



## Final Report

# Jurisdiction Report - Australian Capital Territory

## National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation

Prepared for

*Environment Australia*

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in association with

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 What is the National Vegetation Framework?

In June 1998, ANZECC agreed to the development and implementation of the National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation (National Vegetation Framework). The intention of this policy initiative was to provide a unified, multilateral forum through which to pursue improvements to native vegetation management and monitoring.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1999, ANZECC Standing Committee on Conservation (SCC) agreed that it would be appropriate to engage an independent consultant to conduct a preliminary assessment of the jurisdictions against the draft National Vegetation Framework. A report was subsequently produced - "Native Vegetation National Overview" – which documented the key challenges for vegetation management and monitoring within each jurisdiction.

For the purpose of the NVF, eight jurisdictions were identified in Australia comprising the 7 states and territories, and the Commonwealth. Following endorsement of the NVF and the jurisdiction interim Work Plans by ANZECC in December 1999, each jurisdiction continued preparation of an interim Work Plan that is considered to be the principal means of implementing the National Vegetation Framework. The Work Plans identified the vegetation management and monitoring activities, time frames for when each activity was to occur, responsibility for implementation of the activities and indicators for measurement of success.

The native vegetation outcomes being sought in the Framework are:<sup>2</sup>

- a reversal in the long-term decline in the extent and quality of Australia's native vegetation cover by:
  - conserving native vegetation, and substantially reducing land clearing;
  - conserving Australia's biodiversity; and
  - restoring, by means of substantially increased revegetation, the environmental values and productive capacity of Australia's degraded land and water;
- conservation and, where appropriate, restoration of native vegetation to maintain and enhance biodiversity, protect water quality and conserve soil resources, including on private managed land for agriculture, forestry and urban development;
- retention and enhancement of biodiversity and native vegetation at both regional and national levels; and
- an improvement in the condition of existing native vegetation.

The more specific vegetation outcomes being sought within the context of integrated natural resource management for the ACT Work Plan are described in Section 3 below.

At the ANZECC July 2000 meeting it was agreed to publicly release the Work Plans. At the commencement of the evaluation in October 2000, the Commonwealth and ACT had publicly released their final version of the Work Plan, with interim work plans available from other jurisdictions.

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<sup>1</sup> Environment Australia, n.d , *Consultancy Brief*, Canberra.

<sup>2</sup> ANZECC, 1999, National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation, ACT.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Evaluation

At the December 1999 meeting, the ANZEC SCC noted that an independent evaluation of progress against the National Vegetation Framework and the fulfilment of Work Plan Commitments should commence mid 2000, with the report presented to the Council at the December 2000 meeting.

ANZECC identified the purpose of the evaluation was 'to assess progress against the National Framework for the Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation and fulfilment of the Work Plan commitments' (that were developed by each jurisdiction). Incorporated into the evaluation process was the additional focus of evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Work Plans for achieving long term sustainable vegetation management. The Terms of Reference for the Evaluation are provided below.

### *Terms of Reference*

#### **A. Assessment of Effectiveness of Work Plans and their Implementation**

1. Assess current vegetation management and monitoring practices in jurisdictions against those set out in the respective Work Plans and against best practice.
2. Assess anticipated long term vegetation management and monitoring outcomes against the Work Plans.
3. Assess progress by jurisdictions in meeting the Work Plan success measures within the identified timeframes.

#### **B. Propose Improvements**

4. Propose improvements to Work Plan management mechanisms that are feasible, practical and relevant to jurisdictions and take into account best practice. Proposed improvements should be within the context of National Framework objectives.
5. Suggest a process for jurisdictions to review and refine Work Plans on a continuing basis, to provide, amongst other things, for improvements in understanding of how best to achieve best practice native vegetation management.

#### **C. Propose suitable ongoing independent evaluation arrangements**

Propose a mechanism and time frame for independent evaluation of Work Plans on an ongoing basis, noting that vegetation management and monitoring activities are to be evaluated against agreed native vegetation outcomes and identified best practice.

**D. Assess progress against the National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation**

Evaluate how far actions in Work Plans enable each jurisdiction to achieve the vision and principles underpinning the National Framework especially the national goal to reverse the long-term decline of native vegetation in Australia.

The evaluation examined the performance of the jurisdiction Work Plans, from the release of NVF by ANZECC in December 1999, until September 2000. Our work examined the vegetation management and monitoring activities undertaken by the lead agencies in each jurisdiction that contribute to the progress of the Work Plan.

The review was implemented within a tight time frame to meet the reporting requirements of ANZECC. State agencies were the primary contributor to the ACT Work Plan evaluation. Other non-government stakeholders' views were also sought to contribute to the evaluation, but the timetable contributed to a reduced level of interaction by some stakeholders. A list of participants involved in this jurisdiction review is provided in Annex 4.

## 2 Evaluation Approach & Methodology

### 2.1 Evaluation Approach

A central component of the evaluation was to devise an effective method that would allow evaluation of the eight jurisdictions Work Plans in a restricted time frame, while still allowing for jurisdiction input and discussion. The following provides a description of the approach employed for the evaluation, and method used to evaluate the jurisdiction Work Plans. Copies of the supporting documents used for the evaluation are available in Annex 1-5.

The approach to the evaluation consisted of the following :

- **Team meeting to confirm evaluation approach** – all members of the team that were leading the evaluation in the various jurisdictions met over a two day period, shortly after signing of the contract. The purpose of this meeting was to ensure an evaluation approach was devised that addressed the Terms of Reference and ensure that all members of the team had an opportunity to input and understand the agreed approach to ensure consistency in data-gathering and familiarity with process.
- **Contact with Jurisdictions** – managers of each Jurisdiction evaluation directly contacted agency stakeholders to inform them of the NVF evaluation process and invite participation. A time for a stakeholder meeting to be undertaken to discuss the Work Plan was confirmed.
- **Pre-meeting Preparation** – Due to time limitations, a preliminary desk-top analysis was undertaken by the consultant team, reviewing the ACT Work Plan against a number of criteria. This information was circulated to all participants prior to the Work Plan evaluation meeting to allow for stakeholder review.
- **Jurisdiction Meeting** – a jurisdiction meeting was conducted to discuss progress of Work Plan and identify opportunities for improvement. The process used during the meeting is described in Section 2.2.
- **Draft Jurisdiction Report** - the manager for each jurisdiction evaluation prepared a draft report that documented the outcomes from the jurisdiction meeting and included points made during consultation with other stakeholders such as non-Government agencies and select interest groups external to the formal jurisdiction evaluation meeting.
- **Jurisdiction Review** –the draft jurisdiction report was then sent to all participants in the ACT Work Plan evaluation meeting for comment.
- **Jurisdiction Final Report** Comments were then incorporated into the ACT jurisdiction report and presented to Environment Australia as the Final Jurisdiction Report.

### 2.2 Evaluation method

A consistent approach was employed in each jurisdiction meeting to address the Terms of Reference. Each section is briefly described below.

### ***Session A Review Work Plan against Key Challenges***

Key Challenges were identified for each jurisdiction in the Dore Report. As these were developed prior to the Work Plans, they were presumed to be drivers for the Work Plan Actions. Therefore, to determine the effectiveness of the Work Plans, the Actions were reviewed to determine how well they address the challenges. A matrix was prepared that compared ACT key challenges with Work Plan actions and level of influence. For each Management and Monitoring Mechanism (MMM), a rating was given for the level of influence each action could have in addressing the Key Challenge for that mechanism. The matrix template with a simple worked example is shown in Annex 2.

Following discussions with the primary ACT Work Plan contact, the draft matrix was presented at the Jurisdiction meeting and revised for its validity and for the individual and collective impact of the action(s) in addressing all the key challenges listed for the Jurisdiction. Modifications to the list of Actions was made to increase the beneficial impact on the Key Challenges and applicability of the Key Challenges for their current relevance to the achievement of the outcomes listed in the NVF. Where Key Challenges have become less relevant – i.e. they have been addressed or the program has moved in a different direction; the need for contributing actions was reviewed. Where new challenges were identified these were incorporated into the Work Plan.

