



ACT Climate Change Strategy 2026-36: Overarching Framework



ACT
Government



Acknowledgement of Country

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We respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and their continuing culture and contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

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Foreword from the Minister



For over 20 years, Canberra has been a leading city globally in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but in 2025 we found ourselves at a crossroads. We had achieved a 47% emission reduction against our baseline, but we were 3% short of our interim target. It would be easy to say we've failed, but that is far from the truth.

Since starting on our journey to net zero Canberrans have reduced our emissions by over 40% putting us among the highest-achieving cities in the world, and we have reduced our per capita emissions from our baseline of 11.2 to 3.4 t CO₂e per person per year.

With 2045 only 19 years away now is the time to consolidate our work to date and lay the foundations to increase and accelerate our action to achieve net zero.

We also need to acknowledge that the challenges of climate change go beyond reducing emissions. Impacts from a changing climate are unavoidable, and we need to strengthen our city's resilience to a climate with more frequent and intense bushfires, heatwaves and floods among other things.

Canberrans have told us that you love our natural environment and want to do everything we can to look after it. As we transition, we need to ensure those in our community who are most impacted or can least afford it are supported. We need to make sure we are leaving a fairer city for the next generation.

As we enter this next phase of our climate action journey, the ACT Government commits to realising the aspirations of our community without ignoring the concerns; to not only reduce our emissions and the harm caused by them, but to do so in a fair and equitable way and ensuring the overall environmental impact of our climate action is restorative for our environment now and into the future.

As part of this commitment net zero by 2045 will no longer be the end point of our journey rather net zero will be one step on the path to a sustained climate-resilient, climate positive Canberra. A climate resilient, nature positive and climate positive Canberra means achieving and going beyond net zero and supporting our community and ecosystems to be resilient to climate extremes. It means looking not just at what action is needed to reduce harm now but how our actions can maximise the environmental benefit now and into the future.

From net zero to working towards climate positive, the ACT Climate Change Strategy Overarching Framework 2026-36 and associated action plans will position us to make this shift and show how ambitious, practical climate action can build a healthier, more resilient future for everyone.

Suzanne Orr MLA

Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water



Executive summary

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges we face, and the ACT has taken significant steps to reduce emissions and help our community adapt to the impacts of a changing climate. The next phase of climate action will be more complex, requiring more time and effort, particularly in the context of a growing ACT population and a Canberra climate which is becoming increasingly hotter and more variable.

A coordinated approach to climate action

The ACT Climate Change Strategy, consisting of the Climate Change Strategy 2026-36: Overarching Framework (the Framework) and supporting Action Plans to be developed over the life of the Framework, will help drive deep emissions reductions and get us back on track to net zero by 2045. Together, these will help shape the city that Canberra will become by 2036 by setting efficient and effective pathways to reach our climate goals.

A focused approach to climate action

The Framework presents the direction for a climate-resilient and climate positive Canberra and sets out three overall goals, two core principles that underpin everything we do and eight pillars to guide climate action and support our long-term vision.

Importantly the Framework recognises the importance of both mitigation and adaptation equally. Climate mitigation and adaptation must be pursued together: effective global mitigation, in which we must play our part, will reduce the severity of future climate impacts, while adaptation helps manage the impacts that are already underway.

This approach will help us better respond to an already changing climate and make real progress in protecting people, communities, organisations, and nature.

ACT Climate Change Strategy 2026 - 36

Our vision is for Canberra to be climate resilient and net zero by 2045, with a long-term ambition to become climate positive.

This means:



Climate resilient: being able to anticipate, withstand and recover from climate events, while adapting to long-term changes to the climate in ways that protect people, communities and the natural environment.



Climate positive: going beyond net zero by removing additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, creating an environmental benefit and moving towards climate repair.



Net zero: when the greenhouse gas emissions released equal the amount captured from the atmosphere and stored. For the purposes of this Strategy, this refers to Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions in the ACT.

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Our goals



Net Zero

The ACT is accelerating emissions reduction efforts and is on track to meet net zero by 2045. We're building a net zero economy that supports everyone to participate in and benefit from the transition.



Restoring and supporting nature

Through a landscape-scale approach, the ACT is strengthening resilient, connected ecosystems and reducing pressures that limit adaptive capacity, supporting species and ecosystems to adapt and persist in response to climate change while maintaining ecological functions and natural values.



