Weathering the Change
Action Plan 1
An ACT Greens’ Assessment of Progress

April 2012
Weathering the Change
Action Plan 1:
An ACT Greens’ Assessment of Progress
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Executive summary

This report card rates the ACT Government’s progress on the 43 climate change actions it committed to under Weathering the Change Action Plan 1, which was released in 2007. The ACT Greens hope that this assessment will help to inform the direction of Action Plan 2, which is currently being finalised.

Many of our findings parallel those made in energy consultant Kinesis’ 2009 independent review of Action Plan 1, specifically that: less than 1/3 of the 43 actions were capable of having their emissions reduction quantified; emissions data for these actions was difficult to source, with only 7 of the 13 actions being quantifiable based on provided or estimated data; and that the majority of the actions were not created to achieve measurable emissions abatement.

These limitations make it very difficult to quantify precisely how much this Action Plan has contributed to reducing the ACT’s greenhouse gas emissions over the period of its implementation.

Our review also found that a number of the measures listed were already underway at the time the report was issued, and many actions were not grouped according to their relevant sector (e.g. transport, buildings), thereby allowing them to be double counted.

A rigorous climate strategy should be based on measurable abatement targets. Whilst qualitatively assessed measures are important, a strategy in which the majority of the measures are unquantifiable will make delivering the ACT’s legislated emissions cuts of 40% by 2020 and 80% by 2050 extremely difficult. Furthermore, very few ACT Government agencies report against Weathering the Change in their Budget Papers and Annual Reports. This makes it difficult to evaluate whether the Government is taking clear and consistent steps towards meeting the Plan’s goals.

Based on these limitations and our rating of the how the measures were delivered, we have given the Government an overall score of 48% - a below pass mark with much room for improvement.

The Government scored particularly poorly in the more quantitatively measurable areas whereas they performed better in the more qualitatively measurable areas of education and awareness. The worst performances were in the protection of high conservation areas, action on solar hot water and the preparation of climate vulnerability assessments whilst the best performances were in climate research partnerships and the implementation of sustainability in schools.
Executive summary

Each category of the Plan was ranked as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CATEGORY SCORE</th>
<th>WEIGHTED SCORE*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smarter resource use</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>18.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable design &amp; planning</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>10.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting to climate change</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving our understanding</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>10.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>48.23%</strong></td>
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*weighted according to number of questions in each category

Evaluating the actual mitigation progress made under Action Plan 1 is challenging given the time lag (of 1-2 years) inherent in collating emissions data. The most current greenhouse gas inventory available tracks 2008-09 performance and was released in the second half of 2011.\(^3\) This data indicates that the ACT’s emissions have increased by 31.7% on 1990 levels. It also shows that emissions grew until 2006, reducing by 2.9% from 2007-08 and then continued to grow by 1.3% from 2008-09. To assess the overall reductions delivered by Action Plan 1, we would need subsequent emissions data.

Although the data indicates that some reductions have been achieved under Action Plan 1, the level of cuts is not deep enough. To meet our legislated reduction targets of 40% by 2020, the ACT will need to reduce its emissions by an ambitious 6.9% annually to 2020.

Given the challenges posed by the ACT’s reduction targets, it is hoped that the Government will learn from the deficiencies of Action Plan 1 in ensuring that the measures pursued through Action Plan 2 are more specific, measurable, innovative and ambitious and that they are implemented more successfully.
Methodology

In evaluating the progress made under Action Plan 1, we had planned to assess only the delivery of the 43 measures, however, as mentioned above, we encountered a number of challenges in the design of the measures themselves. Specifically:

1. Many targets were worded broadly and were not measurable in terms of specific abatement outcomes. For example Action 1 – “develop an energy policy” – does not refer to the objectives it should meet; and Action 20 – “mandate greenhouse friendly options for new dwellings” – does not specify when this measure should be adopted. It is impossible to measure the emissions reductions achieved from either of these Actions.

2. Multiple measures overlapped or were based on pre-existing initiatives. For example, Action 36 – “plant 1 million new trees” includes existing planting programs such as post-fire replacement plantings; Action 22 – “include ESD features in all new public schools” – is actually part of Action 11 – “assist schools to become carbon neutral by 2017” – and Action 27 – “develop a grant program for community groups” – includes funding for public housing tenants to reduce their energy use, a requirement under Action 8 – “energy efficiency improvements in government housing.” Had these measures been grouped according to their sectors, this double counting would have been more obvious.

3. In some cases, the rationale for what was included and excluded was unclear. For example, Action 26 – “East Lake to become a showcase urban development” – made the cut, whereas a measure on large-scale renewable energy generation did not, despite it being more directly relevant to cutting emissions.

Given the scale of these inconsistencies, our rating scheme accounts for both the delivery and design of each measure. For example, if a measure has been double-counted or is unmeasurable, we have rated it less favourably than a more specific measurable action.