### ***Session B. Assessment of Work Plan Success Measures***

In order to evaluate Work Plan progress, quantification of achievements was provided against the Success Measures (or Performance Indicators) for each Work Plan activity. For each listed Success Measure, quantified information on the achievement to date was provided by the jurisdiction and further discussed during the evaluation meeting. If no progress was made, this was also noted and discussed during the meeting (what was the reason for lack of progress, what needed to change etc.) Where performance indicators were deemed inappropriate, these were reviewed and amended during the evaluation meeting.

### ***Session C Appropriateness of Work Plan Activities against the NVF Management and Monitoring Outcomes***

Our initial reading of the NVF, the Dore report and the individual Work Plans suggested that the relationship between the management mechanisms in the Work Plans and the Key Challenges is generally straightforward. However the relationship with the Desired Outcomes in the NVF was less so.

Our approach to assessing this relationship was to test how well the individual actions in the Work Plans contributed to the Desired Outcomes using another matrix. A template for the matrix is shown in Annex 3.

Each action for each Management and Monitoring Mechanism (listed across the X-axis) was assessed in regards to contribution to the NVF Desired Outcome, listed on the Y-axis. The rating criteria used in Section A (High/Medium/Low Influence) was applied in Section C.

Recognising that a desk-top assessment was undertaken subjectively, and relying on limited information, the jurisdiction evaluation meeting was used to review the matrix for its validity and the implications for achievement of the NVF outcomes. The jurisdiction meeting was then used to modify the list of Actions to improve contribution to the achievement of the NVF Desired Outcomes where necessary.

### ***Session D Best Management Practices***

A key criteria of the Terms of Reference was to determine if and how Best Management Practices (BMP) are being applied when undertaking vegetation Management and Monitoring Mechanisms and Activities in each jurisdiction.

The National Vegetation Framework identifies a range of BMPs against the seven Management and Monitoring Mechanisms. Due to the time limitations associated with the evaluation, the URS/Griffin nrm team nominated one Management and Monitoring Mechanism per jurisdiction that will be investigated in depth from a Best Management Practice perspective during the jurisdiction meeting, rather than the entire set of MMM's. This process will, across the jurisdictions, address the range of BMP's identified in the ANZECC framework for the nominated mechanism, and be reported as a Case Study in the relevant jurisdiction report.

For the ACT Jurisdiction, the BMP of Incentives was used as the Case Study example. The ANZECC framework BMP's were used as the main guide to discuss Incentives during the Jurisdiction evaluation meeting. This information was then compiled into a 'snap shot' of BMP for inclusion into the Jurisdiction report.

***Session E Visioning - evaluation of overall progress and likely long term impact of the National Vegetation Framework***

This session in the Jurisdiction evaluation meeting looked collectively at the Visions in the Work Plans to assess how effectively the mechanisms being implemented now, will achieve those Visions in future. Plausible process methods were used for this assessment. In using plausible process, you work back from a major goal or vision to identify what would be needed now to achieve the goal or vision within anticipated timeframes.

For instance, if an overall goal is to better integrate management of native vegetation management, you might expect the work plans to include management and monitoring measures which will effectively support integrated management. If an overall goal is to attain a net gain in extent and quality of native vegetation, then the work plans ought to include measures which are likely to have the effect of controlling clearing and/or compensating with equivalent plantings within the anticipated timeframe of the Framework.

From this type of assessment, number of key indicators of overall progress were identified and analysed to evaluate the likely long-term impact of the National Vegetation Framework.

### 3 ACT Work Plan Output

#### 3.1 ACT Work Plan– Setting the Scene

A key driver of vegetation management in the ACT, is the 1998 ACT Nature Conservation Strategy (NCS) that has defined a series of native vegetation objectives, actions and performance indicators. This strategy preceded the National Vegetation Framework, and has provided a distinct advantage for ACT vegetation stakeholders having a clear understanding of the issues and future directions of vegetation management in the ACT. prior to NVF development. The overarching vision of the ACT is to have an aware and responsible community that is actively involved in the protection and conservation of biological diversity and the management of ecological threats.

The key elements of the native vegetation vision are:

- *To conserve native vegetation remnants:* Significant native vegetation remnants will be identified and conserved, and landholder and wider community participation promoted in the identification of areas of remnant vegetation and their subsequent management
- *To manage the clearing of native vegetation so that the biodiversity conservation requirements are not compromised:* This will be achieved by assessing land development proposals for environmental implications, and ensuring that land use activities or proposals that involve the clearing of naturally occurring native vegetation in conservation networks, habitat corridors or other sites of ecological significance are subject to an assessment and approval process directed at protecting nature conservation values
- *To reduce the impact of ACT firewood demand on declining woodland values in NSW:* This will be achieved by promoting the use of alternative fuel sources.
- *To develop a nature conservation network linking protected areas, habitat corridors and significant vegetation remnants:* The main action to achieve this will be to prepare a master reference document as a planning tool and management guide.

Two core pieces of legislation underpin vegetation management in the ACT. They are the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* and the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*.

A Territory Plan is also in place that defines land use zones and associated development and use policy. The Territory Plan provides the mechanism for reservation of Public Land for a range of environmental purposes. The ACT and Sub-region Planning Strategy outlines a long-term planning strategy to guide development and resource management within the ACT and sub-region. It is a collaborative product of the Commonwealth, State, Territory and five Local governments of the ACT and region.

Most of the responsibilities for administering the Nature Conservation Act (and subsequently the Strategy) falls to Environment ACT within the ACT Department of Urban Services (DUS). There are also a number of other advisory and community groups and local government committees that influence the management and monitoring of native vegetation in the ACT.

The ACT commenced developing its Work Plan in August 1999. An interim Work Plan was tabled at the 30 September ANZECC National Framework workshop, with a subsequent iteration endorsed by ANZECC in December 1999. Consultation on the

interim Work Plan was within ACT Government agencies. Consultation on the final Work Plan was extended to Ministerial advisory committees, namely the Nature Conservation Sub-committee of the Environment Advisory Committee, and the Flora and Fauna Committee. Membership of these committees comprises a mix of both expert and stakeholder representation. General community consultation was not undertaken.

A final ACT Work Plan was published by Environment ACT in June 2000. The published Work Plan was circulated generally to key stakeholders within Government and the general community.

### 3.2 Linking the Work Plan with Key Challenges

Key Challenges for the ACT jurisdiction were identified and documented in the Dore report in 1999. During the ACT jurisdiction meeting, stakeholders reviewed these key challenges to determine if they were still relevant. Annotated results are provided below in Table 1 with a full description available in Annex 2.

**Table 1 : ACT Key Vegetation Challenges and relationship with Work Plan activities**

<b>Management &amp; Monitoring Mechanism</b>	<b>Key Challenges*</b>	<b>Relationship between Key Challenges &amp; Work Plans</b>
Planning and Assessment	Combining data sources	H
	Digitising information and accessibility	H
	<i>Nature Conservation Network Master Plan completed</i>	H
	Continuing participation in regional biodiversity survey programs	M-H
	<i>Maintain proactive mode in relation to biodiversity status assessment</i>	H
Reserve System	Maintaining nature conservation standards in competing resource demand environment	H
	Management priorities determined strategically rather than reactively	H
	Use opportunities to apply CAR principles	M
	Increase knowledge base of resources and their management requirements	M
Communication & Capacity Building	<i>Continued clarification of role in community education and/or support of community groups</i>	M
	Focus publicly funded workforce supporting rural lessees	M
	<i>Facilitate and coordinate research and development knowledge transfer to, and between groups, leasees and volunteer workforce</i>	M
Incentives	<i>Use the new rural land policy system as an opportunity to deliver native vegetation outcomes</i>	M-H
	Effective implementation of the Rural Conservation Fund	M-H
	Maintaining effective environmental extension and grant programs	M
Regulatory Arrangements	<i>Ensuring Land Management Agreements include workable nature conservation provisions</i>	H
<b>Management &amp; Monitoring Mechanism</b>	<b>Key Challenges*</b>	<b>Relationship between Key Challenges &amp; Work Plans</b>
	Ensuring the Land Development Assessment process takes into account ecological concerns relating to native vegetation and other issues	H

Monitoring & Evaluation	Develop a biodiversity monitoring program to follow baseline biodiversity status assessment	M
	Establish an efficient M&E monitoring mechanism for private landholder compliance with LMA system	M
	Implementing M&E to enable updating of park management priorities and directions	H
	Use consistent and cost-effective SoE indicators to inform stakeholders of condition of native vegetation, environmental pressure and allow for response system	M-H
	Ensuring M&E results inform strategic landuse plans for the ACT	M

\**Key challenges in italics, indicate that the stakeholder group revised this key challenge.*

A number of key challenges were amended to take into account progress over the last few years. Most were amended rather than removed to reflect that these functions or responsibilities remain, but in a maintenance or proactive role, rather than identifying completely 'new' challenges.