Adapting our city

The ACT is prepared for the impacts of a changing climate. We're driving climate adaptation action across our community to protect people, mitigate urban heat, deliver more liveable neighbourhoods and support our natural environment.

Our pillars

While climate action touches all parts of ACT society, our efforts are organised around eight pillars to focus action over the next decade.

Natural
environment

Built
environment

Transport

Energy

Circular economy
and waste

Hard to abate
emissions

Agriculture

Government

ACT Climate Change Strategy 2026 - 36

● Our core principles

To ensure that climate action is effective, coordinated and fair, the ACT Government will apply two core principles across all climate-related decision-making.

→ ● **Equity**

The ACT is making real progress that is fair, equitable and doesn't leave anyone behind.

We're supporting those most affected by climate change and most impacted by the economic and social changes in the net zero transition.

→ ● **Resilience**

The ACT community, infrastructure and ecosystems are resilient.

We're strengthening our communities, our services, operations and assets and supporting our natural environment to withstand, respond to and recover from climate shocks and stresses, while avoiding actions that make things worse.

Our journey to date

2010 →

Legislated emissions target



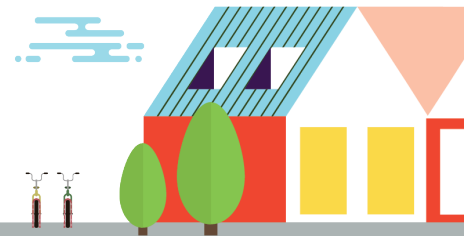
2012 →

Commencement of ACT's journey to 100% renewable electricity
Commencement of the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme



2016 →

Energy Innovation Fund launched



2018 ↘

Updated legislated emissions target: net zero emissions by 2045 and new interim targets
Released the ACT's Transition to Zero Emissions Vehicles Action Plan 2018-2021

↙ 2021

Launched Sustainable Household Scheme



← 2020

Achieved 100% renewable electricity milestone
Achieved target of 40% reduction in emissions
Passed Unit Titles Legislation Amendment Act 2020, removing barriers for installing sustainability upgrades
Released Zero Emissions Transition Plan for Transport Canberra



← 2019

Released ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-25
Commitment to zero emissions government by 2040
Stage 1 Light Rail opens
Commitment made to 30% tree canopy cover by 2045



2022 →

Announced electrification pathway for the ACT and commitment to phase out fossil fuel gas
Released ACT Zero Emissions Vehicles Strategy 2022-30
Launched Home Energy Support Program



2023 →

Commenced regulation to prevent new gas connections
Minimum housing standard for ceiling insulation in rental properties in force
Passed ACT Circular Economy Act 2023
Commenced electrification of government gas assets program

2024 ↘

Released ACT's Integrated Energy Plan 2024-30
Introduced emissions-based registration
Released Zero-Emission Transition Plan for Transport Canberra: 2024 Refresh
Opened Critical Services Building, the first fully electric hospital building in Australia
Commenced construction for Big Canberra Battery project
Released ACT Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design Guide

↙ 2026

Released refreshed ACT Water Strategy 2025-2045
Three neighbourhood-scale batteries now operational and supporting the grid in Dickson, Casey, and Fadden
We are here – it is time for a new Climate Change Strategy to guide our journey to a net zero emissions, climate resilient city

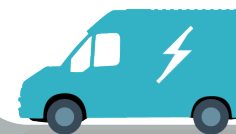
← 2025

Reached and exceeded target of 180 public electric vehicle charging stations
106 Transport Canberra electric buses in operation, and new electric bus depot in Woden opened. *Australia's largest electric bus facility
Released CBR2030: ACT's Strategic Economic Development Framework which includes Mission 2: A climate-ready city, leading Australia's net zero

What's underway and on the horizon

Light rail extension and transition to 100% electric buses by 2040
New Nature Conservation Strategy 2026-2036 including a supplement on adaptation for nature conservation in the ACT
Development of an ACT Landscape Plan
Ongoing upgrades to public housing with insulation and electrification, including all feasible public housing to be fully electric by 2030
Ongoing upgrades to public schools with sustainable infrastructure to improve thermal comfort and reduce urban heat

Ongoing electrification of government gas assets and transitioning to zero emissions vehicles for the government fleet
Next Integrated Energy Plan to be developed from 2030
New FOGO processing facility, a new Materials Recycling Facility and expansion of the ACT Container Deposit Scheme
Planning work on the Southern Gateway Corridor



Where we are at in 2026

Our targets

The ACT has ambitious but achievable Territory wide emissions reduction targets that are legislated in the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010* and regulations:

- 65-75% reduction on 1990 levels by 2030.
- 90-95% reduction on 1990 levels by 2040.
- Net zero by 2045.