A guide to the ratings follows:

- ★★★★★ ➤ met/exceeded; new, ambitious & relevant 4 pts
- ★★★★★ ➤ progressed; sound, relevant 3 pts
- ★★★★ ➤ progressed somewhat; existing &/or weak 2 pts
- ★★★ ➤ not progressed much; existing &/or weak 1 pt
- ★★ ➤ not progressed at all; existing &/or weak 0 pts
Part 1:
A snapshot of the ratings
1 Smarter Resource Use

1. Develop an energy policy
   - 3 years late
   - Lacks overall vision
   - Timid on renewables
   - Lacks specific targets
   - 2 pts

2. Carbon neutrality for Government buildings
   - Behind schedule
   - Government lacks resources to accurately measure progress
   - Only 1 agency had a dedicated plan as of late 2010
   - 1 pt

3. Establish a $1 mil energy efficiency fund for Government agencies
   - Established in 2007
   - A revolving fund
   - Low overall uptake by Agencies
   - Uptake data not centralised and therefore difficult to track
   - 1 pt

4. Develop & implement a Park-and-Ride strategy
   - Feasibility and Concept Design studies completed
   - Sites constructed due to Labor/Greens Agreement
   - Better promotion & marketing needed
   - 3 pts

5. Offer Green Power to all new electricity customers
   - Legislated in 2009
   - Government claims high uptake but 2011 State of Environment Report found uptake low (4.9%) compared with awareness (66%)
   - 3 pts

6. Implement a renewable energy target in line with NSW’s
   - Set in 2011
   - Unclear whether compatible with our mitigation targets
   - Doesn’t distinguish between local and non-local renewables
   - 2 pts

7. Offer stamp duty concessions for low emissions vehicles
   - Legislated in 2008
   - Some positive impacts however full impact not yet gauged
   - New cars added to the concession list at a slow pace
   - 3 pts

8. Implement energy efficiency improvements in Government housing
   - Only 26% of public housing has benefited from the upgrades
   - Greens had funding doubled in 2011-12
   - 2 pts

9. Provide a solar hot water rebate
   - No dedicated rebate administered by Government
   - Can claim $500 through HEAT audit but only for up to $1000 spent on solar hot water
   - 1 pt
10 Pursue national emissions trading & reporting
- supported through COAG, but already underway before Weathering the Change
- scheme is crucial to cutting Australia’s carbon emissions

11 Invest $20mil over 10 years for schools to be carbon neutral by 2017
- $17.6 million invested as of 2011
- better tools needed for capturing energy use data
- non-government schools not audited

12 Undertake ACTION CNG bus fleet replacement
- well underway before Weathering the Change
- CNG comprises 14% of total fleet
- will take 50 years to replace entire fleet at current rate

13 Undertake energy efficient street light replacement
- 1713 lights replaced in 2007
- 5600 installed through 2008-09 budget
- LED trials underway
- future roll-out plans unclear

14 Introduce free bus travel for bike riders
- introduced then revoked
- Government promised to track impact but didn’t
- As of 2011, only 67% of buses had bike racks

How did they perform?
Total possible points - 56
Total actual points - 31
Smarter Resource Use Score »

55%
Sustainable Design and Planning

15. Implement public transport improvements
   • some improvements
   • problems with frequency, coverage & speed persist
   • ACT still has the lowest rate of public transport use nationally
   2 pts

16. Develop network & service design plans for buses
   • achieved following a 2008 review
   • existing services still need improvement and public transport still requires better funding and planning priority
   2 pts

17. Investigate travelling to work options
   • a couple of trials conducted
   • Greens calling for Government-wide car pooling service
   • further work needed
   1 pt

18. Introduce a feed-in-tariff for micro-generation
   • introduced in 2009
   • positive impacts initially but high fixed tariff and low cap created boom-bust, necessitating the scheme’s closure in 2011
   2 pts

19. Pursue energy efficiency ratings for all buildings
   • waited for Commonwealth to require this for commercial sector
   • blocked Greens’ bill mandating minimum ratings for all rental properties
   1 pt

20. Mandate greenhouse friendly options for new dwellings
   • Greens and Liberals legislated hot water efficiency standards for all new homes
   • Government blocked introduction of standards for all existing homes
   0 pts

21. Develop integrated land use and transport planning
   • much academic effort but little action
   • continuation of urban sprawl
   • car travel prioritised
   • 70% of new developments are Greenfield
   1 pt

22. Include sustainable design features in all new public schools
   • underway
   • part of carbon neutral schools - Action 11
   • 3 new schools only
   • un-enforceable
   2 pts

23. Double home-owners’ financial entitlement to trees and shrubs
   • achieved in 2008
   • should now be extended to landlords and public housing tenants
   3 pts
Sustainable Design and Planning cont’d.

24. Pursue triple bottom line tendering for land release
   • report due in 2008 but has not yet been seen
   • price is still the main determinant in awarding tenders
   1 pt

25. Pursue an urban forest replacement program
   • much background work
   • policy of complete rather than staged (according to the tree’s life-cycle) replacement
   • funding cut
   1 pt

26. Establish East Lake as a showcase urban development
   • considerable prep
   • many sustainability criteria fulfilled
   • asbestos on site
   • group that developed the idea has been excluded from further planning
   2 pts

How did they perform?

Total possible points - 48
Total actual points - 16

Sustainable design & planning score » 38%
3 Adapting to Climate Change

27 Develop a grant program for community groups 2 pts
- $1.2 million allocated in 2009-10 and $1.1 million in 2010-11
- program now closed, according to 2010-11 annual report

28 Prepare Government Agency vulnerability assessments 0 pts
- incomplete as of May 2011
- Government says it is “working with NSW to improve data at the regional level”

29 Prepare a climate change social impact analysis 2 pts
- published in September 2008
- some efforts made to respond to recommendations but significant Greens pressure required

30 Prepare an ACT and Region Vulnerability Assessment 2 pts
- partnered with NSW Government and ANU
- funded phase 1 - unclear how findings are being used
- subsequent phases not yet funded

31 Support the National Adaptation Framework 2 pts
- agreed to through COAG
- well underway before Weathering the Change
- impact difficult to gauge