Some key challenges did not appear to have a strong link with the Actions identified in the Work Plan. The key challenge and reason for lack of direct linking actions in the Work Plan are provided below.

<i>Key Challenge</i>	<i>Stakeholder response</i>
Increase knowledge base of resources and their management requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognised as an issue, but not as important as others because many areas already in reserve and not at such great risk</li> <li>any new reserves have concentrated effort on management(risk)</li> </ul>
Continued clarification of role in community education and/or support of community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each of the reserve areas has strategy developed/or developing – ACT maintaining process</li> </ul>
Facilitate and coordinate research and development knowledge transfer to, and between groups, leasees and volunteer workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cannot expect high activity output – can only supply information do not have individual implementation control</li> </ul>
Use consistent and cost-effective SoE indicators to inform stakeholders of condition of native vegetation, environmental pressure and allow for response system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real need to develop and apply consistent indicators so that change can be measured</li> </ul>
Ensuring M&E results inform strategic landuse plans for the ACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While comprehensive M&amp;E not in place, significant progress has been made in targeting areas subject to development planning.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Measuring Work Plan Success

During the Work Plan meeting, the ACT representatives provided information on individual Success Measures that were identified for each Action in the Work Plan. This also provided opportunity for the Success Measures to be 'tested' for ease with which to measure the various activities in the Work Plan. Some of the Success Measures were amended and new measures developed to accompany new activities.

For most of the information provided it would appear that the ACT are progressing well against identified targets. This information is provided in Annex 4.

### 3.4 Linking Work Plan outputs with National Vegetation Framework Desired Outcomes

When examining all jurisdiction Work Plans, it was noted that direct links between each Work Plan and the outcomes of the National Vegetation Framework had not been formalised. A first attempt to link the ACT Work Plan with the NVF desired outcomes and subsequently the overarching NVF goals, demonstrated that the current emphasis of the ACT Work Plan Activities is focussed on delivering the following outcomes:

- biodiversity conservation;
- land productivity; and
- natural and cultural heritage management.

Areas where there appeared to be a poor relationship with the NVF outcomes was discussed. The areas where there was a low correlation between Work Plan Activities and the NVF outcomes included:

- hydrology;
- sustainable land use;
- climate change; and to a lesser extent
- indigenous peoples.

A summary comparison of Work Plan activities against NVF Outcomes is provided in Annex 3. There were some concerns expressed about the lack of, or incorrect definition of NVF outcomes, although the definitions provided in the NVF Work Plan were used by the ACT representatives for the purpose of the review.

### 3.5 Best Management Practices – Incentives

The 1999 stocktake report identified issues in the ACT rural leasehold estate as one of the pressing challenges in native vegetation management. In March 2000, the ACT government launched a new rural policy to provide a better basis for sustainable rural enterprises and to secure a high level of protection of natural values in rural areas.

The new policy includes the availability of 99 year leases in predetermined areas and removes pre-existing uncertainty regarding tenure as current leases do not extend beyond 2005 and are of considerably shorter term if renewed in their current form. For new leases, it requires the development of approved Land Management Agreements for sustainable land use.

The policy is supported by a range of incentives to encourage participation and to promote the concepts of partnerships in land management between the government and lessees in relation to land management and conservation:

- ***Concessions for converting to long term leases.*** Lessees in eligible areas are encouraged to buy out the land rental component of their new leases at a concessional rate and to purchase any government owned improvements on the land. In return for the concession, the government will require measures for care of the natural environment. Lessees will be required under new amendments to the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991, to develop and regularly review Land Management Agreements. The Agreements will need to address features having special conservation value.
- ***Rural Conservation Fund*** is a financial assistance scheme for off-reserve biodiversity conservation. It is designed to fund projects on rural leases. There may be cross

compliance obligations placed on landholder through Land Management Agreements, to maintain the outcomes of the investment. The emphasis is on long term environmental outcomes. Greening Australia is a partner in this scheme.

- ***ACT Environmental Grants Program*** is designed to assist community groups to deliver goods and services that provide important environmental benefits to the ACT and surrounding areas, focussing on broader community benefits.

These new incentives schemes embody many of the best practice principles set out in the NVF:

- The rules are simple and clear.
- The objectives are clearly defined.
- Administration systems are relatively uncomplicated.
- Voluntary participation is encouraged through a range of measures- from binding agreements to grant programs, and there is scope for cross compliance to protect government investments.
- There is scope for targeting wider community benefits.

The potential best practice challenges for the ACT in the new rural policy include:

- Providing the range of technical advice, education and information required by landholders to meet their sustainable land management obligations.
- Targeting high priority ecosystems to encourage higher rates of participation in these areas perhaps through higher levels of incentives.
- There is no explicit mention of incentives for the development of sustainable rural industries- eg native seed collection, native nurseries to encourage these over less sustainable land uses.

### **3.6 Evaluating the ACT Work Plan against NVF Vision and Goals**

Use of plausible process was a positive way of attempting to define how far the ACT had progressed in achieving the overarching goals and vision of the NVF. It also proved a useful tool for identifying the broader issues that may limit achievement of the goals. The outputs from the plausible process are provided in Annex 5. In summary, the response to the four goals and the overarching vision are provided in Table 2 below.

**Table 2 : Achievement of Work Plan towards the NVF goals**

NVF Goal	Major Achievements Or Barriers
A reversal in the long term decline in the extent and quality of native vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lot of planning activity already undertaken and likely to be implemented</li> <li>• complex web of planning initiatives underway that difficulties trying to get be aware of, and integrate them within existing activities</li> <li>• enormous access to broad skills and knowledge – CSIRO, ANU, library etc are all excellent sources of information. Sometimes there is limited people capacity (rural extension and organisation)</li> <li>• slowly achieving sound monitoring and evaluation framework. Currently putting a structure in place. Aware that monitoring can be very costly and onerous, but working to develop systems that are simpler and cost-effective</li> <li>• limited resources mean that rigour and statistically valid monitoring is compromised, but always trying to work toward best management practice monitoring and evaluation</li> </ul>
Conservation and where appropriate, restoration of native vegetation to maintain and enhance biodiversity, protect water quality and conserve soil resources, including on private land managed for agriculture, forestry and urban development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perception that the ACT is probably doing this better than other jurisdictions, remembering that 54% of the ACT is already under reserve. Cutting down of trees reasonably well controlled. Clearing of native vegetation (remnant vegetation) of area greater than 0.5 hectares under statutory control. Uncertain if remnant vegetation applies to secondary growth</li> <li>• Greening Australia have programs underway that target revegetation on private land, with support also provided in the forms of the Rural Conservation Fund, Environmental Grants Program and other NHT initiatives</li> <li>• under Land Management Agreements, there is provision for revegetation activities</li> <li>• programs and management in place, except for forestry owned native vegetation land (5,000 hectares) - do not have management plans</li> <li>• ACT has established firewood strategy. Includes encouraging the use of a mix of plantation timber and native wood, plus a host of other actions. The ACT strategy is informing the national firewood strategy currently being developed</li> <li>• still need to get a strategic position on monitoring and evaluation in terms of comprehensiveness. Current M &amp; E is being undertaken well, but limited by resources. Not able to easily identify change to vegetation communities over the long term</li> <li>• Difficult to document revegetation activities does not appear to be well coordinated to allow for direct monitoring and evaluation. Being addressed via database development.</li> </ul>
Retention and enhancement of biodiversity and native vegetation at both regional and national levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comprehensive and effective policies and measures are in place</li> <li>• do not have vegetation targets – 54% of the ACT is already under cover; the targets need to be set in regional context with the New South Wales jurisdiction</li> <li>• targeted but not comprehensive programs for monitoring and assessment. Currently examines sites of risk such as threatened species and plant communities</li> </ul>
An improvement in the condition of existing native vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land Management Agreements for all rural leases – no covenants included in Land Management Agreements. Native vegetation condition is specifically addressed in LMA's; part of reserve planning; and legislative controls are quite strong on public land (unleased land to include roadside vegetation)</li> <li>• not going to achieve outcomes everywhere, but programs and policies are in place (eg. rural conservation fund, weed strategy and feral animal strategy currently being developed)</li> <li>• targeted, not comprehensive monitoring and evaluation in place</li> </ul>