Targets have also been set to benchmark how well the ACT is adapting to the changing climate across community resilience, water efficiency and tree canopy coverage (which is a critical mechanism for mitigating urban heat):

- We are aiming for at least 60% of Canberrans to report moderate to high climate resilience by 2030, increasing to 65% by 2036, measured through the Annual Community Resilience Indicator and the 5 yearly *Longitudinal Living Well with a Changing Climate Survey*. This is a new target based on an existing Strategic Indicator for the City and Environment Directorate.
- We aim to save 6.36 GL water per through improved water efficiency by 2036 (against a 2024-25 baseline) through the ACT's Water Efficiency program.
- We aim to achieve a 30% tree canopy cover target by 2045 (against a 2025 baseline of 21.8%) as committed in the previous ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025.



To further guide mitigation efforts in our key sectors, we have set the following targets to tackle our biggest emissions sources:

Transport

New light vehicle sales in the Territory are:

 80-90% ZEVs by 2030.

 100% ZEVs by 2035.

New bus and truck sales in the Territory are:

 30% ZEVs by 2030.

 100% ZEVs by 2040.

We are also aiming for:

 All new vehicles onboarded in taxi and ride share fleets are ZEVs from 2030.

Government transport emissions:

 Continue to ensure that 100% of all new government passenger vehicles are zero emissions (where fit for purpose).

 100% of all new government light commercial vehicles are low emissions vehicles or ZEVs until 2030 (where fit for purpose).

 100% of all new government light commercial vehicles are ZEVs from 2030 (where fit for purpose).

 50% of all new government medium and heavy-duty vehicle are ZEV by 2030 (where fit for purpose).

 100% of all new government medium and heavy-duty vehicle are ZEV by 2035 (where fit for purpose).

Energy

 100% of electricity in the ACT will continue to be from renewable sources.

 Phase out fossil gas by 2045.

Government operations

Targets for government operations emissions are:

 15% reduction on 2019 levels by 2030

 55-60% reduction on 2019 levels by 2035

 Net zero by 2040

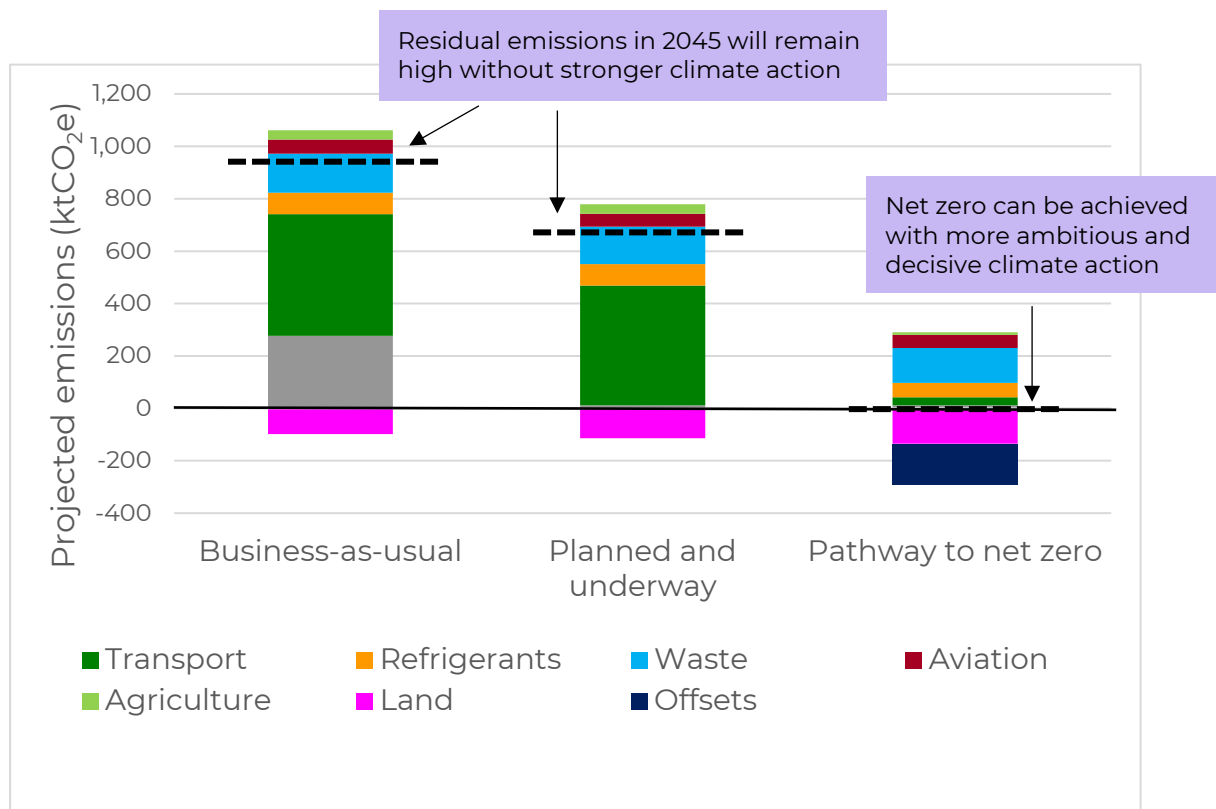
We are also aiming for:

