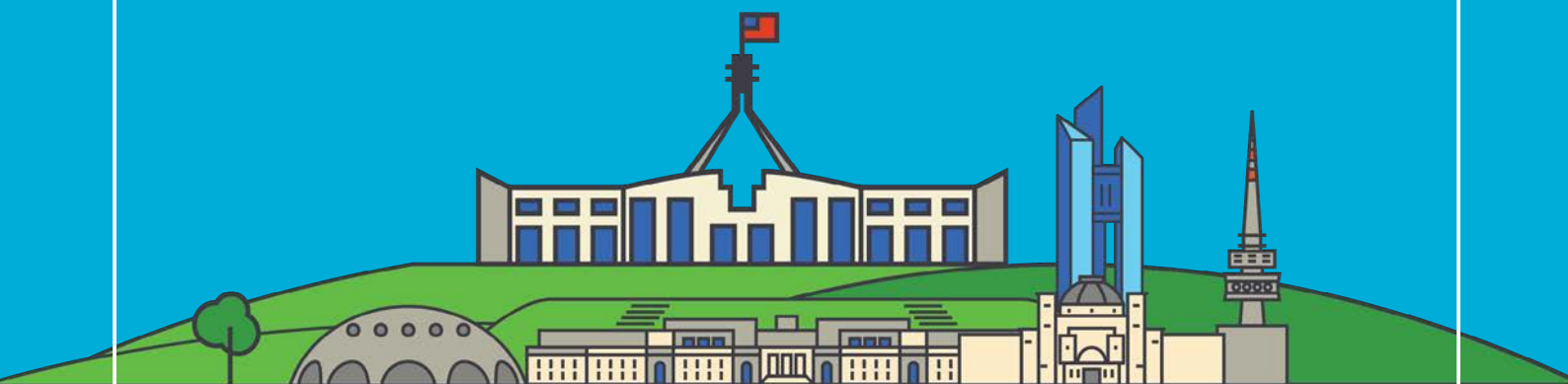


URBAN SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



THE URBAN CHALLENGE

Future Earth Australia, hosted by the Australian Academy of Science, is leading a process to co-design a national strategy for Australian sustainable cities.

Australia is already one of the most urbanised countries in the world, with 89% of the population living in urban areas (UNDESA, 2014) and 67% living in the capital cities. Australia's estimated resident population of 24.6 million people, as at June 2017, is projected to increase to between 37.4 and 49.2 million people by 2066 (ABS, 2018). All capital cities are projected to grow at a greater pace than the rest of their respective state or territory (ABS, 2018). Some are seeking to constrain growth; others, including many regional centres, are looking for extra or renewed growth.

Our urban environments are an interrelated system comprising social, economic, ecological and technical spheres. Urban systems transformation is needed to ensure that people can move around efficiently, live in safe and healthy homes, receive adequate education and medical care and enjoy lives of social equity in a healthy and biodiverse environment.

The metropolitan plans for most Australian capital cities include consistent sustainability planning and design principles such as containing urban sprawl, reducing car dependency and providing greater housing choices. However, in practice, urban decision-making is subject to numerous complex drivers—social, environmental, economic, institutional, technological—with the potential to create barriers to sustainable development.

The challenge lies in ensuring effective and consistent urban policy and decision-making in the complex urban institutional environment (across spatial scales and decision-making levels, and across sectors), with genuine stakeholder and community engagement

that understands the many and varied underlying aspirations and values. In turn, this process needs to be guided by shared visioning of our urban futures, underpinned by approaches to co-produce, share and implement knowledge to inform decision-making. In this context all decision-makers and stakeholders are both providers and users of knowledge.

However, current urban development and decision-making is characterised by a lack of shared vision and excessive fragmentation in institutional arrangements and in relevant knowledge development, translation and use.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

Future Earth Australia is working to improve the appreciation of the underlying barriers and enablers to sustainable urban development, and the supporting development, synthesis, translation, accessibility and application of relevant knowledge. Through a nationwide consultative process, it is co-developing a national strategy for the sustainable development of Australia's cities and communities over the coming decades.