32 Assess climate change impacts on our urban areas 2 pts
- 2 reports published in 2010 but made no recommendations
- unclear how information is being integrated into planning processes

33 Protect areas of high conservation value 0 pts
- no new areas protected since Weathering the Change introduced, other than for offsetting

34 Develop an ecosystem connectivity map 1 pt
- ANU report highlighted that connectivity was not properly accounted for in the ACT Spatial Plan
- ACTMAPi doesn’t show connectivity

35 Prepare a sphagnum bog mapping and recovery plan 3 pts
- plan published in 2009
- funds allocated for restoration and maintenance
- existing funding will expire mid-2012
Adapting to Climate Change

360 Plant one million new trees

• 741,000 as of 2011
• 17% are shrubs
• includes planting programs underway before *Weathering the Change*
• unclear whether arboretum included

**How did they perform?**

Total possible points - **40**
Total actual points - **16**

Adapting to Climate Change
Overall Score

40%
### Improving our Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>37</th>
<th>Undertake a community education program</th>
<th>3 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ACTSmart website created as online education platform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Home energy kits distributed in 2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Survey of attitudes &amp; behaviours due 2011 but not yet seen</td>
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<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>38</th>
<th>Implement sustainability in schools</th>
<th>4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• sustainability curricula introduced to all schools in December 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2010 evaluation revealed many benefits delivered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>39</th>
<th>Showcase renewable and energy efficiency technologies</th>
<th>2 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• showcases of solar, wind and energy efficient lighting but all at a commercial rather than residential scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• has not been promoted well</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>40</th>
<th>Facilitate a business roundtable on climate change</th>
<th>2 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• unclear what this achieved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• no longer meets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>41</th>
<th>Partner with key institutions to encourage research</th>
<th>4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• has funded a series of projects, provided grants to the ANU Climate Change Institute and given a solar bursary to the ANU’s Fenner School</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Improving our Understanding cont’d.

How did they perform?

Total possible points - 28
Total actual points - 18

Improving our Understanding Overall Score »

42 Develop fuel sale data legislation for emissions
   • already well underway before Weathering the Change
   • passed in 2007
   • data collection commenced in 2008
   2 pts

43 Undertake a carbon sequestration audit
   • completed by the ANU in 2009
   • recommendations appear not to have been followed
   1 pt

64%
Part 2: The complete assessment
1 Develop an energy policy

Three years after they promised it, the Government released their Sustainable Energy Policy in 2010.[4] Aspirational in nature, it outlines some broad ideas around large-scale solar and distributed energy, but lacks an overall vision of where and how our future energy supply will be sourced. Additionally, it is overly timid in its approach to renewable energy, particularly the role of wind, and makes little mention of specific targets.

2 Pursue carbon neutrality in Government buildings

This measure required Government agencies to develop and implement Resource Management Plans (RMPs) by 2009 and to report annually on their progress. An October 2010 audit by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment found that annual reports were inconsistent and lacked data[6] and that only one Agency had finalised their RMP.[7] The Government has only just drafted a framework for a whole-of-government approach to achieving carbon neutrality[8] (after the Commissioner told them to) and has only just put out a tender for a data management system to better monitor its carbon neutrality progress.[9] Subsequent to the publication of Action Plan 1, the Government set itself a deadline of 2020 for the achievement of carbon neutrality,[10] however current progress towards meeting this target is unclear as there is no implementation plan nor process for review of the implementation.

3 Establish a $1 million energy efficiency fund for Government agencies

Established in 2007 and re-named the Resource Management Fund in 2010, this was increased to $3 million in the 2011-12 budget.[11] As a revolving fund, any money invested in it translates to future cost savings, so it’s in the Government’s interest to keep it well resourced. It is accessible to all Government Agencies except schools and housing, and is intended to support projects developed through the Agencies’ Resource Management Plans. But there’s the problem – the Commissioner’s audit in October 2010 found that only one Agency had a proper Plan,[12] which makes one wonder whether the money is being spent in a way that will deliver meaningful long-term energy and emissions cuts. That said, in 2010-11, the money was invested in a range of beneficial projects, including energy efficient Government building upgrades led by the Department of Land and Property Services, solar hot water installation and co-generated heat at the CIT, solar lighting at EPIC and for the Department of Disability, Housing and Community services to commission community energy audits.[13] However, the funding’s overall uptake has been low and difficult to track.[14] Should the spending be part of Resource Management Plans, as initially intended, it would reduce Government costs, giving fast payback for the small investment required.
4 Develop & implement a Park-and-Ride Strategy

The ACT Government has made progress on Park-and-Rides, employing consultants to develop a Park and Ride strategy as well as a Feasibility and Concept Design Study. In fulfilment of its Parliamentary Agreement with the ACT Greens, the Government has constructed a number of new Park and Ride sites, including at Mawson and EPIC, and others are in planning. Further work needs to be done particularly on promotion and marketing.

5 Legislate for Greenpower to be offered to all new electricity customers

The ACT GreenPower Scheme is the first of its kind in Australia and has contributed to a level of per capita GreenPower uptake that, according to the Government, is double that of the next best performing jurisdiction, however, according to the 2011 State of the Environment Report, uptake is low (4.9%) when compared with the percentage of Canberrans who are aware of Green Power (66%).

