and coordination as well as insurance cover, training, protective clothing and equipment. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination. Support for new groups will be conditional on funding through budget processes.
Improve the condition and resilience of our nature reserves by:		
2.1 Taking action now as we are warned: Do not wait for improved climate and impact information before taking further actions that will enhance the resilience of the Nature Reserves. #	Agreed	Work is already underway to improve the resilience of Canberra's natural landscape, including its reserves to respond to climate change. For example, the four year \$1m woodland restoration program is improving the resilience and condition of nature reserves. The initial focus is to improve the connectivity and extent of woodland habitat across five nature reserves that stretch from Aranda Bushland, via the Belconnen Hills and Kama Reserve to the Molonglo River.
2.2 Giving priority to those routine management actions identified in this Investigation for each nature reserve (refer to Table 7) (These actions should be part of the Nature Reserve Operational Plans (Recommendation 3.1). However, implementation of actions should not be delayed pending the development of these plans). #	Agreed	These routine management actions will be recognised in Nature Reserve Operational Plans and will be implemented over time.
2.3 Implementing a nature reserve restoration program which would be additional to routine management actions	Agreed in Part	Restoration programs (such as the woodlands restoration program and the reintroduction of locally extinct species to the ACT) that are undertaken within the nature reserve system, involve more than routine management actions. It should

<p>with priority given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • restoring the condition of those nature reserves that are overall approaching critical condition or in critical condition (20 per cent) (refer to Table 5, Part 1. Report). • restoring localised areas that are approaching or in critical condition on nature reserves in an overall satisfactory condition, especially those with high ecological values. • protecting and enhancing the ecological values of all nature reserves. <p>(These actions should be part of the Nature Reserve Operational Plans (Recommendation 3.1). However, implementation of actions should not be delayed pending the development of these plans). #</p>		<p>also be noted that extensive restoration work has recently occurred on Mt Painter (the only reserve considered to be in a critical condition), while recent restoration activities in nature reserves identified as approaching a critical condition including (Goorooyarroo, Isaacs Ridge, Mulligans Flat and Red Hill) means that the condition of these reserves is currently improving compared to 5 or 10 years previously. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination. The implementation of further restoration actions will be guided by the ecological values present, by restoration planning that identifies actions that have greatest benefit to ecosystem function and resilience, and by the current condition of reserves and the success of actions already taken or under way, rather than focussing solely on those reaching critical condition. Best value for money will be a key principle guiding prioritisation of actions.</p>
<p>2.4 Strengthening connectivity between nature reserves with on-ground actions being guided by independent strategic and scientific ecological advice and monitored by one of the existing advisory committees (e.g. Flora and Fauna Committee, Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee, Natural Resource Management Council). #</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>Strategic and independent connectivity research, funded and supported by the ACT Government and utilising the best available scientific methodology has been developed by the ANU Fenner School and the Landscape Modelling and Decision Support Section within the NSW Environment Department. The research enables the current and potential relative connectivity value of a particular site to be determined at a fine scale. The research provides the means to identify key areas that need to be protected or enhanced to maintain or improve ecosystem connectivity, as well as a robust methodology for monitoring changes in connectivity value. Connectivity research will inform development of a revised Nature Conservation Strategy.</p> <p>Connectivity was identified as an issue to be addressed in public consultation for the Review of the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1980</i>. The NRM Advisory Committee is the most appropriate advisory body to monitor actions taken to maintain or enhance connectivity.</p>