Through a series of workshops in the capital cities, Future Earth Australia asked policymakers, practitioners, researchers, business and community stakeholders to contribute to the development of local and national strategies. Each workshop included a special focus on the specific city and the surrounding region, as well as implications for a national approach.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY

To be successful, transformational strategies will need to include shared urban visions of feasible and desirable futures, with a focus on:

- key systemic leverage opportunities
- collaborative and aligned urban governance integrated across systems, sectors and scales
- effective stakeholder and community engagement across multiple goals and diverse values
- co-produced knowledge development and use by policy and urban decision-makers.

These elements should all be supported by continuing learning and adaptive management. A national strategy will provide governments, practitioners, businesses, communities and researchers with recommendations for cost-effective and integrated urban systems transformation.

To help us achieve these goals, workshop participants are asked to consider:

- current issues and future visions for their city and region
- how to improve engagement outcomes with stakeholder and community groups by policy and decision-makers
- actions that if taken locally (at state/territory level) and nationally would increase the sustainable development of the city/region
- how such actions might contribute to a national strategy for urban systems transformation.

A national strategy will also help Australia meet our commitments under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 11 is to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable', but transformation is underpinned by integration of all 17 of the goals.

Australian Capital Territory workshop

On 2 November 2018 Future Earth Australia held the third in a series of national workshops for its project 'Urban systems transformation: sustainable cities'. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) workshop was hosted by Future Earth Australia, the Australian National University (ANU) and CSIRO at the Australian Academy of Science's Shine Dome. Forty-nine stakeholders from territory government, city councils, universities, local

businesses, NGOs and research groups participated. This document summarises discussions grouped under the following workshop themes: urban visioning initiatives and pathways; collaborative governance and decision-making; stakeholder and community engagement; and co-produced knowledge development, usage and learning.



SPEAKERS

Introductions

Mr Guy Barnett of CSIRO Land and Water opened the workshop and welcomed participants and Professor Xuemai Bai welcomed the group on behalf of ANU.

Professor Kate Auty, ACT Commissioner for Sustainability the Environment

Professor Auty was appointed ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment in May 2016 and was previously the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability in Victoria. Professor Auty spoke about the benefits of compact cities with ample green space for biodiversity and humanity. Compact cities are economically sustainable and better for the environment (Rode, 2018). The ACT is addressing climate change through adaptation and mitigation policies, and other states and the federal government should follow this lead.

Professor Barbara Norman, Canberra Urban and Regional Futures

Professor Norman's current research and teaching interests include sustainable cities and regions, coastal planning, climate change adaptation and urban governance.

The growth of renewable energy illustrates the strength of coming together with a shared vision and a clear target. The ACT's 2020 renewable energy target has set a clear framework for the future: 640 MW of renewable energy has been secured from 192 wind turbines and 159 000 solar panels, contributing \$500 million to the local economy.

Public transport will be the next focus, particularly with the light rail commencing in 2019. Sustainable transport is an important target for the ACT as it works towards a sustainable built environment. Marginalised communities, such as the homeless population and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, should be involved from the outset. Local government must be included in these conversations.

Dr Hitomi Nakanishi, University of Canberra

Dr Nakanishi has a background in urban and regional planning, transport planning and evaluation of urban policy and infrastructure planning. She explained that Canberra has experienced several natural disasters, including floods in 1976 and 2012 and bushfires in 1952 and 2003. The 2003 bushfires were the worst in Canberra's history.

An important area of research focuses on what happens immediately following a natural disaster and during the recovery phase. Understanding how people behave during and in the aftermath of a disaster helps emergency services to prepare for the future, for example, by refining evacuation procedures.

Ms Susan Heylar, Director, ACT Council of Social Service

Ms Heylar works with leaders across Canberra to build a more just and inclusive community, where everyone lives with dignity. She began by asking whether Canberra is a global city or a bush capital—or potentially both?

Underinvestment in municipal social structures in Canberra has led to an erosion of focus of social responsibility. The city has a high cost of living—an above-average income is necessary to meet the cost of the housing market, retail, health and transport. The Canberra 'knowledge economy' is excellent for people with education and training, but is not inclusive for those lacking in these attributes. Canberra has the lowest unemployment rate in the country, however those who are unemployed are often locked out of the jobs market for a long time. A cycle of poverty occurs when people cannot pay their bills and cannot get out of debt. The demand for food assistance services in the capital has grown.

