

Environment

The ACT boasts some of the most pristine natural areas in the world. Even in the heart of our suburbs, the bush is never far away. The lifestyle of Canberrans is fundamentally linked to our natural environment – our clean air, our open spaces and nature parks and our magnificent National Parks all contribute to our quality of life and community activities.

The ACT Labor Government has a strong track record of environmental leadership. We understand the urgency of the challenges that now confront us, particularly in relation to climate change, water and energy use, the generation of waste and the protection and restoration of our natural environment.

ACT Labor has significantly expanded the area of the ACT devoted to reserves – without stifling legitimate urban growth. We have done this by taking a sensible and balanced approach to the way we plan and build our city.

We have also added 1500 hectares to our reserves system, creating new areas of wilderness conservation for the benefit of future generations.

We have created the new 30-hectare *Sanctuary @ Tidbinbilla* and have begun work on a joint Management and Business Plan for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Birrigai Outdoor School, with educational programs to be centered on the new Sanctuary.

Conservation Volunteers Australia are now providing educational and interpretive services to visitors at Tidbinbilla. We have also created legislation to protect significant trees.

ACT Labor has developed conservation strategies for our most vulnerable ecosystems – our lowland woodlands, our grasslands and our aquatic ecosystems and riparian zones. We will preserve central Molonglo, habitat of the Little Eagle and the Brown Treecreeper, from development and we've invested in research into threatened species such as the Corroborree Frog.

ACT Labor has delivered 15km of new walking tracks in Canberra Nature Park and 9.5km in the Cotter Precinct. We have reinstated and rerouted 27km of walking track in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor and created three self-drive heritage trails for people to enjoy our beautiful nature areas.

ACT Labor has made the position of Commissioner for the Environment to a full-time position and given the office a new name – Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainability.

Our efforts have been recognised by leading conservation organisations, with the World Wildlife Foundation awarding the ACT a Triple A rating in their review of Australia's protected area systems.

ACT Labor has been able to do all this, and deliver much more, because we have been responsible economic managers. By maintaining budget surpluses we have been able to invest in these important programs and initiatives in order to create a greener Canberra and protect the environment for future generations.

Jon Stanhope

Chief Minister and
Minister for the Environment,
Water and Climate Change

Katy Gallagher

Deputy Chief Minister

A Proud Record of Preserving our Natural Environment

ACT Labor has built a better city and a stronger community by promoting sustainable living, where high quality of life co-exists with good environmental citizenship.

ACT Labor has ensured that the Government works in partnership with the community to protect our natural environment and preserve our Bush Capital, for the benefit of future generations.

ACT Labor has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2050, and to reduce our ecological footprint. We have also made the strong commitment to reduce waste and to manage water use responsibly.

Our Record

Since coming to office, the ACT Labor Government has:

- Increased funding for the Environment by 50%
- Added over 1500 hectares to the reserve system. This has included expanding Tidbinbilla, saving land previously earmarked for development at Goorooyarroo and Callum Brae, and protecting woodlands at East O'Malley;
- Created the stunning new 30-hectare Sanctuary @ Tidbinbilla, along with an adventure playground;
- Begun work on a joint Management and Business Plan for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Birrigai Outdoor School, with educational programs to be centred on the new Sanctuary;
- Entered into an agreement with Conservation Volunteers Australia to provide educational and interpretive services at Tidbinbilla;
- Released conservation strategies for our most vulnerable ecosystems – our lowland woodlands, our grasslands and our aquatic ecosystems and riparian zones;
- Agreed to preserve central Molonglo, habitat of the Little Eagle and the Brown Treecreeper, from development;
- Invested in 15km of new walking tracks in Canberra Nature Park and 9.5km in the Cotter Precinct, reinstated and rerouted 27km of walking track in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor and created three self-drive heritage trails;
- Enacted legislation to protect significant trees;
- Invested in a three-year program of willow removal along the Molonglo River to reinvigorate our waterways, and restore habitat for our local aquatic species;
- Implemented a strategic management plan for the Lower Cotter catchment;
- Invested in research into threatened species such as the Corroboree Frog – the first ACT Government to so invest;
- Legislated to ban the sale of declared pest plants;

- Developed a Draft Weeds Strategy, which has been made available for public consultation;
- Finalised plans for new fire trails in Namadgi National Park after extensive consultation with conservation groups;
- Elevated the position of Commissioner for the Environment to a full-time position – with a new title of Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainability;
- Been awarded a Triple A rating by the World Wildlife Foundation's review of Australia's protected area systems; and
- Shown leadership on animal welfare by insisting that all eggs purchased by ACT Government agencies be sourced from non-cage producers. We have also called for a national phase-out of traditional cage production and have made a financial offer to Pace Farms to assist them to phase-out battery egg production.