<p>Better direct and inform the management of nature reserves by:</p>		
<p>3.1 Preparing a Nature Reserve Operational Plan for <u>each</u> nature reserve which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guides all management actions on a nature reserve; • presents the nature reserve’s key conservation and other values and its management goals; • includes priority management and restoration actions (Recommendations 2.2 and 2.3), fire management actions and infrastructure and urban protection works; • has a map of the nature reserve boundaries with recreation areas and tracks shown; • has an attachment listing relevant research; • has a monitoring program (guided by a comprehensive reserve monitoring strategy – Recommendation 3.2); and • is prepared and implemented in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders including local groups (especially Park Carers), utility agencies and, if relevant, researchers. # 	<p>Agreed in Principle</p>	<p>Nature Reserve Operational Plans will be developed giving attention first to the highest priority reserves, rather than providing an operational plan for <u>each</u> reserve. Consideration will be given to grouping some reserves, such as those which are similar and do not have an individual Park Care group. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.</p>
<p>3.2 Developing and implementing a nature reserve monitoring strategy which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • condition, ecological values, impacts of threatening processes and recreation use; • bench-marking against information collected for this Investigation; and 	<p>Agreed in Part</p>	<p>Monitoring of the core ecological values within the nature reserve system is a priority. It is important that monitoring provides meaningful and measurable data and relates to the health of significant features, the objectives within operational plans and the results provide management direction. Landscape Function Analysis is good at identifying land in poor condition and changes over time, but may not be the best monitoring for the values and adaptive management within CNP</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defined monitoring procedures – the Landscape Function Analysis technique used in this Investigation should be included. # 		<p>because it may not be reproducible across different assessors because of its subjectivity. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.</p> <p>Priority will be given to monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the endangered ecosystems protected within these reserves, (b) the abundance and extent of selected occurrences of threatened species, and (c) the abundance and extent of selected weed patches.
<p>3.3 Enhancing controlled burn monitoring that is part of the Strategic Bushfire Operations Plan from the currently approximate 10 per cent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • around 40 per cent or more particularly in high conservation nature reserves over the longer-term (5 to 10 years); • around 20 per cent or more particularly in high conservation nature reserves in the short to medium term (2 to 5 years); and • include indices of specific plants and animals. 	<p>Agreed in Principle</p>	<p>Funding for the implementation of the regional fire plans (out of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan V2) included increased funding to monitor prescribed burning, which is currently achieving approximately 10% coverage. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination. Should additional resources become available through the budget process, priority will be given to the long-term monitoring of prescribed burning of high conservation value nature reserves and on specific flora and fauna.</p>
<p>3.4 Categorising nature reserves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define the goals and objectives for each nature reserve using criteria that include their environmental, recreational, health and cultural values and draw upon the protected area categories adopted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These goals and objectives should then be used to inform and guide the priorities in each Nature Reserve Operational Plan (Recommendation 3.1); and • guide decisions regarding a northern ACT national park, especially its boundaries. 	<p>Agreed in Principle</p>	<p>ACT reserves are already nominated to IUCN categories when they are reported as part of the Collaborative Australia Protected Area Database. The ACT will consider how to best integrate the IUCN categories into the establishment of new reserves and management of existing reserves.</p> <p>Defining the key goals and objectives for each reserve will be undertaken as part of future reviews of Plans of Management and operational plans. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.</p>

<p>3.5 Advancing the consideration of a northern ACT national park via a discussion paper which details areas for inclusion, management structure, costs and funding etc. If Recommendation 3.4 is not pursued this paper should be progressed based on existing information.</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle</p>	<p>Further consideration will be given to a northern ACT national park, including through canvassing all the relevant issues such as legislation, biodiversity values, review of the IUCN categories, management implications and planning. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.</p>
<p>3.6 Fostering research as a means of informing nature reserve management strategies and practices by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging research partnerships with universities and qualified members of the community with direct funding, in-kind contributions and support for funding proposals; • improving opportunities for staff to access research findings and to adopt evidence-based management practices on our nature reserves; • ensuring research priorities are coordinated with relevant strategies and plans, for example the ACT Natural Resource Management Plan (Bush Capital Legacy) and action plans for threatened species and ecological communities; and • monitoring being a key part of natural resource management and included in the design and execution of projects in order to encourage land managers to adopt adaptive (or learning) management practices (Recommendations 3.2 and 3.3). 	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>This recommendation is already being actively implemented and, as identified in the Commissioner’s report, there are many current research partnerships relevant to adaptive management that are targeting priority areas. Future research collaboration will seek to direct and better inform nature reserve management.</p> <p>The ACT NRM Council takes into account research in its natural resource management planning and program delivery</p>