## 4 Evaluation of progress against Work Plan Commitments and the National Framework

### 4.1 Assessment of the effectiveness ACT Work Plan and its Implementation

#### *Are Management and Monitoring Mechanisms in Work Plans effective?*

When considering the effectiveness of the Work Plan in dealing with the Key Challenges, initial observations indicate that the ACT Work Plan is progressing well. Determining the level of association with the overarching National Vegetation Framework is difficult due to the lack of formal linkages that were identified during the initial preparation of the Work Plan.

Fortunately for the ACT the earlier preparation and development of the ACT Nature Conservation Strategy provided a set of vegetation objectives, indicators and actions that had already resulted in agreed activities that provided vegetation management and monitoring direction when the NVF and Work Plan preparation occurred. The ACT Nature Conservation Strategy has effectively provided a layer that has injected a level of strategy into the development of the Work Plan rather than a loose set of activities, and also provided a linking document, where the NCS vegetation objectives have some commonality with the NVF objectives. The strength of this approach is apparent when compared with other jurisdictions where the layer between the management and monitoring mechanisms is missing and Work Plans reflect a series of actions packed together under specific headings, but lacking strategic focus and integration.

On closer examination of the Work Plan management and monitoring mechanisms, most activities nominated under the different mechanisms reflected a close correlation with the core vegetation issues in the ACT. Aside from the NCS, factors that may have contributed to this high level of influence of actions are primarily related to two core management and monitoring mechanisms.

- Planning and Assessment – a strong level of planning arrangements had already been developed and implemented in the ACT. Coupled with a smaller area (relative to other jurisdictions) over which to apply planning requirements has meant that the role of the ACT is largely maintenance and fine-tuning, rather than initiation of any new policies related to native vegetation management or clearance controls.
- Reserves – similarly, the existing planning system of the ACT has resulted in 54% of the ACT already in reserve. Management and monitoring mechanisms should be reflecting the ongoing management and enhancement of these areas.

In both instances, it could be argued that the ‘difficult’ process of enabling new legislation and potentially effecting institutional change has occurred and the ongoing management and monitoring is easier to manage and implement.

Management and monitoring mechanisms that demonstrated a level of weakness that could ultimately compromise the effectiveness of the Work Plan were identified primarily in the area of Monitoring and Evaluation, and to a lesser degree Communication and Capacity Building.

- Monitoring and Evaluation – identified as a weakness in the key challenge process and also the plausible process this lower level of correlation is a result of the lack of a strategic monitoring and evaluation plan, although it is noted that the ACT are conscious of this limitation and are working to develop this area. An issue that was raised on more than one occasion indicated concerns that monitoring and evaluation is

targeted to specific communities and not comprehensive. In addition, the lack of an agreed set of multi-purpose indicators has meant that there is a lack of consistency of monitoring and evaluation information.

- **Communication and Capacity Building** – The ACT perceive that the communication and capacity mechanism is related to delivery of information. The medium rating ascribed to this mechanism is related to a perception that ultimately people cannot be forced to change their behaviour. Hence most of their activities were identified as having only a medium influence on changing attitudes toward vegetation management as they can only provide information and not necessarily change behaviour. The use of regulatory frameworks such as Land Management Agreements however, suggest that using an appropriate mix of legislation, incentives and communication can strengthen this type of approach and associated mechanisms. This is an area that the ACT stakeholders should review carefully.

### ***Does the ACT Work Plan address the long-term national vegetation outcomes?***

As already described above, the earlier development of the NCS provided a focus for vegetation management in the ACT. Although not specifically related to the long-term outcomes of the NVF, there is still a level of correlation that has resulted in the Work Plan being relatively well focused and strategic and consequently addressing the broader goals and outcomes of the NVF.

By making a number of assumptions in association with key stakeholders based on the Activities in the Work Plan it was clear that activities primarily addressed the biodiversity, land productivity and natural and cultural heritage outcomes identified in the NVF.

This is to be anticipated because the lead agency for Work Plan development was Environment ACT, which traditionally has a focus of biodiversity, reserve management and other natural heritage and cultural issues. To further support this observation, the outcomes that could be identified as the secondary benefits of native vegetation management such as hydrology benefits and soil and water outcomes were rated slightly lower in the ACT plan. This is also a reflection of the scale of these types of issues in the ACT (eg. according to stakeholders interviewed, the ACT has assessed and identified that soil erosion is not a major issue in the ACT) that accounts for the lower focus in the Work Plan.

By close examination of the NVF outcomes it was clear however that the lack of clearly stated and recognised links between the NVF and Work Plan meant that measuring progress was difficult, and an area that would require further investigation for long term monitoring.

### ***Management and monitoring mechanisms – are they best practice?***

To effectively assess if Best Management Practices are being employed by the ACT jurisdiction, an evaluation process needs to incorporate an element of on-ground measurement at the scale where the outcome is most likely to have the most significant impact. Due to time limitations when undertaking this evaluation, assessment of BMPs was restricted to one management and monitoring mechanism. The lead agency supplied an example of BMP that is currently being implemented as part of the Incentives mechanism and responded to some additional questions during the Work Plan meeting. This information is provided in Section 3.5.

ACT representatives also indicated that they are comfortable utilising Greening Australia to augment delivery of off-reserve extension and information services that theoretically

should encourage the use of BMPs given that Greening Australia specialise in vegetation establishment and management. It was acknowledged that although the capacity of the ACT work force is relatively low, there are options to access a large field of vegetation expertise via the Universities, CSIRO and other specialist institutions that should encourage the use of best management practice information relating to vegetation management and monitoring.

The case study of incentives found that many of the best management practices outlined in the NVF were embodied in the new ACT policy for rural lands. The weaknesses relate primarily to resources available to ACT agencies to meet their obligations in the provision of technical support and information to landholders. This aspect of cross compliance incentive schemes is commonly underestimated but is critical to achieving real outcomes on the ground. Another area of concern may be the scope within the range of incentive schemes to specifically target high vegetation value areas, and sustainable land uses.

