

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
NATURE CONSERVATION ACT 1980
NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY
NO. 263 OF 1997
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Nature Conservation Act 1980 (the Act) is the primary ACT legislation for the protection of native plants and animals. A 1994 amendment to the Act introduced a requirement for the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to prepare a draft nature conservation strategy that 'shall include proposals in relation to the protection, management and conservation of flora and fauna indigenous to the Territory'.

A process of public consultation is provided for. Accordingly, a draft strategy was released for public comment on 26 June 1997. Thirteen written submissions were received. There was no issue raised that was at variance with the principles discussed and objectives proposed. The draft strategy was revised in the light of comment received and with a view to a more concise final document. In accordance with section 15V and section 15W of the Act, the Conservator confirmed the draft strategy and submitted it to the Minister.

Section 15X of the Act provides for a draft nature conservation strategy to be approved by the Minister as a disallowable instrument. This is the instrument referred to. The attached ACT Nature Conservation Strategy is the draft nature conservation strategy provided for in section 15 of the Act.

The ACT Nature Conservation Strategy establishes a strategic framework for conservation of the native plants and animals of the Territory in their natural habitats. It examines land planning and management principles that are widely recognised as being important to meeting the conservation requirements of our biological diversity. Objectives based on the principles are established with accompanying implementation mechanisms.

The strategic goal is to protect our biological diversity and maintain ecological processes and systems.

Emphasis is placed on developing conservation priorities in an integrated regional context. A nature conservation network that links ecologically significant ACT lands with a regional network of habitat corridors is a key proposal.

Enhanced off-reserve protection of ecological values and a high standard of management of the nature reserve system are identified as important areas for conservation effort. Species and ecological communities that are threatened with extinction receive specific attention.

A monitoring system will be established to record information on changes in the biological diversity of the Territory so that environmental trends and issues can be more readily identified, management performance assessed and reporting obligations better fulfilled

An annual Strategy Implementation Plan will ensure that the impetus of adopted initiatives is retained in planning and management programs across Government.

Other issues are addressed in the context of current policies and programs for environmental conservation, refined as necessary to highlight nature conservation concerns. They include management of ecological threats (for example, pest plants and animals) and the benefits of community participation in nature conservation programs