<p>Strengthen the management framework and strategically position our nature reserves by:</p>		
<p>4.1 Amending the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1980</i> to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve enforcement options; • increase penalties; • include powers to ensure historical encroachments onto nature reserves are removed at an encroacher’s or user’s expense; and • include relevant climate change and connectivity matters (including those raised in <i>Impacts of Climate on the Canberra Nature Park: Risks and responses</i> by Dr Bob Webb - Appendix E and ‘Ecological Connectivity for Climate Change in the ACT and surrounding region’ by Manning <i>et al</i> 2010). 	<p>Agreed in Part</p>	<p>The Review of the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1980</i> (the Act) will identify improvements in enforcement options and the penalty regime under the Act, this will include consideration of the appropriate way to deal with future encroachments.</p> <p>Climate change and connectivity matters will primarily be dealt with through the ACT Nature Conservation Strategy and Weathering the Change Action Plan 2, rather than through legislation.</p> <p>Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.</p>
<p>4.2 Reviewing the Canberra Nature Park Management Plan 1999 as mandated under the <i>Planning and Development Act 2007</i> and in so doing include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nature reserves added to the reserve system since 1999 • addresses categorising nature reserves (recommendation 3.4) • policies to address current issues and those developed since 1999, particularly; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Action Plan No. 27 - ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy; § Action Plan No. 28 - ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy; 	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>A review of the Canberra Nature Park Plan of Management 1999 will include the nature reserves added since 1999 and policies to address current issues including the Action Plans developed since 1999. The review will consider climate change and connectivity.</p>

<p>§ Action Plan. No 29 - ACT Aquatic Species and Riparian Zone Conservation Strategy ; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consideration of climate change (ie. Impacts of Climate on Canberra Nature Park: Risks and responses by Dr Bob Webb - Appendix E) and connectivity including Ecological Connectivity for Climate Change in the ACT and surrounding region Manning et al.). 		
<p>4.3 Developing and implementing an ACT Rabbit Pest Management Plan. This plan should address the recommendations in Managing Rabbits in Canberra Nature Park by Dr Kent Williams (Appendix D). #</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>A statutory Pest Animal Management Plan (PAMP) for rabbits is being developed by ESDD and TAMSD in accordance with the <i>Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005</i>. The recommendations made by Dr Kent Williams that are relevant to outlining this requirement will be considered during development of the Rabbit PAMP.</p>
<p>4.4 Finalising and implementing the Code of Sustainable Land Management and address infrastructure construction and maintenance.</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle</p>	<p>The Code of Sustainable Land Management is currently in draft form pending allocation of resources for completion. It is aimed to cover the principles by which all operations are undertaken on PCS managed land and establishes the need for works plans for all operations. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.</p> <p>In 2010 the Conservator of Flora and Fauna established a Site Management Agreement with ACTEWAGL to protect environmental values in nature reserves including water quality and flow, soil protection, flora and fauna conservation and cultural heritage values, in accordance with section 99(2) of the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1980</i>. This Agreement incorporates a Code of Conduct which prescribes specific requirements to protect environmental values in CNP during utility maintenance activities.</p>
<p>4.5 Using the term Environmental Offsets for Development to replace the term Biodiversity Offsets.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	