6 Implement a renewable energy target (RET) in line with NSW’s RET

In 2011, the Government set a 25% by 2020 target with an interim target of 15% by 2012 (as compared with NSW’s RET of 20% by 2020). In February 2012, Minister Corbell reported that we are on track to meet the interim 2012 target, but noted that the data required to confirm 2012 performance will not be available until mid 2013. As for the 2020 target, the Minister said his Department’s modelling indicates we are on-track to meet the target, following the release of the first 40MW of large-scale solar. The Government will not reveal whether the current RET is consistent with cutting emissions by 40%, so it is difficult to know how suitable a target it is, however there are many indications that a higher target is both desirable and achievable. The target also doesn’t state how it will be met, as between GreenPower or local renewables, and it is not additional to the Commonwealth RET. It was indicated that the target would be reviewed as part of the finalisation of Action Plan 2, however it is unclear how this review is taking place and whether there are plans to consult publicly.
The Government passed legislation in 2008, the first of its kind in Australia, which grants car purchasers a differential stamp duty discount of up to 100% for purchases of new energy efficient cars.\textsuperscript{25} The impact of the concession has not been assessed, however data on electric and hybrid vehicle registrations from 2007-2011 shows an increase with 1 electric vehicle and 8 hybrid vehicles registered in 2007 and 10 electric vehicles and 240 hybrids registered in 2011.\textsuperscript{26} Whilst the full impact of the concessions has not been gauged, the existing data suggests that its overall impact has not been as much as was hoped. The Government plans to review the scheme in 2012.\textsuperscript{27} As part of this, they should consider what improvements could be made to encourage a greater level of uptake. This could include streamlining the currently slow pace at which new cars are added to the concession list and extending the concession to efficient second-hand vehicles and motorbikes, so that it is more accessible to lower-income individuals.

This action required the Government to commit to $20 million over 10 years. This started well, with the Government committing $8 million over 4 years to public housing energy efficiency in the 2008-09 budget, however it soon became evident that this level of funding was not sufficient to deliver widespread benefits to public housing tenants. For example, as of 2011, the Government’s figures revealed that only 26% of public housing had received some level of improvement due to the increased funding.\textsuperscript{28} Consequently, the Greens had the Government double the funding to $4 million in the 2011-12 budget and commit $2 million annually until 2014-15\textsuperscript{29} and are now bidding for this level of funding to be doubled to $4 million annually, as required in the Labor-Greens Parliamentary Agreement.\textsuperscript{30} Overall, the Government could and should be acting more swiftly to reduce energy consumption and costs for the ACT’s most vulnerable households.
9 Provide a solar hot water rebate

There is currently no dedicated solar hot water rebate administered by the ACT Government, however, customers are eligible for a $500 rebate through the Government-funded Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT), if they spend up to $2000 on energy efficiency measures, of which solar hot water can count for no more than $1000. The Government’s approach to solar hot water has, on the whole, been reticent. They did not support the Greens’ Bill mandating all new houses to have energy efficient hot water systems. This was passed with the support of the Liberal party. Neither party agreed to the Greens’ legislation requiring all replacement hot water systems to be energy efficient.

10 Pursue national emissions trading and reporting

Whilst this was already well underway before Weathering the Change was drafted, and the ACT alone had no authority to push the scheme through, the ACT did, through COAG, support the development of the scheme, which will take effect in 2015 (as part of the Federal Government’s Clean Energy Future Package) and play a crucial role in cutting Australia’s carbon pollution.

11 Invest $20 million over 10 years to assist schools to become carbon neutral

As of 2011, $17.6 million had been invested in the ACTSmart Schools Program, however, the Government is still developing methods to capture and evaluate schools’ energy data, meaning that progress towards the 2017 target cannot be definitively measured. Given that government schools’ emissions dropped by just 3% between 2007-08 and 2008-09, and non-government schools are not yet audited, it is unlikely that the 2017 target will be met.
Vehicles fuelled by CNG (compressed natural gas) emit fewer emissions than regular vehicles, however the use of CNG also has its drawbacks, namely: the lack of CNG fueling stations, the need to keep the fuel at an extremely high pressure to attain satisfactory driving range (therefore limiting the distances that CNG vehicles can travel) and the much larger and bulkier nature of CNG fuel tanks. There are also new types of bus technology that are more efficient than CNG buses, such as hybrid buses. CNG replacement was well underway before Weathering the Change was released, however it was boosted under the Plan, with an additional 18 buses purchased in 2008. Commencing in 2001-02, it saw $17.2 million invested over 5 years for 42 vehicles and an additional $4.84 million in 2005-06 for 11 new vehicles. CNG vehicles now make up 14% of ACTION’s total service fleet, so there is still a long way to go before the entire fleet is replaced. In fact, at the current rate of 70 vehicles over the past 10 years, replacement would take more than 50 years.

In 2007, $1.1 million was allocated to replace 1713 lights and additional funding was allocated in the 2008-09 budget for 5600 new lights to be installed. LED trials are also underway in Civic, Bonner and Harrison. It is unclear what the status of these trials is and how future roll-out of energy efficient street lighting will unfold. Given that analyses prepared for the Government indicate that lighting offers one of the most significant emissions reduction potentials, it is important that replacement plans are not sidelined.