 Scope 3 emissions from ACT Government operations are on a declining trajectory

Delivering on net zero

Our current climate policies reduce emissions, but they are not enough on their own. The scale of effort and ambition will need to increase in the coming decade.

To interpret what might happen in the future, three different scenarios for 2045 have been modelled below.



*Note there is a high degree of uncertainty in these emissions forecasts. However, they still provide useful insight into potential future outcomes and are one of several tools used to inform the prioritisation of the actions needed to keep us on track to achieve our emissions reduction targets.

Scenario 1: Business as usual

This is what happens if we only keep doing what we're already doing, with current policies and no new initiatives. This scenario includes the ongoing commitment to 100% renewable electricity, existing policies on the adoption of electric vehicles and new gas connections. It also includes national efforts like reducing certain refrigerant gases.

With these measures alone, emissions stay too high.

Scenario 2: Planned and underway

This includes everything in 'business as usual', plus actions already planned or in progress. Examples include reducing waste sent to landfill, further reductions in gas use and commitments to sustainable aviation fuel.

This leads to lower emissions than 'business as usual', but it is still not enough to reach net zero in 2045.

Scenario 3: Pathway to net zero

This includes everything in 'planned and underway', plus additional actions we may need in the future. These actions include increased walking, cycling and use of public transport, a faster shift to electric vehicles, replacing high-emission refrigerants more quickly, and more sustainable agriculture and land management.

This scenario shows a possible path to net zero, noting that there are many alternative pathways that could achieve the same goal.

What needs to happen next

To track to net zero by 2045, we need a stronger focus on cleaner transport, further electrification and building upgrades, enhancing the contribution of our trees and soil to store carbon and stronger action to avoid and reduce waste. For emissions that can't be avoided, we may need to offset them by supporting high-integrity activities that remove carbon elsewhere.



Understanding our emissions

Reducing emissions is critical to limiting global warming and reducing future climate change and damage.

Transport remains the largest contributor to the ACT's emissions, followed by fossil fuel gas use. Targeted and sustained ambition over the coming decade will be critical to meeting our targets.

Key emissions drivers in the ACT

Transport is the largest contributor to the ACT's emissions with ACT drivers doing about 14 million kilometres per year, using over 437 million litres of fuel in 2024-25.

We currently use about 13,000 MJ of **fossil fuel gas** per person per year, mostly for space heating and hot water.

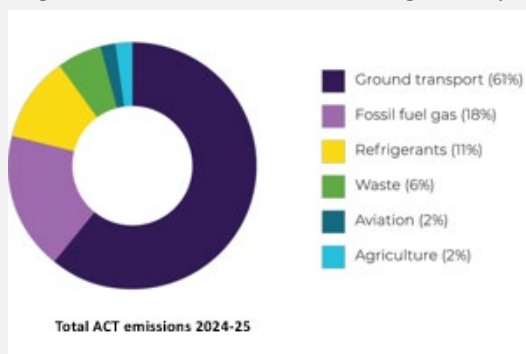
Fridges, heat-pump hot water systems and air conditioners all use **refrigerants**, which can be very powerful greenhouse gases – the third largest source of emissions in the ACT.