## 4.2 Proposed Improvements to ACT Work Plan

### *What improvements need to be put into place to improve the ACT Work Plan?*

The ACT Work Plan went through a useful period of review during the Work Plan meeting. A revised copy of the Work Plan incorporating amended Key Challenges, additional activities and some altered success measures are included in Annex 4. Given the time availability however, it would be appropriate if the ACT group went through an additional period of review that incorporated the following:

- *Check key challenges with the broader community* – native vegetation management is not just the sole responsibility of the ACT government agencies, even though the Work Plan is agency led. Given the size of the ACT, there is an opportunity to expand the review of the ACT Work Plan and incorporate community stakeholder views, creating awareness and ownership of the Work Plan during this process.
- *Review actions to ensure that they are focused and targeted to the NCS and NVF outcomes* – The lack of explicit links mean that it is difficult to undertake a consistent review of how the ACT Work Plan is performing relative to the NVF desired outcomes. It may be possible to improve this link by strengthening of the objectives and success measures of the NCS and Work Plan, and formalising how they link with the NVF through the use of key indicators.
- *Develop success measures that reflect all of the key criteria of successful indicators* – following confirmation of the key challenges and identification of key actions, the success measures need to be reviewed. A few of the Success Measures identified in the Work Plan are still lacking in terms of their clarity of measurement, or if they are achieved will not necessarily result in positive vegetation management and monitoring. (ie adequate facilitation and coordination resources, grant funding program continues). Ideally, performance indicators<sup>3</sup>:
  - relate directly to project objectives;
  - focus on outcomes, not inputs or outputs;
  - provide a measurable assessment of the project outcomes;
  - are directly attributable to the impact of the project and are not overly influenced by external factors;
  - can be quickly, easily and cheaply assessed; and

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<sup>3</sup> NCOSS (Council of Social Service of New South Wales) 1992. *Performance Indicators for Community Organisations*. Revised edition. Sydney in J Woodhill and L. Robins 1998. *Participatory Evaluation for Landcare and Catchment Groups – A guide for facilitators*. Greening Australia. ACT

- show trends over time.

A quick review of the ACT success measures demonstrates that application of these principals could assist in strengthening the indicators, and consequently provide a Work Plan that can provide information on level of achievement.

- *Undertake a more thorough review of the revised Work Plan to check targets, actions and performance indicators.* This process was commenced during the evaluation, but given the volume of information that was reviewed and time available, it would be advantageous if the ACT undertook a formalised process of review that expanded agency and community understanding, involvement, and subsequently ownership of the ACT Work Plan.

### 4.3 Jurisdiction Progress Assessed against the National Vegetation Framework

#### **Will the current ACT Work Plan achieve the National Vegetation Framework Outcomes?**

In its current form, the ACT Work Plan has some issues that may compromise ability to deliver on the goals and outcome of the National Vegetation Framework. In summary this includes:

- mechanisms to allow for coordination of agency activities to maintain a strategic approach to addressing native vegetation issues in the ACT;
- clear definition of links between the ACT Work Plan and the NVF; and
- need to strengthen monitoring and reporting of effectiveness of Work Plan activities.

The stakeholders involved in the evaluation are aware of these issues, and have for the most part identified activities in the current Work Plan that seek to address these issues. In terms of achieving the overarching goal of ‘reversing vegetation decline’ the regulatory processes are in place in the ACT for this goal to be achieved, although the management and monitoring mechanisms are not in place to determine if this is the case, particularly in relation to vegetation condition.

Use of the plausible process matrix supports this assessment (Table 2). Examination of the four overarching goals of the NVF demonstrated that the processes were in place to achieve all four goals, provided that the issues identified above are addressed.

In summary, the ACT Work Plan has a series of activities in place that if implemented could achieve the four long-term objectives of the NVF Work Plan, although a time frame to achieve all four goals was not expressed by the ACT.

### 4.4 Proposed Ongoing Independent Evaluation Arrangements

#### *How should the ACT Work Plan be independently monitored in the long-term?*

Given the lack of clarity with the NVF desired outcomes and formal links between the NVF and Work Plan, this issue will need to be resolved at a national level before an appropriate approach can be confirmed. However, it is proposed that the following principles are incorporated into the evaluation approach:

- *Use of desktop review and on-ground audit* – undertaking an evaluation purely based on review of information provided by agencies can result in an incomplete evaluation. While the Work Plan is primarily an agency document, there is an assumption that a number of the activities implemented through the Work Plan will result in vegetation

management changes implemented by other stakeholders (ie Landcare Groups, farmers, community groups). It is important that those delivering the end outcomes are incorporated into the evaluation process. An ongoing review process should incorporate a combination of on-ground review and desktop.

- *Bi-annual independent review* - given the level of energy required by all stakeholders to undertake an efficient review, it would be appropriate that independent reviews are taken on a biannual basis. There is no reason why an internal review – particularly assessment of key issues, progress against success measured could not be incorporated by the jurisdiction into annual management and monitoring activities.
- *Involve the broader community in the review* – As already highlighted, although predominantly an agency plan, the actions incorporate a number of other stakeholders who implement the outputs of the agency Work Plan. It would be logical to extend the review to incorporate those who are interested or involved from the broader community. This will also act a way of increasing awareness about the objectives of vegetation management in the ACT and create ownership.

## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The ACT Work Plan is progressing well and is likely to be a reflection of the pre planning that occurred prior to the implementation of the NVF and the Work Plan. In addition the smaller area appears to have facilitated the application of vegetation legislation and ongoing management. Due to the NCS it would appear that relative to some other jurisdictions that the ACT Plan demonstrates a level of coordination and integration of activities that is not so apparent in other jurisdiction Work Plans. The ACT still has opportunities to further develop the Work Plan to move from a strategy that appears to have a primary function of summarising current vegetation activities, and moving to a process that drives vegetation management in the ACT.

- *Lack of explicit links between the NVF desired outcomes and ACT Work Plan* – this is not only a problem confined to the ACT jurisdiction. It would appear that jurisdiction Work Plans were not developed with the overarching NVF desired outcomes in mind. The existence of the ACT Nature Conservation Strategy prior to the development of the ACT Work Plan appears to have been useful in developing a reasonably well-coordinated approach to vegetation management and monitoring in the ACT. However, if the ACT Work Plan is to remain focussed and clearly address the NVF goals, then the ACT vegetation managers will need to consider how their existing Work Plan clearly addresses the NVF desired outcomes.

***Recommendation 1 : Formalise links between the National Vegetation Framework Desired Vegetation Outcomes and the Work Plans, once the overarching issues of clarity of NVF outcomes has been addressed.***

- *The overarching NVF desired outcomes lack clarity, thereby impeding ACT Work Plan measurement* – The NVF outcomes were viewed as broad and lacking clear definition that would allow for the ACT Work Plan outputs and outcomes to be easily linked with NVF outcomes.

***Recommendation 2 : ANZECC should review the NVF Desired Outcomes to ensure that performance can be measured against them.***

- *Monitoring and evaluation is targeted, not comprehensive* - As part of the review, it was acknowledged by stakeholders that existing monitoring and evaluation is fragmented and primarily focused on targeted, rather than comprehensive assessment of vegetation condition and cover in the ACT. This is not uncommon when funding and resource availability is limited. Development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks that are comprehensive is a positive long-term goal for the ACT. In the interim, targeted monitoring is appropriate provided it is assessing the critical targets.

• ***Recommendation 3 : Review the existing mechanisms to ensure that the priority areas and issues are incorporated into ACT vegetation monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Where possible, expand mechanisms to provide a more comprehensive assessment of extent and condition of native vegetation.***

- *Use the ACT Work Plan to develop strategic actions that effect change* - some of the activities identified in the ACT Work Plan are dependent on other stakeholders implementing outputs. While it may be the perception that this is not the role of the ACT agencies - particularly with the Communication and Capacity Building mechanism (ie ‘you can give people information, but it does not mean they will use it)

- the role of the ACT Work Plan should be to provide opportunity to consider how to package vegetation management and monitoring information to initiate change. It should be noted that the ACT land management agreements are an example of using a mix of mechanisms to encourage change. This is the type of function that the ACT Work Plan should play. It is important that these initiatives are monitored to ensure that the planned outcomes are being achieved.

