



## **Simon Corbell MLA**

ATTORNEY GENERAL  
MINISTER FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES  
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
MINISTER FOR TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES

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MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

The Hon Tony Zappia MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Climate Change,  
Environment and the Arts  
PO Box 6021  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE ACT 2600

Dear Mr Zappia

I refer to your letter of 14 June 2011 to the ACT Chief Minister, Ms Katy Gallagher, regarding the Inquiry into Australia's Biodiversity in a Changing Climate. The Chief Minister referred your correspondence to me as this matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

The Inquiry is timely and of great interest to the ACT Government. Its findings will be a useful input into the ACT's considerations in planning for the unavoidable impacts of climate change on the ACT's biodiversity. However, at this time the ACT Government is not in a position to make a submission to the Inquiry. In lieu of a formal submission the following should at least provide you with a brief overview of our current strategic direction and activities in relation to climate change and biodiversity.

The ACT Government has a strong focus on mitigation aspects of climate change, but also recognises the importance of adaptation. More specifically the ACT Government's approach to responding to changes in our local climate is to manage risk, increase resilience and build the adaptive capacity of our ecosystems and human settlements. Our objective is to embed climate change risks into standard risk management frameworks. In terms of practical on-ground actions the ACT's overall strategy is to enhance biodiversity's ability to adapt to climate change through restoring and connecting fragmented native habitat patches in lowland areas and connecting them with upland areas in Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and across the border into NSW. The strategy will also enhance our riparian areas to better retain water and be more resilient to flash flooding, so that they can provide refuges and corridors for biodiversity in a drying climate. In line with these strategic considerations, some of the significant research and on-ground action initiatives being undertaken by the ACT Government include:

- Allocation of \$598,000 over three years from 1 July 2011 to implement a revised Nature Conservation Strategy and to improve understanding of the likely impacts of climate change on biodiversity in the ACT and to develop adaptation plans to start to address those impacts.

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

- Participation in the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) Integrated Regional Vulnerability Assessment (IRVA) on climate change for its South East NSW State Plan Region which surrounds most of the ACT. ACT Government agencies participated in nine different sectoral workshops between February and July 2010. The outcomes of the IRVA project will assist the ACT to identify expected changes to the regional climate, biophysical impacts (soils, urban buildings and infrastructure, biodiversity and ecosystems, occurrence of natural hazards) and the likely capacities for adapting to these impacts. The project is also enhancing cross-border cooperation between the ACT and NSW State and local government authorities in the region. A final report is expected to be publicly released by the OEH in late 2011.
- In June this year the ACT Government's Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate made a significant financial contribution of \$250,000 to the NSW and ACT Regional Climate Model (NARClIM) project which is being coordinated by the OEH in association with the University of NSW Climate Change Research Centre. This is an outcome of the IRVA project, mentioned above. It will generate regional climate change projections for the ACT and all of NSW that are much finer in scale (space and time), more comprehensive, and more robust than currently available. The data and analysis generated by this project will assist the ACT Government in evaluating climate change risk and vulnerability and in developing adaptation responses in relevant key sectors including biodiversity conservation and natural resource management. The NARClIM project is due to be completed by June 2014, after which data and reports will be made publicly available.
- Keeping abreast of the latest national and international research. For example, the ACT Government recently attended a technical workshop on the CSIRO's draft synthesis report to the Australian Government's Natural Resource Policies and Programs Committee on the implications of climate change for Australia's National Reserve System. Another example is networking with and funding of relevant research bodies such as the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility and the Australian National University Climate Change Institute.
- Enhancing existing reserve management to ensure these areas remain cornerstones of landscape scale conservation efforts. Activities will facilitate the recovery and restoration of habitat, better control feral animals and environmental weeds, and improved ecological fire management practices. This is being realised through implementation of: a woodland restoration program; pest and weed management programs; and Park Management Plans.
- Strengthening partnerships with resource managers by engaging in voluntary partnerships with landholders who wish to manage significant patches of native habitat on their lands for biodiversity conservation and enhancement of ecological connectivity. This involves establishment of appropriate partnership agreements and funding sources.
- Enhancing public awareness of ACT environmental assets and potential impacts of climate change by: building on the existing success of partnerships with public interest groups (eg Parkcare); targeted education and awareness that honours our bush heritage and expands the public's engagement with nature conservation outside of urban areas; and supporting research on key issues related to biodiversity and climate change adaptation, especially related to ecological connectivity, sleeper weeds and pest animals. Specific activities include: research (e.g. forest bushfire and woodland experiments); long term ecological monitoring; captive breeding programs (e.g. Northern Corroboree Frog); and community education and awareness activities.

I trust this information is some of assistance and wish you every success with the Inquiry.

We greatly appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention.

Yours sincerely

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Simon Corbell MLA  
Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development

15.8.11