<p>4.6 Guiding Environmental Offsets for Development on nature reserves (and lands affecting nature reserves including areas of connectivity) using the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • net environmental gain to the ecological communities or species most affected by the development in the ACT i.e. seeking potential long-term overall improvement in the environment; • additional actions are undertaken, that is, actions taken are above those normally implemented or funded on a regular basis; • timely and certain environmental gains are achieved; • monitoring and adaptive management is applicable to all land management actions at all offset sites; • independent decision-making in the use of funds; • transparency in decision-making; and • flexibility to ensure the application of the above principles. 	<p>Noted</p>	<p>Further consideration is needed on how best to implement these principles. The Australian Government response to the Review of the <i>Environment and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth.) has identified the potential for accreditation of State and Territory offset schemes. The ACT is ensuring that its scheme is consistent with national offsetting principles.</p> <p>Funding models to support offset requirements are in an early stage of development. The ACT Government notes the need for transparency and accountability in managing offset requirements within reserves and will take this requirement into account in developing a preferred funding model. Independent decision-making or use of funds may not be the most efficient and cost effective model for ensuring transparency and accountability of use of offset funding. Progression of this recommendation involves consultation and general agreement with Commonwealth environmental approval officers and desk-top and on-ground identification of vegetation and significant species habitat present in potential offset areas. The issue of future fire management requirements in any offset area must be incorporated with the original planning.</p>
<p>4.7 Assessing areas identified in this Investigation (Boxes 8, 9 and 10) as having potential for Environmental Offsets for Development.</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle</p>	<p>An assessment of potential offset sites within the Canberra Nature Park will be undertaken with existing resources, subject to resource availability. This would be an important step in creating a bank of potential offset areas which could be used as credits against development. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.</p>
<p>4.8 Ensuring that any plantings in nature reserves intended as carbon offsets are carefully considered as to their ecological appropriateness in the development of Action Plan 2 under the ACT Climate Change Strategy ‘Weathering the Change’.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>The ACT Government will consider emerging national policy on carbon offsets in developing a carbon offsets policy for the ACT Government. Consultation on draft Action Plan 2 commenced in December 2011. Ecological appropriateness will be considered in planting decisions for carbon offsets and other factors such as the requirements of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (v.2).</p>

Integrate community health and well-being with nature reserve protection by:		
<p>5.1 Developing and implementing an ACT Nature Reserve Recreation Strategy which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifies the appropriate balance and mix of recreational opportunities for each nature reserve; • directs recreational activities to appropriate locations and encourages users to respect the environment and each other; • incorporates the Centenary Trail where appropriate; • specifically addresses track planning and management; • guides infrastructure development; • is developed in consultation with the community, in particular, reserve user groups and Park Care groups; and • aligns with the ACT Government's Strategic Plan for Sport and Active Recreation in the ACT and Region 2011-2020. # 	Agreed in Principle	<p>This recommendation is being partly addressed with the preparation of an ACT Trails Strategy and a Mountain Bike Strategy this year. These strategies target some of the main recreational users of nature reserves in the ACT. The ACT Government's <i>Strategic Plan for Sport and Active Recreation 2011-20</i> was released in 2011. Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination. Subject to availability of resources through the budget process a Nature Reserve Recreation Strategy will be prepared.</p>
<p>5.2 Improving the provision and management of appropriate recreation infrastructure in nature reserves. #</p>	Agreed in Principle	<p>Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination.</p>
Increase the protection and restoration of our nature reserves by sourcing new funding by:		
<p>6.1 Establishing the Capital Woodland and Wetland Conservation Trust and monitor its effectiveness in sourcing additional funds. #</p>	Agreed	<p>The Capital Woodlands and Wetlands Conservation Trust has been established and its effectiveness in sourcing additional funds will be monitored.</p>

6.2 Identifying new sources of funding. #	Agreed in Principle	Implementation arrangements and likely resourcing needs will require further consideration and examination. The Government will continue to explore options for funding work in nature reserves. This will include continued promotion of partnerships between Park Care groups and local businesses.
<p>6.3 Guide the management of non-government additional funds using the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expenditure must be on specific and defined projects aimed at long-term overall improvement in the environment; • projects are defined and publicly reported prior to commencement or expenditure; • additional actions above those normally funded on a regular basis; • independent and transparent allocation of funds; • monitoring, assessment and auditing of results and expenditure; and • public reporting of results and expenditure. 	Agreed in Principle	These principles are consistent with the Objects of the Capital Woodlands and Wetlands Conservation Trust. Management of trust fund monies, including the Capital Woodland and Wetland Conservation Trust, will be undertaken in accordance with best practice accounting standards and probity.