***Recommendation 4: Achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness by developing mechanisms to ensure coordination of agency activities, to ensure a strategic approach is maintained within the Work Plan.***

- *Generate community involvement and ownership* - The independent evaluation was the first attempt to assess the Work Plans since inception. Most stakeholders who participated in this process indicated that this was a useful process. The facilitators of the meeting perceived that this brief review, contributed to improved understanding and ownership of the ACT Work Plan and NVF. Given time limitations and issues identified in this evaluation, it would be useful to implement the proposed changes and then undertake another brief review to confirm revised ACT Work Plan objectives and outcomes, and link these with the NVF outcomes. This could be managed by Environment ACT in the form of a community consultation process.

***Recommendation 5: Undertake a final review of the Work Plan that incorporates broader community stakeholders who have a role of vegetation management and the elements identified in ongoing evaluation.***

## Glossary

<b>Abbreviation/Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AFFA	Agriculture Fisheries Forestry - Australia
ANZECC	Australia New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council
BRS	Bureau of Resource Sciences
EA	Environment Australia
NCS	Nature Conservation Strategy
NVF	National Vegetation Framework
SCC	Standing Committee on Conservation
TOR	Terms of Reference
WP	Work Plan

## **Annex 1**

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# **Original ACT Work Plan**

ENVIRONMENT **ACT**

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE  
MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF  
AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE VEGETATION

**ACT Work Plan**

July 2000



AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

## Foreword

*The National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation* is an initiative of the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC). The Framework provides a vehicle through which to implement the goal of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to reverse the long-term decline in the quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation cover. It was launched as a public document in March 2000.

A key element of the National Vegetation Framework is that each jurisdiction will prepare a Work Plan. Work Plans address each of the mechanisms identified in the Framework applicable to individual jurisdictions that are required to achieve 'best practice' native vegetation management. They are considered to be the principal means of implementing the objectives of the National Vegetation Framework. ANZECC has agreed to publicly release Commonwealth, State and Territory Work Plans. This is the ACT Work Plan.

Performance against Work Plans will be used to monitor ongoing implementation of the National Vegetation Framework. An independent evaluation of the Framework and the fulfilment of Work Plan commitments will be undertaken, commencing in the second half of 2000. Comment on this inaugural ACT Work Plan is welcomed.

A summary Fact Sheet of the National Vegetation Framework is attached to this Work Plan.

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# NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE VEGETATION

## A.C.T. WORK PLAN

### Introduction

Primary responsibility for land use planning and management in the ACT falls within a single Government portfolio—the Department of Urban Services. The Commonwealth retains management and planning authority for specified lands.

There is no freehold land in the ACT. Where naturally occurring native vegetation occurs on leasehold land (typically a rural primary production enterprise) protection may be provided through lease provisions and planning or nature conservation controls. Over 50% of the ACT is reserved for environmental conservation as national park or nature reserve. The urban fabric of Canberra contains significant native vegetation assets in public open space, road and service easements, and, to a lesser extent, occupied land. These values are complemented by extensive landscape plantings of both native and exotic species.

The *Nature Conservation Act 1980* protects native flora and fauna, and provides management authority for national parks and nature reserves. Native vegetation is protected on all unleased land and threatened species are protected on all land. On leased rural land, native trees may not be damaged, felled or removed from the land except in accordance with specified conditions. Broadacre clearing of native vegetation is generally not an issue in the ACT—the priority area of conservation effort is providing for the management and protection of remnant vegetation on occupied land.

The *Planning and Land Management Act 1988* (Cwth) establishes the Territory Plan. The Territory Plan contains goals for the conservation of biological resources. It sets out general principles and policies, as well as objectives, controls and policies for land uses. The Plan also prescribes classes of defined decisions requiring mandatory preliminary assessment, including the removal of more than 0.5 ha of remnant vegetation. The *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* (ACT) specifies procedures for environmental impact assessment and management objectives for public land

Leased rural land is administered under the provisions of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act. New rural leases require development of a Land Management Agreement whereby land management and nature conservation issues are identified and sustainable management measures agreed. The Land Management Agreement process is the preferred mechanism for identifying protective measures for remnant vegetation on leased rural land. The Rural Conservation Fund provides financial assistance with conservation works on leased rural land.

The ACT Nature Conservation Strategy provides a framework for a coordinated and strategic approach to the maintenance of biodiversity. It establishes a number of initiatives relevant to the conservation of native vegetation. The ACT and Sub-region Planning Strategy outlines a long-term planning strategy to guide development and resource management within the ACT and sub-region. The Integrated Catchment Management Framework for the ACT reinforces the importance of intergovernmental cooperation and a partnership with the community if goals for sustainable natural resource management are to be achieved. In recognition of its size and biogeographic relationship with NSW, a regional approach to planning and management strategies is an important ingredient of success.

Despite the extensive nature conservation estate, not all ecosystems are adequately represented. Significant woodland and grassland communities in particular may occur as fragmented remnants outside the reserve system that continue to be subject to threat from urban development or incompatible rural land use. Reservation is neither practicable nor preferred as a protection option for most of the vegetation of concern. The main management tools are systematic application of off-reserve conservation techniques for rural lands and responsible urban planning and open space management.

The ACT Work Plan identifies significant initiatives and established programs being undertaken in the ACT which are relevant to the conservation of native vegetation. Natural Heritage Trust support is a feature of several programs. The National Framework will inform planning and management directions.

## ACT WORK PLAN – JULY 2000

	Management Mechanisms	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
	<b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities of Governments</b>	<p>Primary responsibility for land use planning and management in the ACT lies with the Department of Urban Services.</p> <p>Environment ACT is the conservation arm of Government within Urban Services. Environment ACT manages the bulk of the nature conservation estate directly and coordinates delivery of off-reserve conservation programs. Canberra Urban Parks and Places has carriage of supporting programs in the urban environment. Planning and Land Management group administers the <i>Territory Plan</i> and the <i>Land (Planning and Environment Act) 1991</i>.</p> <p>The Commonwealth retains management and planning authority for land defined as <i>National</i>. Substantial biodiversity values are present on broadacre areas of National Land and Memorandums of Understanding between Territory and Commonwealth agencies are in place to provide for their conservation.</p>			3
	Community involvement in program delivery	Maintain support for community-based consultative forums and on-ground action groups that address ecologically sustainable land management issues. Examples include Landcare and Parkcare groups, Greening Australia, and the Conservation Council for the South-east Region and Canberra.	Environment ACT, Canberra Urban Parks and Places, community-based stakeholders	Continuing programs	Facilitation and coordination resources maintained; continuing community participation
	Expert reference and consultative forums	Maintain support for expert reference and consultative forums that provide advice on nature conservation issues. Examples include the Environment Advisory Committee, its sub-committees, and the Flora and Fauna Committee.	Environment ACT	Continuing programs	Adequate facilitation and coordination resources
	District implementation plans	Develop Implementation Plans for land management districts, to address in a coordinated way the range of vegetation management commitments identified in Reserve management plans and Action Plans for threatened species and communities.	Environment ACT	10/99 continuing as an annual program	Implementation Plans in place for management districts within 12 months of a Reserve management plan being

## ACT WORK PLAN – JULY 2000

	Management Mechanisms	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
					adopted
	ACT Nature Conservation Strategy	Ensure continuing implementation of vegetation conservation initiatives adopted in the ACT Nature Conservation Strategy	Environment ACT	Continuing program via annual Strategy Implementation Plan	Strategy Implementation Plan reflected in business plans, work programs and work practices as relevant
		Review ACT Nature Conservation Strategy in terms of progress in achieving conservation objectives	Environment ACT	7/01	Relevant report and new Implementation Plan
	<b>Planning &amp; Assessment</b>				
2.1	Impact assessment guidelines	Establish Fauna and Flora Guidelines to guide assessment of land development proposals on biological resources. These guidelines will identify significant biological resources in the ACT and provide guidance on how they should be considered in the planning process. The guidelines will be based on strategies to conserve the ACT's biological resources.	Planning and Land Management group	Finalised by 12/00	Incorporation into planning processes of conservation requirements of significant species and ecological communities
2.2	Vegetation data management and mapping	Extract, interpret, collate and digitise relevant vegetation data consistent with NVIS requirements.	Environment ACT	12/00	Vegetation data management methodology standardised; hard copy vegetation map produced
2.3	Environmental weed assessment	Progressively map distribution of priority weed species in protected areas and associated public lands. Report on control input and evaluate management effectiveness.	Environment ACT	Annual program	Decline in weed abundance in areas subject to control action
2.4	Vegetation management planning	Prepare for Government consideration, a proposal for development of a comprehensive tree management and protection policy for the ACT that will bring together existing policies in one document, identify policy and coordination gaps and priority actions to be implemented.	Environment ACT	8/00	Government decision on policy directions and priorities
2.5	ACT Weeds Strategy	In accordance with principles and policies set out in the ACT Weeds Strategy, determine an annual program of weed control for priority species in predetermined areas; assess control	Commonwealth and Territory Government	Annual program	Continuing support for annual weed control program; control