Co-generated knowledge creation is needed to tackle these issues—social practitioners should work with academics to create solutions. Additionally, environmental sustainability must be embedded in city development and renewal. The SDGs offer an excellent opportunity for prioritising this work.

VISIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Participants were asked to consider their current perceptions of the Canberra region and to use their devices to enter applicable words into an online poll to generate a word cloud.

Many people chose positive words. There were seven entries for *diverse*, and four each for *progressive*, *beautiful* and *green* (word cloud 1). Words with a more negative connotation were *car* and *cars*, *sprawling*, *changing* and *divided*, entered by four people.

Although seven people entered *diverse*, this meant different things to different people. Some meant diversity of place—the range of environments from the mountains to the coast. Others meant diversity of people—referring to the immigration of people from different places for different reasons.



Word cloud 1: Current perceptions of Canberra

There was disagreement about the cultural diversity of the Canberra region. Some felt that the city and region is transient and predominantly white with only microcosms of culture; others felt that Canberra's culture is spread out in a diverse but integrated society. Several people felt that the region is a progressive place, for example, the rainbow roundabout that was recently installed in an inner-city suburb. But others disagreed and felt that these are, at most, pockets of progressiveness. The ACT's *Social Inclusion Statement* (ACT Government, 2018a) sets out an agenda for recognising and supporting gender, sexual and cultural diversity in the territory.



The main criticisms of the Canberra region were its sprawling nature and dependence on private cars. This is seen as hard to change as the city was planned to be this way. The word *divided* was used by some in reference to geography and the distances between suburbs, but others meant socially divided. Canberra lacks housing diversity and many felt that future developments should address this as a priority. The word 'changing' was prominent, but there was no input about whether this was a positive or negative point or simply an observation.

The most popular answer to the question 'What would you like the ACT region to be like in 30 to 50 years?' was *sustainable*, with 12 entries, and *inclusive*, with seven (word cloud 2).



Word cloud 2: Vision for Canberra for 2030–2050

There were six entries for *biophilic* or *biophillic*, referring to the process of embedding nature in a city, which would lead to increased connectedness and happiness. The point was made that if we are connected to nature, we are more likely to understand its limits.

The group was asked to consider the word clouds and discuss how they differed and how their vision for Canberra for 2030 to 2050 could be achieved.

There is a need for further research into the social factors governing sustainability in the Canberra region, as some felt that the human component of planning had not been sufficiently investigated. It was suggested that there is a lack of understanding about individual motivations and barriers to sustainable behavioural change, such as behaviours to choose certain modes of transport or types of energy. Research should be undertaken to question why people do not adopt sustainable behaviours to ascertain if there are common causes.

INITIATIVES AND PATHWAYS

Participants worked in groups to consider the specific knowledge that would be needed to achieve their vision for a sustainable Canberra and ACT region. A series of initiatives were presented, detailed below.

SETTING INDICATORS: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

This group discussed how to use indicators to create accountability, to measure success and failure and to hold people and organisations accountable. They considered how this might be done with a triple bottom line approach and how people might collectively create shared indicators that lead to positive change.

A sample method would be a series of experiments in Canberra during which people choose indicators for the sustainable transformation of their suburb and ask the following questions: Can people come up with indicators and measure them? Does that foster accountability? Does it foster community interest? How do we collectively learn from our decisions and experiences?

Process:

The process would be collective and inclusive with a system of rules for setting indicators. The project would have to carefully consider the capacity of government and community to create change and assume responsibility. Research into other projects that could be used as a template for design, practice, implementation and evaluation would be valuable.

Opportunities:

The collective nature of the project means that ideas would be shared with the community, with feedback via a community suggestion scheme encouraged. There would be potential to use the data from the project to

create performance models and to build on the SDGs and National Cities Performance Framework¹.

Barriers:

The community might not welcome the initiative as it can be hard to communicate complex planning issues and results. Access to project information might be limited; stakeholders might not be willing to share their data and the significance and meaning of indicators might differ between stakeholders. Securing project funding could also be a challenge.



PUBLIC DATA HUB

This group proposed creating a data hub with independent oversight, accessible by government, business and industry and to be used for policy, decision-making and collaboration. The precedent is the G21 Geelong Region Alliance² and other similar schemes in Copenhagen and Helsinki.