Introduced in 2007, Bike ‘n’ Ride initially allowed cyclists to travel free, however, in 2009 the exemption was revoked. The Government promised to track how the introduction of a charge would affect patronage but they never did. It also promised to equip all new diesel buses with bicycle racks, however, as of October 2011, only 67% had them. Consequently, cyclists have been finding that buses scheduled to have a rack sometimes arrive without one, leaving them stranded. The Government is now saying that it is not possible to fit all buses with racks due to design constraints, so their revised target is for 80% of buses to have racks by June 2012.
Designing & Planning our City to be more Sustainable

15 Implement public transport improvements

Some important improvements have been made to Canberra’s public transport network, particularly through the implementation of the Labor-Greens Parliamentary Agreement during the 2008-12 Assembly term. These include the introduction of the Red Rapid bus service, extensions to the Blue Rapid bus service, and a commitment to a 30 minute frequency guarantee for coverage services. However, the Government is still largely failing to give priority to the kinds of initiatives needed to create a first class system of public transport in Canberra. Problems persist with the current network’s frequency, coverage, speed and reliability. Government policies are still largely focused on private car travel – in terms of both planning and funding priority. These problems are reflected in the fact that the ACT still has the highest number of car passenger kilometres per capita. It also has the lowest rate (8% of commuters) of public transport use in Australia - ACTION now has fewer vehicles than it did in 1991, drives fewer kilometres, and has a lower patronage - whilst, in recent years, other capital cities have seen sharp rises in per capita public transport use. These problems are also reflected in the ACT’s growing rate of car ownership.

16 Develop network and service design plans for buses

This was a poorly defined measure that the Government declared complete after it reviewed its network in 2008. The Government has recently developed a public transport network plan with a timeline to 2031 which, if implemented, will bring considerable improvements. A dedicated funding strategy should be attached to this plan. ACTION’s existing services would also benefit from external, expert auditing – something the Government has not utilised - as there are significant problems in areas such as overcrowding, frequency, reliability, coverage and connections.

17 Investigate travelling to work options

The ACT Government trialled a carpooling scheme in the Health Directorate and allowed salary sacrificing of bus tickets for ACT public service employees but otherwise it has done little to further this measure. Work from home options, sustainable transport incentives, car pooling, and end of trip facilities still need considerable work. The Greens have progressed this by passing a resolution in the Assembly in 2011 calling on the Government to develop options for introducing an ACT Government-wide car pooling service, and to investigate options for allowing Federal Government agencies to utilise the service.
18 Introduce a feed-in-tariff for micro-generation

The Greens helped to accelerate the introduction of the Government’s Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) in 2009. The FiT attracted rapid private investment, generating a marked increase in industry training. In an effort to manage the enthusiasm with which the scheme was received, the Government subsequently imposed a capacity cap of 15MW, which, together with the scheme’s high fixed tariff, caused a boom-bust situation, prompting the FiT’s closure in little more than 2 years after its commencement. This greatly disadvantaged local solar providers and consumers, many of whom had to wait months for their systems to be connected to the grid. The ACT Greens advocated for the FiT to be uncapped from the outset (based upon European experience) to avoid this scenario.

19 Pursue energy efficiency ratings for all buildings

As part of this commitment, the Government would extend mandatory energy efficiency ratings to commercial and rental properties. Instead, it noted that it was already committed to adopting the Australian Building Code energy efficiency measures for commercial buildings, and waited for the Commonwealth to introduce mandatory disclosure requirements for commercial buildings of over 2000m². It also blocked the Greens minimum standards for rental properties bill, which would have required energy efficiency ratings and disclosure for all rental properties. Under existing ACT legislation, all residential properties are required to have and disclose energy efficiency ratings at the point of sale. Rental properties that have energy efficiency ratings are required to disclose them at the time of lease. Unfortunately however, not all rental properties are required to have been rated, and there is no monitoring of disclosure for houses which have been rated. This lesser standard for rentals has led to high levels of disclosure non-compliance, which could be alleviated if mandatory ratings and disclosures across the rental market were legislated. A proposal for such measures has been floating with COAG for some time and was due to be introduced last year but was delayed. Regardless, it will be up to the States and Territories to implement the measures, so the Government should not use this to justify inaction.
Sustainable Design & Planning

20 Mandate greenhouse friendly options for new dwellings

The Greens received support from the Liberals to pass legislation that eventually mandated hot water efficiency standards for new ACT homes (from January 2010). The Government voted against the bill and, with the help of the Liberal Party, they blocked a Greens’ initiative to phase in the use of environmentally friendly hot water systems in existing homes.\(^{[73]}\) The Government has still not acted to phase in energy efficient hot water systems in existing homes, despite promising, through COAG, to do this by July 2010.\(^{[74]}\)

21 Develop integrated land-use and transport planning

Although the Government has put considerable academic effort into this action point, there has been little practical action. Canberra continues to spread out under existing planning and land release policies and the Government continues to prioritise transportation by private car travel. The Government is currently creating 70\% of its developments as new ‘greenfield’ sites (previously undeveloped land);\(^{[75]}\) it is failing to provide adequate public transport services to new areas in a timely fashion; and its funding priorities are focused on new large road infrastructure, such as the Majura Parkway. As a result, in recent years the ACT was the only Australian jurisdiction to increase the average kilometres driven by private passenger vehicles and from 2007-08 to 2010-11, the Government built approximately 100 times more roads than transit/bus lanes.\(^{[74]}\) Transport accounts for almost a quarter of the ACT’s carbon emissions.\(^{[77]}\)

22 Include environmentally sustainable design (ESD) features in all new public schools

Technically speaking, this is part of Action 11 (carbon neutral schools), and therefore should not be listed as a separate action. Whilst ESD principles are being integrated into new schools, the number of new schools currently under construction is fairly low and no mechanisms have been introduced to mandate that schools meet minimum environmental design standards.\(^{[78]}\)
In January 2008, the Government doubled the entitlement from $110 to $220. This entitlement should now be extended to public housing tenants and landlords. Doing so would not only create environmental benefits, by increasing the carbon sequestration potential of our suburbs, but it would also improve public health, as studies prove a strong association between mental wellbeing and natural vegetation in one’s immediate environment. That said, in terms of overall climate mitigation, this measure’s impact is fairly soft.