In the most recent ACT Budget 2008/09, the ACT Labor Government has:

- Committed another \$2.2 million to Tidbinbilla, with an elevated treetop walk planned for the Sanctuary and enhancements to the Aboriginal learning area.;
- Allocated \$30.8 million over four years for initiatives such as planting trees as part of the One Million Trees initiative, the urban forest replacement program and the reinvigoration of recreational areas across Canberra;
- Provided \$440,000 over four years for strategic off-reserve conservation programs;
- Funded the restoration of the Mount Majura walking trail;
- Earmarked \$1 million for the predator-free sanctuary at Mulligans Flat, to allow for regular boundary inspections, internal surveillance, eradication of foxes and cats and visitor assistance; and
- Funded the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainability to continue important Grasslands Studies to protect remnant native lowland grasslands and their ecosystems.

Moving Forward

New nature reserves

More than half the land area of the ACT is dedicated to national parks or reserves, and about three-quarters of the Territory is open space of one kind or another – including urban parks and ovals.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will bring further areas of high conservation value into our nature conservation estate.

ACT Labor will provide \$950,000 in capital funding and \$750,000 in recurrent funding to establish new nature reserves, better care for existing reserves and management of conservation values on significant areas of leased land. This would include:

- the establishment of new nature reserves at Kinlyside Woodlands and Kama South in Central Molonglo and finalising the establishment of the new reserve at East Jerrabomberra Grasslands;
- the employment of an additional ranger at Tidbinbilla and a dedicated field officer to maintain Mulligans Flat and Goorooyaroo; and
- ensuring conservation values are maintained in areas under private lease at Naas Valley lowland woodlands and other areas in Central Molonglo.

Better ecosystem management and planning

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will work with experienced community groups to share existing data and collect new data to better inform ecosystem planning and management.

Central Molonglo

Central Molonglo's grassy woodlands provide important habitat for the Brown Treecreeper, Little Eagle, pink-tailed worm lizard and many other local species. However there are pressures on this habitat that must be dealt with to ensure its sustainability in the longer term. ACT Labor will commence the regeneration of trees and other crucial ecosystem elements to improve the long-term sustainability of this habitat.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will allocate \$200,000 to support native tree and shrub regeneration on unleased land and leased land in partnership with leaseholders in Central Molonglo.

Conserving high value private land

ACT Labor will continue to work with private lessees to support conservation practices on land that is outside our reserves system. By supporting private land holders we can improve our preservation of ecosystems and create better connectivity between conservation areas.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will provide an additional \$440,000 for the management of remnant bush land under private care and will provide better support to leaseholders that are managing these areas.

One Million Trees

The ACT Labor Government has committed to an aspirational goal of planting one million trees. We acknowledge the benefits of tree planting in capturing and storing carbon, as well as assisting in the management of salinity.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will protect and restore the environment and improve its resilience through the planting of trees.

We will support Greening Australia to work with the community by providing \$1 million to replant the Lower Cotter catchment.

ACT Labor will also expand our One Million Trees Program to encourage sponsored forests at the International Arboretum. In addition, we will negotiate a tree-planting project in East Timor to re-forest cleared land and help create a sustainable forestry industry that will benefit the East Timorese economy.

A management plan for Namadgi

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will finalise the Namadgi Management Plan and explore ways in which eco-tourism opportunities can be developed to benefit Indigenous signatories to the plan.

Identifying the best eco-buys

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will invest \$155,000 to create an eco-buy program which will provide easily accessible information to assist consumers to judge what are the most environmentally-friendly products to buy.

Cleaner water leaving the ACT

ACT Labor will enlist the help of all Canberrans in the fight to reduce the increasing salinity of the water that flows from the ACT. We will provide \$460,000 over the next term to promote the benefits of choosing low sodium and phosphate products and other measures to reduce salt levels.

A better urban environment

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will commit \$50,000 to promote awareness of the health benefits of good indoor air quality. This will include advice on minimising air pollution.

A further \$50,000 will be committed to an awareness campaign that will focus on noise pollution to show how simple decisions made in installing appliances such as external air conditioning units can be made to minimise household noise.

Towards a new home for the RSPCA

The RSPCA is the most active and respected animal-welfare organisation in Australia and carries out indispensable work in the community. The RSPCA shelter in Weston cares for 4,500 domestic animals a year, along with 3500 injured or orphaned native animals.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will provide \$50,000 to fund the planning of the relocation to new premises for the RSPCA, in consultation with the Association. This is with a view to establishing a new home for the RSPCA in the next term of government.

Rabbit control across the reserve system

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will allocate \$500,000 to respond to a surge in the number of feral rabbits breeding in the 2008 spring and follow-up control. An alarming growth in the population of rabbits is being reported throughout the ACT reserve system, from Gorooyaroo and Mulligans Flat in the north through our urban nature parks to Tidbinbilla and Namadgi in the south.

These numbers are of particular concern at the beginning of spring and as we emerge from a drought cycle.

It is crucial that action is taken to reduce the potentially devastating effects that rabbits could have on our native environment if their numbers continue to grow at the current rate.