



# Securing Canberra's Water

Canberra**liberals**

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The Canberra Liberals alerted the community to water security as a key issue for Canberra in 2004, and committed to the building of a new dam. While we were addressing the problem, the Stanhope Government was in denial and, quite irresponsibly, talking down the idea of increased water storage.

Three short years ago Jon Stanhope was telling Canberrans his strategy was to:

“put off for as long as we possibly can...the construction of another dam. If we can put it off forever, what a fantastic achievement by the ACT government that would be.” (Hansard 21 September 2005 page 3473)

More recently he told Canberrans that

“...Actew is now saying, through its reports and quite publicly, that we may not need to think again about whether or not we ever need a dam. (Hansard 28 March 2006 page 674)

It is only in the last year that Stanhope Labor finally agreed that we need to expand our storage capacity to help to secure water. We have seen three years of unnecessary delay and escalating costs.

The Canberra Liberals have a strong track record and commitment to securing our water future by a combination of building infrastructure and water conservation. We are aware of the impact climate change will have on our water supply and the need for more storage and improved water efficiency.

## A Time for Investment and Planning

A Canberra Liberal Government will:

- complete the enlargement of the Cotter Dam;
- undertake a feasibility assessment and planning for more storage in other catchments in future such as the Tennant Dam, so we are better prepared as a city if these water supply options are needed down the track;
- guarantee we will not contaminate Canberra's drinking water with waste water from sewerage treatment;
- introduce a free water audit and upgrade program based on the success of the Queanbeyan City Council;
- allow a rebate of up to \$250 on 5 star washing machines; and
- review the water restriction settings to ensure responsible arrangements continue, as rainfall conditions and dam storage improves.

# The Canberra Water Audit and Tune-up

The Canberra Liberals will introduce a water audit and water efficiency “tune up” program, similar to the Queanbeyan City Council model.

**The water audit will assess water and energy use, while the tune up would involve the installation of water-saving measures. In the next four year we plan to audit and tune up approximately 9,000 houses at a cost of up to \$700 per house.**

A Canberra Liberal Government will pay for eligible residents to have their homes audited and tuned up by a trained plumber.

The water audit will identify opportunities for reducing water and energy use. At a practical level, the tune up would involve installing flow regulators in basins and kitchen taps, water efficient shower heads and replacement washers for leaking taps. During the water audit and tune up, households will also have their toilet converted to a low capacity dual flush model.

Like the Queanbeyan program, the Canberra Water Audit and Tune up Program will be delivered systematically, street-by-street, house-by-house.

The funding can also be used by eligible home owners towards a rebate of up to \$250 on a washing machine with a 5 star rating or above.

## *Eligibility*

Everyone in government and community housing will be automatically eligible for the **Canberra Water Audit and Tune up Program**. Pensioners and holders of Commonwealth Seniors Health Cards will also be eligible. As funds become available in future years the program will be extended to other households.

	<b>2008-09 \$000</b>	<b>2009-10 \$000</b>	<b>2010-11 \$000</b>	<b>2011-12 \$000</b>
Canberra Water Audit and Tune up – Private Dwellings	300	1,200	1,236	1,273
Canberra Water Audit and Tune up – Public Housing		600	618	637

One third of the cost would come from ACT Housing’s maintenance budget, as much of the work in ACT Housing would be done in the course of the regular maintenance program. A Canberra Liberal Government would allocate a further \$4 million to carry out audits for low-income retirees.

The Canberra Liberal water-efficiency policies will deliver immediate and ongoing savings to householders through reducing water bills. This will be of greatest benefit to low-income households.

## *Employment*

The Canberra Water Audit and Tune up Program will create new, green jobs in the ACT and support suppliers of environmentally-friendly water saving products.

## Drought-Proofing Ovals and Playing Grounds

The Canberra Liberals will invest a further \$5 million over four years to drought proof our sporting facilities. This was previously announced in our sport policy.

The drought has led to many playing surfaces becoming dry and damaged. It is simply not a long-term option for Canberra to rely upon drinking water to irrigate ovals and sporting facilities.

The Stanhope Government has declared that no sports facilities in Canberra will be solely reliant on potable water by 2013. But they have not matched this target date with the funding needed to ensure the target will be met. Sports Minister Andrew Barr has said he expects volunteer sports groups to make a large contribution, even though many of these grounds are government owned assets (Media Release 24 October 2007).


In the 2008 budget the Stanhope Government only provided \$8 million over the next four years towards drought-proofing ovals. This investment is slow to start over the next two years, with much of the investment delayed until late 2010.

**The Canberra Liberals will contribute an additional \$5 million over the next four years to drought-proof our sporting facilities, with the bulk of the extra investment loaded up-front in the next 18 months, ensuring the long term health of our sporting fields.**

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
2008 Budget Capital Funds	500	1,500	3,000	3,000
Additional Canberra Liberal Capital Investment	2,200	1,800	500	500
Total Capital Investment to Reduce Water Consumption and to Capture Non-Potable Water	2,700	3,300	3,500	3,500

This funding will support a range of solutions including rainwater harvesting tanks, better use of drought-tolerant grasses and recycling of stormwater. In consultation with local groups, we will consider investing in synthetic surfaces that are compatible with the type of sport played by locally-based teams.

**As part of the drought-proofing program, we will explore options to collect rainwater from the roofs of large buildings close to playing fields and piping it short distances downhill to water public grounds.**



A number of suburban shopping centres are ringed by concrete and bitumen surfaces and send their rainwater runoff directly to stormwater. Where these centres adjoin playing grounds and are unable to use all their runoff for onsite reuse, we will explore options to improve the capture of rain for tank storage and subsequent use in dry periods. This may involve capture of water from government-owned buildings. We will also enter negotiations with other land-users including shopping centres and churches, to seek their assistance in helping the broader community.

The enhanced investment by a Canberra Liberal Government will deliver the most cost effective options to drought-proof our neediest sporting grounds. The new investment may also be used to rejuvenate facilities abandoned by the Stanhope Government.

## No Waste in our Drinking Water

The Canberra Liberals have a strong track record and commitment to securing our water future by a combination of building infrastructure and water conservation. We have always said that we would not contemplate the use of recycled water unless it stacked up in environmental, health and economic terms.

The independent group that looked at the health and environmental implications produced equivocal results.

In economic terms we do not believe that the recycled water stacks up. The recent report of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC) shows a waste water plant will cost \$100 million to build and \$4 million per year to run. The ICRC estimates that it will cost \$4.16 to produce a megalitre of water from a waste water plant compared to \$0.18 cents per megalitre from the enlarged Cotter Dam. Clearly recycled water does not stack up economically.

Recently the Commonwealth Government has promised \$85 million to build a desalination plant to address the salt contamination from the Lower Molonglo treatment works. A Canberra Liberal Government will not permit the desalination plant to be modified to allow infusion of waste products into our drinking water. We will support efforts to reduce salinity, but not as a means of getting waste water into our drinking water by stealth.

The Canberra Liberals agree with the ICRC that a waste water plant is not needed to solve the long-term water supply needs of the ACT and we cannot see it becoming practical for addition to drinking water in health or economic terms in the near future.

We see a role for recycled water for non-human uses, but it needs to be affordable and safe.



# Responsible Preservation of Water

The Canberra Liberals recognise the huge efforts of Canberra families to save water during these years of drought. We recognise that the burden of water saving has fallen heavily on families, and as a result they have lost a great deal of their urban amenity.

A Canberra Liberal Government will regularly review the watering restriction settings, in consultation with the community and with advice from experts. As rainfall conditions and dam storage levels improve, we will examine opportunities for responsible changes in water restrictions.