A report into Triple Bottom Line tendering was due to be produced by 2008, however this report has not been seen. Although a number of criteria are considered in determining the use of land for release, when the land is sold, it seems that price is the main (if not only) determinant in deciding which developer to award a tender to.

The Government did plenty of background work to develop a proposal to renew ageing street trees across Canberra. Unfortunately the proposal involved replacing all the trees in a street in one go, rather than just replacing the trees which are obviously at the end of their life cycle. When the Greens, following many residents’ concerns, raised a motion in the Legislative Assembly about this, the funding for the program was pulled, and it has not yet been restored to its previous level.

ACTPLA has undertaken a considerable amount of preparation for the development of East Lake, including a partnership with the CSIRO. The plans for East Lake tick many sustainability boxes, but unfortunately the site was found to be extensively contaminated with asbestos and until funding can be found to remediate the site, it is hard to foresee any progress there in the short term. We also note that the Australian National Sustainability Initiative (ANSI), the organisation that first floated the idea with the Government, was excluded from further planning work, as well as many of their community building plans.
3 Adapting to current and future climate change

27 Develop a grant program for community groups

Established in 2008, the Government’s Community Energy Grants Program provides funding for eligible ACT community groups to reduce their energy consumption through the installation of renewable energy technologies.[83] In 2009-10, these grants totalled just over $1 million and in 2010-11, they amounted to approximately $1.1 million. It should be noted that this overlaps with Action 8 as a number of the grants are to fund community groups to assist low-income households and public housing tenants to save energy. As of 2011, the Government is also offering grants for community groups to build support for action on climate change. The first round of these grants totalled $380,000 and was allocated to 8 groups. According to the Directorate’s 2010-11 annual report, the Community Energy Grants Program will no longer continue.[84] It is unclear why this decision has been made, particularly given that the program was only open for 4 years and its impact was not publicly assessed, although the projects it funded appear to have resulted in multiple community benefits.[85]

28 Prepare Government Agency vulnerability assessments

As of May 2011, these had still not been completed.[86] According to Minister Corbell, the Government is “working with NSW to improve data at the regional level”, and, until this is completed, agency assessments cannot be prepared.[87]

29 Undertake a climate change social impact analysis

This analysis was published in September 2008[88] and the Government has taken some steps to address its recommendations, however the scale and speed of actions undertaken could be more ambitious.

• **Recommendation 1** called on the Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) rebate to be expanded to lessees and public-housing residents. The Government is yet to do this.

• **Recommendation 2** was for greater investment in solar hot water for low income households and community organisations. 35 systems have been installed,[89] however, these were funded as a result of the Labor-Greens Parliamentary Agreement, in which we required the Government to double its annual investment in public housing energy efficiency.

• **Recommendation 3** was for greater investment in space heating energy efficiency. Whilst funding has been invested in this (again, as a result of the Parliamentary Agreement) only 26% of vulnerable households have (cont’d.)
Adapting to Climate Change

(cont’d.) benefited from efficiency upgrades since 2007-08.[90] The Government has no energy performance data for 85% of its housing.[91]

• **Recommendation 4** was to develop a risk assessment tool for identifying and monitoring vulnerable households.[92] The Government is currently conducting an audit of ACT housing to identify properties in most need of retro-fitting, however, it is unclear how this is being measured.

• **Recommendation 5** was for a household education campaign. This has been pursued through the HEAT program and, from 2009, the distribution of home energy action kits to ACT Public Libraries for households to borrow.[93] These kits are consistently borrowed out, suggesting that more ought to be produced. That said, many households are unaware that they exist. The Government is also funding the Outreach Water and Energy Efficiency Program which educates and helps ease the cost of living for low-income households, however, the Greens had to push for increased funding for this and associated programs.[94]

• **Recommendation 6** was to develop a best-practice utilities hardship policy.[95] For many years, the Government’s utilities concessions were failing to account for inflation and rising electricity prices, however, partly due to a Greens motion introduced in 2011,[96] the Government has since increased the energy concessions rebate to a level commensurate with energy price increases.

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30 Prepare an ACT and region vulnerability assessment

In partnership with the NSW Government, the ACT Government funded the ANU’s Climate Change Institute to carry out Phase 1 of the Climate Vulnerability and Adaptation Project in the ACT and Region Project.[97] Phase 1 comprised a scoping report which analysed and identified gaps in past and present research on climate vulnerability in the Australian Capital Region. The report was published in 2009.[98] It is unclear how the first phase of this project is being used, although the Government says that the findings were used to draft *Weathering the Change Action Plan 2*. Subsequent phases of the project are yet to be announced, given that no funding has been made available for them. The Government should recognise the need to move beyond scoping if it wishes to thoroughly assess vulnerability.

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31 Support the National Adaptation Framework

This COAG commitment was essentially a done deal by the time it was included in Action Plan 1. As an unenforceable policy instrument, it is difficult to gauge the impact this measure is having in tackling climate change within the ACT.
Adapting to Climate Change

32 Assess climate change impacts on our urban areas

The scoping report produced under Action 30 meets some of these objectives, however, the Government also part-funded the ANU’s IACCIUS (Integrated Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Urban Settlements) Project. One of the project’s publications analysed local climate variability and change in Bendigo, Canberra & Queanbeyan, Cooma and Darwin, however it did not evaluate the specific impacts that this would have on the ACT’s physical and social infrastructure. ACTPLA subsequently commissioned AECOM to evaluate the vulnerability of human settlements to climate change in the ACT. This report was released in August 2010. It does not make any recommendations and it is unclear how or whether it will be used to inform the Draft ACT Planning Strategy. In short, the Government deserves a tick for conducting the assessment but we are yet to see how the data is translating into policy and concrete actions.

