



Protecting Canberra's Biodiversity

Canberraliberals

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The Stanhope Government's Record

The ACT is famed for its bushland setting and mountainous backdrop. Its mountains, parks, woodlands and grasslands are part of what makes Canberra special.

The 2003 bushfires and the ongoing drought have had a huge impact on the ACT's natural areas. In addition more than 40 plants, animals and ecological communities have been declared vulnerable or endangered in the ACT.

In the last four years nearly 1500 hectares of land has been added or committed to reserve, and four species have been declared endangered or vulnerable.

As a result, the management requirements have increased. However there has been no expansion of the resources to manage reserves, or develop and implement action plans for vulnerable or endangered species. The Stanhope government did promise extra rangers at the last election - only to cut the positions two years later.

The Canberra Liberals support the inclusion of important areas in reserves. However without the resources to maintain these reserves, this is at best a hollow gesture. At worst, it stretches already-limited resources to breaking point.

We are concerned that there is a clear deficit of on-ground resources, such as rangers, which is having an impact on Canberra's natural heritage. There is simply not enough staff to address weeds and feral animals, or monitor activities in the reserves. Under-resourcing threatens the biological diversity of the reserves.

More Resources for Conservation

The Canberra Liberals recognise that to maintain and protect our natural resources and our biodiversity, we need to fund more basic on-the-ground works as well as addressing the serious skills shortage. To this end we will inject a \$1 million capital each year for on-ground investment in our nature reserves and upgraded conservation works such as weed and pest eradication. In addition we will increase the ranger workforce by three new positions, and ensure that all the existing positions are filled.

This substantial increase in funding and resources will allow us to address the backlog of work, as well as committing to new and important works in our reserved areas.

Protecting Central Molonglo

The Canberra Spatial plan identified the area around the Molonglo River between Weston Creek and Belconnen as the next area for urban development in Canberra.

However this area has a number of endangered and vulnerable species and ecological communities, as confirmed in investigations and studies by and on behalf of the National Capital Authority, the ACT Planning and Land Authority studies as well as community groups and peak organisations. The ecological importance of this area limits the amount of land available for development.

Central Molonglo in particular is now recognised as an important location for biodiversity. However Stanhope Labor has given no commitment to study or preserve these areas.

The Canberra Liberals will preserve the area and further implement all the recommendations of the Planning and Environment Committee aimed at maintaining biodiversity in Molonglo.

Volunteer Contribution to Conservation

The work of nature conservation is embraced by many sections of the community. The Canberra Liberals recognise that this is not simply an issue for government officials.

Over the years the Canberra Liberals have recognised and given practical support to the valuable interaction between land holders, volunteers and land managers through the Landcare movement and other voluntary activity. Our commitment to further funding and extra staff will strengthen that cooperative effort.

Innovative Approaches

Much of the land being managed for biodiversity is already outside reserves, often in rural leases. The Canberra Liberals will continue to work with the community (especially the rural community) to develop innovative models of preserving and managing our biodiversity even when it is not in reserve. In cooperation with conservation groups and rural communities, we will explore and develop the concept of conservation leases.

Review of the Nature Conservation Act

One of the most significant tools for managing our biodiversity is the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*. This very important piece of legislation has not been comprehensively reviewed since it was written almost 30 years ago. The Canberra Liberals will complete the review of the *Nature Conservation Act* as a matter of priority.

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
New Conservation Ranger	150	300	309	318
Capital injection for on-ground works	400	1,030	1,061	1,093