The design principles would be interactive, graphic and easy to use, include community and citizen science, and welcome contribution and use by diverse stakeholders. Governance must be independent, impartial, transparent and accountable, and the hub must be independent, impartial and transparent. All data should be in one place and accessible by government, public (with special attention for marginalised segments), business and industry, academics, researchers and international stakeholders.

1. <https://smart-cities.dashboard.gov.au/all-cities/overview>

2. A forum to discuss regional issues across interest groups and municipalities resulting in better co-ordinated research, consultation and planning www.g21.com.au/

Opportunities:

This project would likely gain public support and would open the way for bureaucratic reform. There would be an opportunity to increase funding for citizen science and community engagement processes, to work with private industry and share data, to learn from 'critical mass' movements and to build on existing successful groups to take advantage of Canberra's existing strong urban research community.

If successful, this would lead to reduced silos between government departments and promote the importance of open access to data. The hub could be linked to the NSW Government. Spatial data and GIS projects would be used to visualise landscapes.

Barriers:

The hub would need a clearly defined purpose to not be another clunky/misaligned data structure. It would have to be 'troll proofed'. As many agencies can't or won't share data, the cost and political will may be significant barriers. It would be a complicated process with lots of players and interactions.

Personal data protection will be an important consideration. Additionally, if the hub is online, certain groups will be excluded from accessing and engaging with it. There may be competing interests between contributors, involving arguments against excessive data centralisation and such a broad scope.

URBAN FOREST AND BUSH CAPITAL

This group talked about the what, where and health of Canberra's urban trees and the need to understand the threats, opportunities and values placed upon them. The first stage would be to ascertain what to repair, protect and enhance, while encouraging community adoption.

Questions to explore might include: What makes a healthy urban forest? What are the health and recreational benefits of national parks and street trees? Is this branding consistent with existing Canberra branding? Do people think that 'bush capital' sounds old fashioned? Would planting more trees be contrary to the desire for densification and infill? The economic value of the bush capital brand should be explored.

The big sell would be to value the bush capital brand ACT-wide, in suburbs, by street and per household. New values, such as urban food production, could be promoted.

Opportunities:

CSIRO and ANU have years of experience in urban forestry in Canberra and have a large amount of biodiversity data. The project would integrate objectives and planning across scales and introduce measures that demonstrate upscaling and replication.

It would be important to link the project to 'living infrastructure' work and effectively capture the concept that the bush capital is more than just trees. The project would emphasise the potential gains in health and well-being associated with greening the capital. The process should also build the community's awareness of local ecology and the ecosystem services provided. Additional outcomes would be highlighting and supporting food production in the ACT and the work of local groups that care for urban forests in the region. Urban forests contribute to emissions reductions targets and can become a carbon bank. The project could also measure the benefits to biodiversity.

Barriers:

It can be hard to integrate objectives and planning across scales (local, state and federal). Data is often locked up with government bodies and private companies. The work may be expensive, and care must be taken to avoid biosecurity threats such as the introduction of pathogens and invasive species.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TRAVEL CHOICES

This group developed a project to assess what motivates people to behave sustainably and what the barriers are that prevent this. This information could be used to help improve the uptake of public and active transport. A cross-sectoral approach would be needed and enlisting the ACT Council of Social Service, relevant ACT government directorates, universities, active travel offices and public health groups should be a priority.

Opportunities:

The project would link to the promotion of the health benefits of active travel, challenge the perception of the convenience of car travel and promote active transport, in terms of savings of both time and cost.

Barriers:

One challenge is understanding how to bridge the gap between what people intend to do and their actions. Significant support systems and incentives would likely be needed to facilitate behaviour change. Canberra planning has been very focused on car travel, and it can be difficult to change long-held behaviours. It would be necessary to distinguish between individual behavioural barriers and systemic barriers, such as access to public and active travel opportunities.

RENEWABLE ENERGY CO-OPS

This group proposed implementing renewable energy co-ops that enable people to work together for sustainable outcomes. The focus of the co-ops would be to help people access cheaper sustainable power and to optimise the production of energy depending on need. Different types of co-ops could be developed depending on the needs of the community and the opportunity for development. For example, some co-ops might concentrate on one aspect of energy provision, such as economics, while others might be multi-tiered. Expertise developed within the co-op could be applied elsewhere and to other co-ops, and co-ops of different expertise could join to form a block. The blocks might be based on local geographic areas and would encourage movement of members between co-ops and blocks to share skills. The design, management and funding of the co-ops would be supported by an elected governance board and their executives. The co-ops would be self-funded. The benefits to customers would include the provision of clean energy, potentially from solar panels linked to household storage, and large savings on energy grid price. The co-op members would set the price of the power and investors would be remunerated as electricity is consumed.