33 Protect areas of high conservation value

The ACT is home to large areas of highly biodiverse and fragile grasslands and woodlands. Since Weathering the Change was released, a number of reports highlighting these areas’ specific conservation concerns and needs have been produced however little has been done to implement their recommendations. Many areas in need of protection are also dependent on the review of the Nature Conservation Act, which is now long overdue. It seems that the responsible parts of Government are simply under-resourced in this area. As far as areas that have been or will be protected, all have been done so to offset damage caused by urban development proposals, so should not be counted as genuine conservation measures. The Government is currently developing an offsets policy for future developments, however has not sought any public consultation around its design, thereby bringing into question the policy’s integrity.
Adapting to Climate Change

34 Develop an ecosystem connectivity map

The Government commissioned the ANU to produce a technical report on ecological connectivity in the ACT and surrounding region. Completed in 2010 but not publicly released, the report included a series of draft connectivity maps and recommended that connectivity be adopted as part of the planning process and applied across whole landscapes irrespective of the tenure or use of land. It also highlighted that the ACT’s Spatial Plan did not adequately address the issue of connectivity and made a series of specific recommendations, including amendments to the *Planning and Development Act 2007* and detailed modelling suggestions, to address this shortfall. The Government’s online mapping service (ACTMAPI) has still not been updated to display connectivity data and it is unclear how or whether the Government is responding to the report’s recommendations. The proposed development of Throsby, an area of high conservation value according to the ANU’s report, suggests that these recommendations have not been heeded. Given that the Government allocated $50,000 to the project, it’s about time they opened their eyes to it.

35 Prepare a sphagnum bog mapping & recovery plan

Sphagnum bogs provide habitat for endangered alpine species, filter water, regulate discharge and store groundwater. Given bogs’ vulnerability to climate change, the Government allocated $50,000 for a targeted rehabilitation and recovery plan, which was published in August 2009 and builds upon the rehabilitation program that had been underway since the 2003 bushfires. The plan recommends that the Government continue to rehabilitate and monitor the bogs, giving particular attention to addressing the impacts of invasive species, fire and recreation. ACT Parks and Conservation Services were allocated funds to continue restoration and maintenance (until 2009) and to collate all of the data that accrued from the bog program to date in a restoration manual. This data will be used to determine further monitoring requirements. Resources have also been invested in treating pig impacted bog areas, however horses remain a significant threat. Given that the monitoring and rehabilitation fund has now expired (bar some limited funding for one-off surveys), it is important to ensure that ongoing defined funding is allocated. According to experts, the existing bog monitoring program is also in need of review, as it may not be comprehensive enough to meet future requirements. Consolidation of existing research is also required in order to develop improved fire management plans for the bogs.
Adapting to Climate Change

36 Plant 1 million new trees

This measure encompasses all existing tree planting programs, including replacement (e.g. post Cotter fire) and riparian plantings. This double-counting of existing plantings means that the measure cannot be counted as additional. It is further complicated by what it defines as a “tree”. As of March 2011, the Minister was unable to report the Government’s progress towards this target, however, in May he reported that 741,000 trees had been planted, 17% of which were medium-large shrubs (which sequester less carbon than trees). The Government has also repeatedly sought not to clarify whether Arboretum plantings are included in the target. Aside from this, counting street trees, which are primarily planted for aesthetic purposes, as a climate change initiative, could be seen as a green-washing exercise.

4 Improving our understanding of climate change

37 Undertake a community education program

Under this initiative, the Government committed to provide: better information on utility bills, an interactive website, community education programs, events, displays and household information kits. The Government promotes a series of programs and services, through their ACTSmart website, which provide information for households, communities, businesses and schools to reduce their emissions and energy bills. Further educational information is provided through the Directorate’s website. In 2009, home energy action kits were distributed to all ACT libraries for loan by ACT households. The Government has also sponsored a series of environmental conferences and is showcasing renewable technologies in select locations throughout the ACT. ACTEWAGL has changed its bills to display total greenhouse gas emissions per quarter, however this was in response to a national requirement. The overall impact of the Government’s education initiatives are yet to be evaluated. They indicated they would update their 2007 survey of environment and sustainability attitudes and behaviours and that this would be ready in July 2011, however the survey has not yet been published.
Improving our Understanding

38 Implement sustainability in schools

This target refers to the Government’s commitment to develop curriculum packages to support schools to integrate sustainability into their existing curricula. The packages were distributed to all ACT schools in December 2007, as part of the Federally-funded Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AUSSI). An evaluation report of the curricula was published in 2010, revealing that: 94% of teachers found the units covered to be very or somewhat useful, teachers observed educational and social benefits for their students and that the materials had prompted a range of positive behavioural changes in relation to resource management.

39 Showcase renewable & energy efficiency technologies

A number of technologies have been installed on public facilities throughout Canberra, including the LED and solar car park lights at Macarthur House, PV at Tidbinbilla Visitor’s Centre and the PV arrays and vertical wind towers at Canberra Stadium. Intended as showcases, these systems have been poorly promoted and are not particularly applicable to the average Canberra resident given their commercial scale. An improved strategy would be to also develop something like the Canberra Sustainable House where an array of different technologies relevant to the residential sector can be viewed.

