



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

ACT Government Minister for Planning
Andrew Barr

*Australian Government Minister for the
Environment, Heritage and the Arts*
Peter Garrett

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT AT MOLONGLO AND NORTH WESTON

In a landmark agreement, the Australian and ACT Governments will conduct the first strategic environmental assessment in Australia for urban development.

ACT Minister for Planning, Andrew Barr said urban development in the Molonglo Valley is a key part of the Government's strategy to develop Canberra on an environmentally sustainable basis. The strategic assessment will ensure that development in Molonglo and North Weston is carried out in an environmentally sustainable way.

"Molonglo will eventually be home to about 55,000 Canberrans and will include affordable housing," Mr Barr said. "Molonglo has been identified as a sustainable development because it is centrally located, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by reducing transport distances. The proposed north – south arterial road will provide a public transport corridor that could include light rail. Molonglo will also be developed under new guidelines which require a 40 per cent reduction in mains water use in new developments.

"The ACT Government is determined to ensure the development of Molonglo will be as environmentally sustainable as possible. That's why we have ruled-out developing central Molonglo to protect the habitat of vulnerable species such as the Little Eagle and the Brown Tree Creeper. And that's why I am pleased to be able to announce this strategic environmental assessment with Minister Garrett today.

"This assessment will provide further protection for our environment and is a great example of Labor Governments working together for the good of our environment and the Canberra community," Mr Barr said.

Minister Garrett said a strategic assessment will ensure sustainable development and matters of national environmental significance are considered early in the development planning process.

"This is the first strategic assessment of large scale urban development under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) 1999*," Minister Garrett said. "It will deliver on the Council of Australian Government's commitment to harmonising national, state and territory assessment processes and will provide greater certainty to government, the community and industry.

"I am keen to use innovative approaches under the Act, such as strategic assessments, to achieve regional biodiversity and environmental protection outcomes. The use of strategic planning, assessment and approvals provisions of the Act will mean more timely and efficient measures for protecting our unique environment and facilitating sustainable development," he said.

Mr Barr also released for public comment draft terms of reference for the assessment which will be available for public comment until October 20, 2008.

The strategic assessment will be conducted in accordance with s146 of the EPBC Act. The strategic assessment agreement and Draft Terms of Reference are available for download from both the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website at: <http://www.environment.gov.au>, and the ACT Planning and Land Authority's website <http://www.actpla.act.gov.au>

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