HOW TO SHARE INFORMATION

Engagement between the research community, government, general community and business is vital in the development of planning processes that deliver

denser city environments that enable industriousness, social engagement and environments that mitigate climate impacts.

This group discussed how to better share resources. Policymakers should make use of local knowledge and the community's connection to place. Information from successful overseas schemes could be incorporated into policy and regulatory measures where appropriate to the Australian environment and cultural context.

Methods for using information might include scenario planning, research on social-technical practice and how to upscale small projects into developments. Sharing cultural and sociological information would help to answer questions such as how to implement more sustainable habits in the community, what actions are required to achieve transformation, and how change could be measured.

To better share resources, potential synergies between siloed policy activities and goals should be identified. By sharing information, the following important matters could be explored:

- how to have broader sustainability conversations that address facilitating industrious lives within the sustainability paradigm
- how to interest and motivate the community to be more involved in the conversation about sustainability
- what outcomes we are aiming for
- how to incorporate feedback into our learning and experimenting
- what we are building towards (Will people be moving here? How do we incorporate them? Are we increasing or decreasing equality?)
- what the most effective and efficient processes are for genuinely engaging the currently unengaged parts of Canberran society
- what knowledge can be harnessed from the community about barriers to living sustainably
- where the holes are in policy implementation
- what the sources are of Canberra's pockets of resilience and where these are located
- a deeper evidence-based understanding of demographic changes in the Canberra region.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

During the plenary discussion, it was suggested that a lack of political will creates a barrier to collaborative governance and decision-making. However, most agreed that the problem is not insurmountable.

Information overload was also seen as a barrier to effective decision-making, as it can be difficult to harness the breadth and depth of information that might be relevant. The currency of information is an issue in today's climate. Complex ideas that use technical language, or language that only appeals to certain experiences or values, needs to be simplified. Trust between experts and users is vital for collaboration to succeed. Collaboration is vital for survival. Humans are social animals that can only thrive by working together. If we don't increase our efforts, we are in for a very dark future.

STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

All participants agreed that work was still needed on understanding the values of the community. Why do different communities have certain behaviours and how can appropriate consultation shape programs to be more in line with core values?

To engage effectively with people, it is important to focus on positive outcomes, as negative messaging is often less effective. It is necessary to outline the good things that can arise from changing activities and actions and to stress the feel-good component. The urgency of a situation should still be conveyed, but it is important to give people a sense of hope, otherwise they may not see the point in changing their behaviour. A call to action can be empowering—you can make a difference if you act now!

If community input is fundamental to policy, then supporting community leadership makes absolute sense. Value the time that people volunteer to their community and acknowledge their contribution.

Models of engagement are important, as too often engagement is dominated by people who are loud and opinionated. There needs to be more informal ways of connecting than planning sessions. Engagement

should be more organic, and alternative mechanisms of accessing feedback should be explored.

CO-PRODUCED KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT, USAGE AND LEARNING

Entrenched structures of governance can lead to information being withheld, and sometimes different groups, such as industry, academia and government, don't know if they are talking about the same thing.

Research needs to be integrated. A single lens can be too focused on one issue, but connections across several systems can increase the power of research. It is important to ensure that collaboration is based on a true understanding of how different knowledge bases are related.

Canberra can be an example for this sort of knowledge development. It should be possible to demonstrate what is feasible and to make it easy for others to follow the example. By developing knowledge for the next generation, people demonstrate a responsibility for their future and take ownership of their actions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY

The participants discussed how to harness information and create a shared language to collaborate. It is important to use positive messaging when engaging with the community and to explore more organic mechanisms for gaining inputs and feedback during planning processes. Collaboration is recognised as a worthwhile process, but the need to understand component knowledge bases should be stressed. A must understand why they are working with B!