40 Facilitate a business roundtable on climate change

It is unclear what this initiative achieved as no publicly released documentation of or recommendations from their meetings can be found. Established in June 2008, the roundtable met 3-4 times annually to discuss opportunities to reduce emissions and build awareness of sustainability. They have since ceased meeting.
This is another initiative where the outcome is difficult to measure in the short term, however significant partnerships have been forged, albeit exclusively with the ANU. The Government has contracted the university to conduct a series of research projects for it, addressing topics such as climate impacts on urban settlements, ecological connectivity and carbon sequestration in the ACT. It has also part funded the Integrated Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Urban Settlements project (which has now ended) as well as a solar research bursary, (both at the ANU) and has provided a series of project grants to the ANU Climate Change Institute.

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The legislation had already been on the cards for some time prior to Weathering the Change and was passed in 2007. The provisions allow for a more accurate (though not perfect) assessment of emissions from the transport sector.

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The audit was published in 2009 but it is unclear how the data and recommendations are being used. In particular, the audit recommends the establishment of permanent research plots to monitor how different ecological variables influence carbon sequestration and that the chipping of removed trees be ceased, given that this practice releases carbon at 6-8 times the rate of unchipped wood. No evidence that the plots have been established could be found and the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment’s 2010 Investigation into the management of the ACT’s urban forest revealed that chipping of removed trees is still common practice.
Conclusion

It is hoped that this assessment offers the Government food for thought as it finalises its latest climate change strategy - Weathering the Change Action Plan 2. This new Action Plan should emphasise only the most relevant and measurable abatement activities. It should not be a shopping list of existing measures but rather a series of new actions with a proven capacity to deliver deep emissions cuts in both the short and longer term.

The ACT Greens recently commented on Action Plan 2.[117] Whilst it contained some promising ideas, the Plan is still only at a scoping stage and must be made more specific in order to ensure our legislated reduction targets are met.

Action Plan 2 outlined 5 possible reduction pathways, each of which comprised varying combinations of: building energy efficiency; sustainable transport; sustainable waste; renewable energy generation; gas-fired electricity generation and carbon offsetting.

Of the 5 options outlined, the Greens preferred Pathway 2 which included a combination of building energy efficiency, sustainable transport and waste strategies and renewable energy generation. The 4 remaining strategies relied too heavily upon one strategy alone or incorporated environmentally dubious strategies such as carbon offsetting or gas-fired electricity generation.

Given the ACT's strong reduction targets, widespread community support for change and the wealth of abatement technologies now available, never before has there been a better time to act on climate change.

The Greens look forward to working with the Government to ensure that Action Plan 2:

• builds on the strengths & learns from the weaknesses of Action Plan 1;
• incorporates only the most sound and effective reduction strategies;
• and is based on highly measurable abatement activities.

What were very timid first steps, in Action Plan 1, to address climate change now must be made up for with giant leaps if we are to adequately respond to the challenge of climate change and make our community sustainable and prosperous.
References
References

Executive Summary


Smarters Resource Use


[9] Ibid.


[14] Data on which agencies have been allocated funding is not centrally compiled


[21] Correspondence received from Minister Simon Corbell, in response to a question asked by Shane Rattenbury, Greens MLA, 14th March 2012.


[26] Corbell, Simon (2011), Answer to Question on Notice 1850, point 8, 15th November.


[34] Agreeing in December 2007, to develop a set of cross-jurisdictional measures to complement an ETS (the report can be viewed here: http://www.coag.gov.au/reports/index.cfm)


[36] Ibid. f(i)

[37] Ibid

[38] Ibid., p.2005. f(iii)

[39] ibid

[40] Legislative Assembly of the ACT (2007), Transcript of Evidence, 15 June, p.70.


[49] Letter from Katy Gallagher MLA to Amanda Bresnan MLA, 2 December 2011


[52] private car travel is the most popular mode of transport in the ACT, more so than any other Australian state/territory; ACT Government 2004, Measuring our Progress: Canberra’s Journey to Sustainability, p.16; ACT Greens (2011), “Will the new Transport Minister deliver sustainable transport?”, online at: http://act.greens.org.au/content/will-new-transport-minister-deliver-sustainable-transport


[55] ibid.; in the ACT, public transport use continues to flat-line

[56] The rate of car ownership in Canberra has grown from 544 per 1000 people in 1999, to 596 per 1000 people in 2009. This is the second highest rate in Australia – only behind WA with 605/1000 – and well above the average of 552/1000. ABS, Cat no. 4102.0, Australian Social Trends, Data Cube, Other areas of Concern, 2009. http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/lookupAttach/4102.0Data_Cubes-14.12.108/$File/4102_ other_indicators_2010.xls


[59] Answer to Question on Notice 2005, 14 February 2012


[79] ACT Legislative Assembly (2007), Standing Committee on Planning and Environment, Transcript of Evidence, 27 November, p.102.


[81] LDA Response to Supplementary Question, Annual reports hearings, 6th February 2012.


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[87] ibid.


[90] ibid.


[92] this was also announced as an election initiative: http://www.chiefminister.act.gov.au/media.php?v=7368


Improving our Understanding


[110] Many householders are not aware that these are on offer whilst those who do want to use them often have to wait as they are almost always loaned out!


[112] Whose ongoing funding is currently not guaranteed


References


[107] Whose ongoing funding is currently not guaranteed


Conclusion