## ACT WORK PLAN – JULY 2000

	Management Mechanisms	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
		effectiveness of each years program.	land managers, rural lessees, community interest groups		programs result in decline in weed abundance/distribution
2.6	Evaluation of urban ecological assets	A survey of urban open space vegetation condition and habitat value was undertaken during 1998-99. Assessment of the ecological significance of assets identified will be undertaken to allow management requirements and priorities to be developed.	Canberra Urban Parks and Places, Environment ACT	6/01 – subject to funding priorities	Assessment completed and management measures being developed
2.7	Management of threatening processes	Determine the most effective mechanism for identifying and providing for the coordinated management of ecological threats. Statutory processes are available, but an alternative approach may be more productive.	Environment ACT, Flora and Fauna Committee	01-02 for substantive project completion	A preferred mechanism or combination of mechanisms is identified for each threatening process
	Reserve System	Over 50% of the ACT is reserved as wilderness area, national park or nature reserve with specified management objectives for environmental conservation. Management plans are a statutory requirement. There is little scope for significant expansion of the ACT reserve system other than in terms of discrete sites containing critical habitat or other values of special significance. Application of off-reserve conservation mechanisms and responsible town planning is the preferred approach.			5
3.1	Management Plans	Prepare management plans for all areas of the nature conservation estate and urban areas of open space (Public Land) with native vegetation values present.	Environment ACT/Canberra Urban Parks and Places	Continuing program	The degree to which reserved areas have a management plan in place
	<b>Communication &amp; Capacity Building</b>	Environment ACT participates in a range of community-based programs that include native vegetation conservation in their operational objectives. Typical examples are Parkcare, Landcare, Waterwatch and catchment management groups. Capacity building programs for land managers, such as Prograze and Farming for the Future, are also supported and facilitated. In			

## ACT WORK PLAN – JULY 2000

	Management Mechanisms	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
		partnership with the community and with a view to fostering a strategic approach to catchment management, Environment ACT has produced an integrated catchment management framework for the ACT and guidelines for sub-catchment management planning. Supportive Commonwealth funding is a feature of many of these programs.			
4.1	Vegetation information and advice to rural landholders	In conjunction with development of Land Management Agreements for new rural leases, ensure all lessees are provided with relevant information on the native vegetation present and its management requirements.	Environment ACT	1/00 ongoing	The degree to which information provided is incorporated into Land Management Agreements
4.2	Environmental awareness strategy	Develop a strategic framework for a targeted and coordinated approach to the delivery of environmental information and awareness-raising programs initiated by Environment ACT.	Environment ACT	Draft by 1/01	Environmental awareness strategy in place
<b>4.3</b>	Integrated catchment management planning	Facilitate and promote the development of sub-catchment management plans.	Environment ACT & other Govt agencies, community stakeholders	Continuing program	Adequate facilitation and coordination resources; the degree to which sub-catchments in the ACT have a management plan under development or in place
4.4	Natural resource management leadership	Facilitate and coordinate design of Building Regional Capacity – natural resource management short course.	Environment ACT, Commonwealth	Pilot project complete 11/00	Pilot project assessment leads to full program implementation
	Incentives	The ACT administers a range of environment grant schemes initiated by the ACT Government or as devolved elements of NHT programs. Greening Australia operates as a partner with Government or in its own right on a number of grant programs directed at vegetation conservation. Key Government administered programs are identified below.			
5.1	Financial assistance for off-reserve conservation	Implement Rural Conservation Fund to provide financial assistance for conservation of natural resources on leased rural land.	Environment ACT	5/00 ongoing	Rural Conservation Fund continues and attracts positive lessee interest

## ACT WORK PLAN – JULY 2000

	Management Mechanisms	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
5.2	Environment grants programs	Continuing support for grants program for environmental conservation, including: ACT Environment Grants Program ACT Riparian Restoration Program Bushcare in the Bush Capital	Environment ACT	Ongoing annual programs	Grant funding program continues
5.3	Foster ecologically sustainable management of leased rural land.	New policies for administration of leased rural land provide for extended lease terms in designated areas. Concessional arrangements are available to lessees, including a discounted valuation of land for rental buy out purposes and special financial arrangements for rental buy out. The goal of these incentives is to provide greater security of tenure wherever possible, and promote a partnership between Government and lessee in achieving sustainable use of the land for agriculture and securing a high level of nature conservation.	Planning & Land Management group.	1/00 ongoing; special conditions will be phased out after 18 months.	The degree to which new lease arrangements are taken up
	<b>Regulatory Mechanisms</b>	<p>The <i>Nature Conservation Act 1980</i> protects native plants and animals throughout the Territory. It also provides for the identification and declaration of threatened species and ecological communities. A conservation Action Plan must be developed in response to each declaration.</p> <p>The <i>Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991</i> requires each new rural lease to have a Land Management Agreement attached. Land Management Agreements set out how the land is to be managed in a sustainable way. Conservation of native vegetation must be addressed.</p> <p>The Territory Plan specifies, among other things, land use objectives, controls and policies relating to environmental matters (<a href="http://www.palm.act.gov.au/tplan">www.palm.act.gov.au/tplan</a>). The non-urban area land use policies are of particular relevance (Refer to Parts B10-B14 of the Written Statement). Part C1 of the Plan (Overlay provisions) identifies the purposes for which public land is reserved. For instance a (Pa) on the Territory Plan indicates that public land is reserved for the purposes of a wilderness area.</p>			7

## ACT WORK PLAN – JULY 2000

	Management Mechanisms	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
		The Territory Plan specifies that a mandatory preliminary assessment (impact assessment) be prepared for all proposals involving vegetation removal or destruction of greater than 0.5 ha of remnant vegetation.			
6.1	Recovery plans for threatened species and communities.	Prepare conservation Action Plans as a management response to each declaration of a threatened species or ecological community	Environment ACT	Continuing program; currently all declared species and communities have an Action Plan in place	The degree to which declared species and communities have an Action Plan in place The degree to which recommended conservation measures are incorporated into planning and management programs
6.2	Property management agreements	Establish Land Management Agreements as an effective tool for ecologically sustainable management of rural leases.	Planning & Land Management, rural lessees, Environment ACT	1/00 continuing	Number of Land Management Agreements developed .
	<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>				
7.1	Monitoring of woodland communities	Develop and implement a monitoring program for Yellow Box-Red Gum Grassy Woodland	Environment ACT	12/00 Monitoring program designed	Continuing; data collected in accordance with program
7.2	Monitoring of environment grant outcomes	Include a monitoring component in grants provided by the Rural Conservation Fund to enable agreed conservation outcomes/outputs to be assessed.	Environment ACT, rural lessees, Greening Australia	5/00 continuing program	Practicable and useful monitoring techniques developed
7.3	Vegetation data	Develop a GIS-based reference source to fulfil routine reporting	Environment	6/01 Parameters	GIS FAQ system in place

**ACT WORK PLAN – JULY 2000**

	<b>Management Mechanisms</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>
	management	and public information needs. Include baseline vegetation attributes.	ACT	established; continuing refinement	

## **MANAGING AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE VEGETATION— A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK**

Native vegetation is vital for the protection of our natural environment, our economy and our social well-being.