The valuing of natural resources should be prioritised, such as by considering environmental issues in all legislation. Currently legislation is considered from a human rights or health perspective, but it should also consider how decisions impact the environment. To avoid the risk of making legislation too complicated, new legislation might be used as a testbed to understand the implications of enshrining environmental considerations.

THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY REGION

The ACT has an area of 2360 km² (including Canberra's 814 km²), an elevation of approximately 580 m, and is positioned 150 km inland from Australia's east coast. Forty per cent (about 106 000 hectares) of the territory is contained within the Namadgi National Park (Figure 1).

The earliest evidence of Aboriginal occupation of the ACT dates from some 21 000 years ago. At the time of European settlement, the Ngunnawal were the main indigenous people in the region.

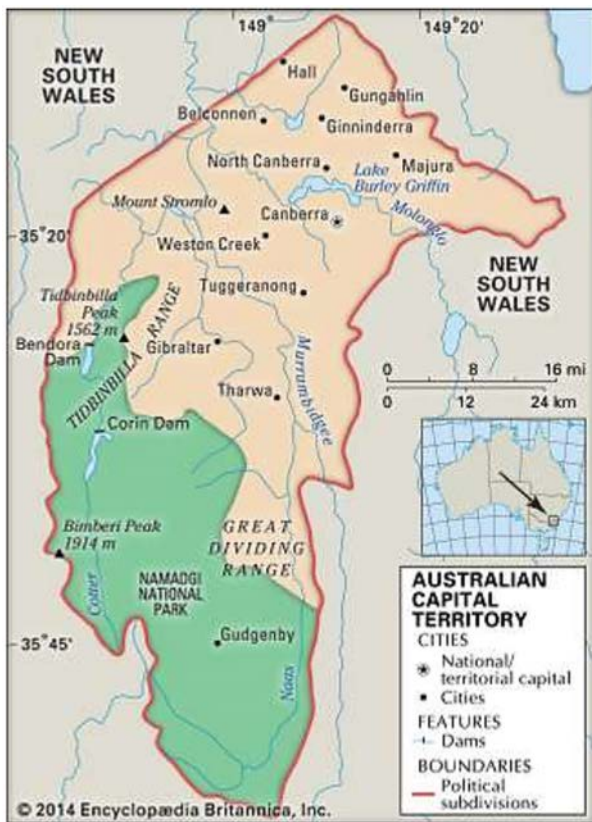


Figure 1: Australian Capital Territory, *Encyclopedia Britannica*

GOVERNANCE

The ACT Government manages the parliamentary, legislative, administrative and financial affairs of the territory, whereas the Australian Government is responsible for Canberra's functioning as the national capital. The Australian Government, through the National Capital Authority, and the ACT Government share planning responsibility in the ACT.

FACTS AND FIGURES

ACT residents are younger (median age of 35), earn more money (median weekly income of \$998) and a higher proportion than the national average have never married (37.9%) (ABS, 2017).

In 2016 the resident population was 396 857. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people made up 1.6% of the population compared with a national average of 2.8%.

THE CANBERRA REGION

The Canberra region stretches from the Australian Alps through the Southern Tablelands and down to the NSW South Coast. The Canberra Region Joint Organisation includes the ACT Government and the councils of Bega, Eurobodalla, Hilltops, Goulburn Mulwaree, Queanbeyan-Palerang, Snowy Monaro, Upper Lachlan and Yass Valley.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES

Land use

Between 2011 and 2016 the ACT was the fastest growing state or territory in the country, adding 40 175 people to its population, an 11.2% increase with Gungahlin in the north of the territory driving the population growth (ABS, 2017). As the second-fastest growing region in the country, Gungahlin is now home to 71 000 people, an increase from 47 000 in 2011.

According to the *ACT State of the Environment Report* (Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, 2015) the main pressure on land in the ACT is changes in land use. Greenfield development—generally land on the urban periphery that has not previously been used for residential, commercial or industrial purpose—places greater pressure on the land and the environment due to the likelihood of vegetation clearance. Much of the development in the territory is in the form of single dwellings with fewer people living in them, which expands the urban footprint.

Socioeconomic disadvantage

Although Canberra has the highest median income and one of the highest education levels of all states and territories, many households in the ACT experience disadvantage in terms of income, education and housing affordability (Tanton et al., 2017). Large-scale statistics conceal the presence of pockets of disadvantage in the

ACT (Tanton et al., 2017). The 2016 census showed that 37 213 people were living in low-income households, representing 11% of the total ACT population (Tanton et al., 2017).