Native vegetation is essential for the health of our water, soil and air, and for the conservation of our biodiversity. It is important for agriculture to protect and provide fodder for stock, increase on-farm productivity and prevent degradation such as salinity. Other direct economic benefits of native vegetation are derived from products such as timber, honey and medicines. Our unique native vegetation also has cultural values, provides scenic amenity and is important for tourism.

However, despite these values, there has been a long-term decline in the quality and extent of our native vegetation over the last two hundred years. There is a growing awareness that this trend must be reversed, and in 1997 all State and Territory governments signed Natural Heritage Trust partnership agreements with the Commonwealth, committing to reverse this long-term trend.

Better management of our native vegetation requires a coordinated effort from all levels of Government, private landholders, industry and the broader community.

The Commonwealth, and State and Territory Governments have recognised the importance of such a coordinated approach, and have agreed to the *National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation*. The Framework has been developed by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC).

### **What is ANZECC and why is it involved?**

The Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council consists of Commonwealth, State and Territory environment and conservation ministers.

It provides a forum where the governments of Australia can discuss and develop nationally coordinated policies and strategies relating to conservation and the environment.

The National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation is an ANZECC initiative. It provides a vehicle through which to implement the goal of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to reverse the long-term decline in the quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation cover.

By coordinating the implementation of the Framework, ANZECC will seek to ensure this goal is met in a unified and consistent manner, against an agreed framework of best practice management and monitoring measures.

### **How will the *Framework* work?**

The *National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation* consists of three key elements:  
desired outcome;  
best practice mechanisms; and work plans.

# THE NATIONAL VEGETATION FRAMEWORK



## **The Desired Outcome**

The desired outcome is that Australia's native vegetation in all its diversity is recognised and protected, and that the long-term decline in its extent and quality is reversed. This would include both a reduction in land clearing and increased revegetation.

## **What Constitutes 'Best Practice'?**

A range of mechanisms have been identified that will help achieve the desired outcome and move towards 'best practice' in native vegetation management. These mechanisms are already being applied to varying degrees across Australia, although the emphasis differs between States and Territories reflecting different circumstances. Experience suggests that, in most circumstances, access to a mix of mechanisms will be necessary.

These mechanisms are outlined below:

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Governments and Community**

This involves clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of organisations with an interest in natural resource management, in order to maximise effectiveness of programs and minimise unnecessary duplication.

This includes cooperative, partnership approaches between Commonwealth, State and Territory, and Local governments, regional organisations such as catchment authorities, and community groups. Policy development and program delivery should ideally be managed by the level best placed to deliver agreed outcomes.

## **Planning and Assessment**

This has three major components:

**Vegetation inventory, data collection and mapping:** Consistent mapping of vegetation type and extent is required, according to agreed standards. This baseline information is essential to underpin the work of resource planners and managers.

**Biodiversity assessment:** *This includes an assessment of how much of a vegetation type remains, its regional significance, how much of it is protected in formal conservation reserves, potential threats, and targets for conservation.*

**Regional vegetation management planning:** This defines goals and regional targets on a bio-regional basis, outlining management actions, and levels of stakeholder participation. These goals and actions then provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation.

## **Formal Reserves Systems**

Formal reserves have a statutory basis and are established for a range of purposes from strict nature conservation to providing for nature-based public recreation, for example Kosciuszko National Park. A reserve system should ideally fulfil the principles of being:

**Comprehensive:** Sampling all ecosystems.

**Adequate:** Ensuring long term viability of the vegetation within the reserves.

**Representative:** Sampling variation within ecosystems.

## **Communication and Capacity Building**

This includes:

**Community education:** Educating the wider community about the value and role of native vegetation, through a range of channels including schools, community activities and the media.

**Research and development, and extension:** This requires better integration of scientific research and practical on farm management, with a two-way flow of information. Vegetation management requires working at a broad scale. Group activities, such as Bushcare projects, are therefore an effective means of both gathering and disseminating information.

**Vegetation management and Infrastructure:** In addition to information, infrastructure in the form of equipment and services is also required to underpin the efforts of landholders, community groups and governments. This includes advice and specialist services to support mapping and monitoring, seedbanks and nurseries to provide sufficient quantities of local species, and equipment for seed harvesting and planting.

## **Incentives**

Incentives can be provided to landholders to encourage conservation of native vegetation. This recognises that there are public benefits in conserving native vegetation, and therefore support from the broader community can be justified to assist private land holders. The most effective strategies will normally involve a mix of incentives.

There is a range of incentive mechanisms including:

**Grant programs:** e.g. Bushcare / Landcare grants.

**Property right and market-based measures:** e.g. management agreements, tradeable carbon rights.

**Revolving funds:** Use of a capital fund to purchase significant land, place a covenant on the land, and then resell to a sympathetic purchaser.

**Tax and rate reductions:** A deduction or rebate on taxes or local government rates.

**Offsets and performance bonds:** Offsets can be used to require protection or revegetation of one area, in exchange for clearing another. A performance bond can be used to ensure conditions of clearing consent are met e.g. mine-site rehabilitation bonds.

## **Regulatory Mechanisms**

These include:

**Threatened species / ecological communities protection:** Legislation to ensure that no further native species or ecosystems become extinct. Listing, based on independent scientific advice usually identifies threatened species. This listing then triggers the preparation of recovery plans, which provide a framework for management and conservation.

**Land clearing regulation:** Regulation aimed at preventing the inappropriate clearing of native vegetation. This includes a statutory requirement to seek approval to clear from a government agency or local authority. This should be linked to regional planning defined objectives.

**Industry / Land Use Codes of Practice:** Prepared by industry groups to highlight appropriate or 'best practice' environmental practices for a particular industry. Environmental management systems can also be applied to manage the impact of a business on the environment.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Any monitoring program must be underpinned by relevant baseline data, at the appropriate scale, against which assessment of change can be made. Monitoring is required of both the extent of vegetation cover and its condition. Vegetation condition is difficult to measure, and more work is needed on how it can best be done.

Monitoring should not only measure on-ground change, but should also gauge the effectiveness of policy and legislation. Monitoring should be an iterative process that establishes feedback between management and its consequences.

How do we know if the Framework will be implemented?

It is the Commonwealth's view that levels of funding will be contingent on the continuing and timely achievement of best practice management arrangements and desired native vegetation outcomes. Each of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments are preparing their own work plans, which are the principal means of implementing the National Framework. The work plans directly address each of the mechanisms identified in the Framework applicable to individual jurisdictions that are required to achieve 'best practice' native vegetation management.

Performance against the Framework will be used to monitor ongoing implementation of the Framework.

This has been a major step forward in the protection of Australia's native vegetation. How do I get a copy of the Framework?

Web URL: [www.environment.gov.au/anzecc](http://www.environment.gov.au/anzecc)

**Contact Environment Australia's Community Information Unit on:**

Phone: toll-free 1800 803 772

Fax: (02) 6274 1970

Email: [CIU@ea.gov.au](mailto:CIU@ea.gov.au)

Website: <http://www.ea.gov.au>

**For further information:**

VIC Dept of Natural Resources and Environment (03) 9637 8000

NSW Dept of Land & Water Conservation (02) 9228 6111  
National Parks & Wildlife Service (02) 9585 6555

WA Dept of Conservation & Land Management (08) 9334 0333

ACT Environment ACT Helpline (02) 6207 9777

SA *Dept of Environment, Heritage and Aboriginal Affairs* (08) 8204 8888

TAS *Dept of Primary Industry, Water & Environment* (03) 6233 8011

NT *Dept of Land Planning and Environment* (08) 8999 4455

QLD Dept of Natural Resources (07) 3896 1111

ALGA Australian Local Government Association  
website <http://www.alga.com.au/alga>

ANNEX 2 –5  
pdf file