The ACT Public Housing Renewal Taskforce aims to improve outcomes for public housing tenants by replacing ageing public housing stock. The taskforce is taking a 'salt and peppering' approach, locating smaller-scale public housing throughout Canberra's suburbs and town centres to reduce concentrations of disadvantage.

Climate change

The 2015 ACT State of the Environment Report listed the following potential issues facing the ACT associated with a changing climate:

- lower rainfall, which will affect water availability and quality, water-dependent ecosystems, agriculture and recreational amenity
- higher temperatures and increased fire risk, which will affect human health and property and vulnerable ecosystems
- more extreme weather events, which will affect property and ecosystems.

MAJOR PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Territory Plan 2018

The *Territory Plan*, administered by the ACT Planning and Land Authority, is the government's main statutory planning document in the ACT³. The plan forms a key part of the policy framework for administering planning in the ACT. It is used to manage development, land use and the built environment, to assess development applications and to guide the development of new estate areas.

ACT Planning Strategy 2018

The *ACT Planning Strategy* (ACT Government, 2018b) is an update of a 2012 planning strategy. The revision involved extensive stakeholder and community engagement. The key feedback incorporated in the strategy was:

- limiting urban sprawl and preserving the ACT's iconic bush capital setting
- promoting the liveability, economy and attractiveness of the region and strengthening Canberra's role as a hub
- improving sustainability and resilience to climate change
- improving liveability by developing social infrastructure, open and public spaces, strong activity hubs and housing choice



3. www.planning.act.gov.au/tools-resources/plans-registers/plans/territory_plan/territory_plan_master_page

- ensuring that the ACT is easily accessible by people of all ages and abilities
- ensuring better integration of land use and transport and increased housing options.

City and Gateway Urban Design Framework 2018

The *City and Gateway Urban Design Framework* (National Capital Authority, 2018) was jointly prepared by the National Capital Authority and ACT Government. It sets the principles for development and growth in the city centre and along the gateway corridor of Northbourne Avenue and the Federal Highway. Implementation of the framework will require changes to the planning controls along the corridor.

The framework aims to improve walking and cycling connections and provide reliable and high-amenity public transport in the corridor through light rail integrated with the bus network.

National Capital Plan 2016

The objective of the *National Capital Plan* is 'to ensure that Canberra and the Territory are planned and developed in accordance with their national significance' (National Capital Authority, 2016). This means that planning and development should:

- respect the Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin's (the Griffins') plan, on which the development of Canberra was first based
- conserve the landscape features that help to integrate the natural and urban environments
- respect environmental values and urban sustainability
- create, conserve and enhance sites for national institutions and ceremonies.



South East NSW and Tablelands Regional Plan 2036

The *South East NSW and Tablelands Regional Plan 2036* (NSW Government Planning & Environment, 2017) outlines a vision for a borderless 'Canberra region', incorporating the ACT and South East Tablelands. A borderless region would encourage NSW residents to access the Canberra airport and Canberra's schools, universities, health service and employment opportunities.

A borderless Canberra region would help primary and secondary producers reach important Asian export markets. Working together, the ACT and NSW governments could market the region to international tourists; a package of Australia's capital, the South Coast and Snowy Mountains.

In 2015, 20% of South East Tablelands workers commuted to the ACT. The plan includes measures to overcome legal and contractual barriers to improve travel efficiency. The availability of housing within an hour's drive of Canberra is driven by the ACT market—people seeking cheaper rent and mortgages, bigger blocks or a more rural outlook. A boundaryless region will require a more strategic, joint ACT/NSW approach to housing to sustainably accommodate a growing population.

The Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO) and the ACT Government recently called on the next NSW and Federal Governments to support a three-point plan to shape the future of the Canberra Region. "*From the Snowy, through the Tablelands and down to the Coast, the Canberra Region is a vision for a borderless South East NSW with Canberra at its heart,*" said Yass Valley Council Mayor Rowena Abbey, Chair of the CRJO. The CRJO identified investment in east-west freight, tourism and commuter connections between the inland and coastal towns as key priorities⁴.

4. <http://crjo.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/Prospectus-for-a-CBR-Region-Deal.pdf>

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