370kg of **waste** per person goes to landfill each year. We need to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, particularly organic waste which produces methane. Almost half the household waste going to landfill now is food.

Over 35,000 arrivals and departures at Canberra airport contributed to our 2% **aviation** emissions, even though we only count the fuel used in taking off, landing and taxiing around the runway.

Emissions from an estimated 110,000 animals contribute to our relatively small emissions from **agriculture**.

The forests and land of the ACT are currently an emissions sink, absorbing more carbon through the growth of vegetation than is released through decay or changes in land use.



ACT emissions profile 2024-25



Understanding our changing climate

The ACT's future climate will be determined by global carbon emissions. These currently put the ACT on a warming trajectory of between 1.5 and 2°C above a 1990-2009 baseline by 2050 and 3-4°C by 2090.¹ We need to continue supporting global efforts to reach net zero but also prepare for this future.

Projected changes				
	Medium emissions scenario		High emissions scenario	
	2050	2090	2050	2090
 Increase in average temperature	+1.4°C	+2.5°C	+1.8°C	+3.7°C
 Increase in hot days (>35°C) per year	+3.6	+8.0	+5.3	+12.8
 Decrease in cold nights (<2°C) per year	-26.8	-46.6	-32.4	-67.7
 Decrease in average rainfall	-7.2%	-19.0%	-13.9%	-12.9%

ACT Climate Projections to 2090

Global emissions are currently tracking between a medium and high emissions scenario, but they are closer to a high emissions scenario. We need to continue supporting global efforts to reach net zero but also prepare for this future climate through adaptation and resilience planning.

This future will include:

- longer and hotter summers, with more extreme temperatures, including longer, more frequent and more intense heatwaves.
- temperatures within built-up areas may be exacerbated by the urban heat island effect
- the bushfire season will start earlier and last longer, with more frequent severe fires.
- changes in rainfall patterns and seasonality, with likely drier conditions overall and reduced average annual rainfall, coupled with more intense droughts; but with more intense storms, increasing the risk of flash flooding.

These changes will impact across all sectors and systems in complex ways and across multiple time horizons, creating risks that may cascade or be compounded by other events. This makes the adaptation task challenging. It is important that we begin to adapt now and begin planning for the longer-term changes and challenges we will face.

¹ NARcliM 2.0 projections are relative to a baseline period of 1990-2009. There has already been 0.84°C of observed warming before the baseline period; see [NARcliM2 Australian Capital Territory Regional Climate Change Snapshot](#)

Understanding our communities' priorities

Recognising the growing challenges posed by climate change, targeted stakeholder consultation was undertaken in late 2025 and broader community consultation in early 2026 to understand Canberrans' views. The key messages that we heard are summarised below. Further detail is available in the [listening report](#).

Canberrans want a practical, ambitious strategy which:

- Acknowledges a Duty of Care for future generations.
- Equally prioritises adaptation and mitigation measures.
- Includes measurable targets for adaptation and mitigation actions.
- Identifies clearer accountability and coordination from government and between government agencies.

Canberrans also want increased focus on:

- Equity: Leadership from government to ensure climate action is fair and equitable.
- Transport: Decreased dependence on private cars and better public and active travel options and acceleration of EV uptake, with equitable access for low-income households and renters.
- Electrification: Continued electrification and adequate support for those who need it most.
- Considering consumption: Measurement and reduction of scope 3 emissions.
- Waste: Better waste management and a transition to a circular economy.
- Infrastructure and urban planning: Better alignment between climate goals and planning and infrastructure decisions, particularly in relation to densification.
- Adaptation: Better protection against urban heat and climate-induced natural disasters.
- Nature-based solutions: Stronger emphasis on nature-based solutions, particularly tree canopy cover and urban cooling.

The next steps in our journey

Beyond net zero – building a climate and nature positive, climate-ready city

Reaching net zero by 2045 marks an important milestone but is not the end of climate action. The scale and persistence of climate risks mean decisions made this decade must also prepare Canberra for what comes next.

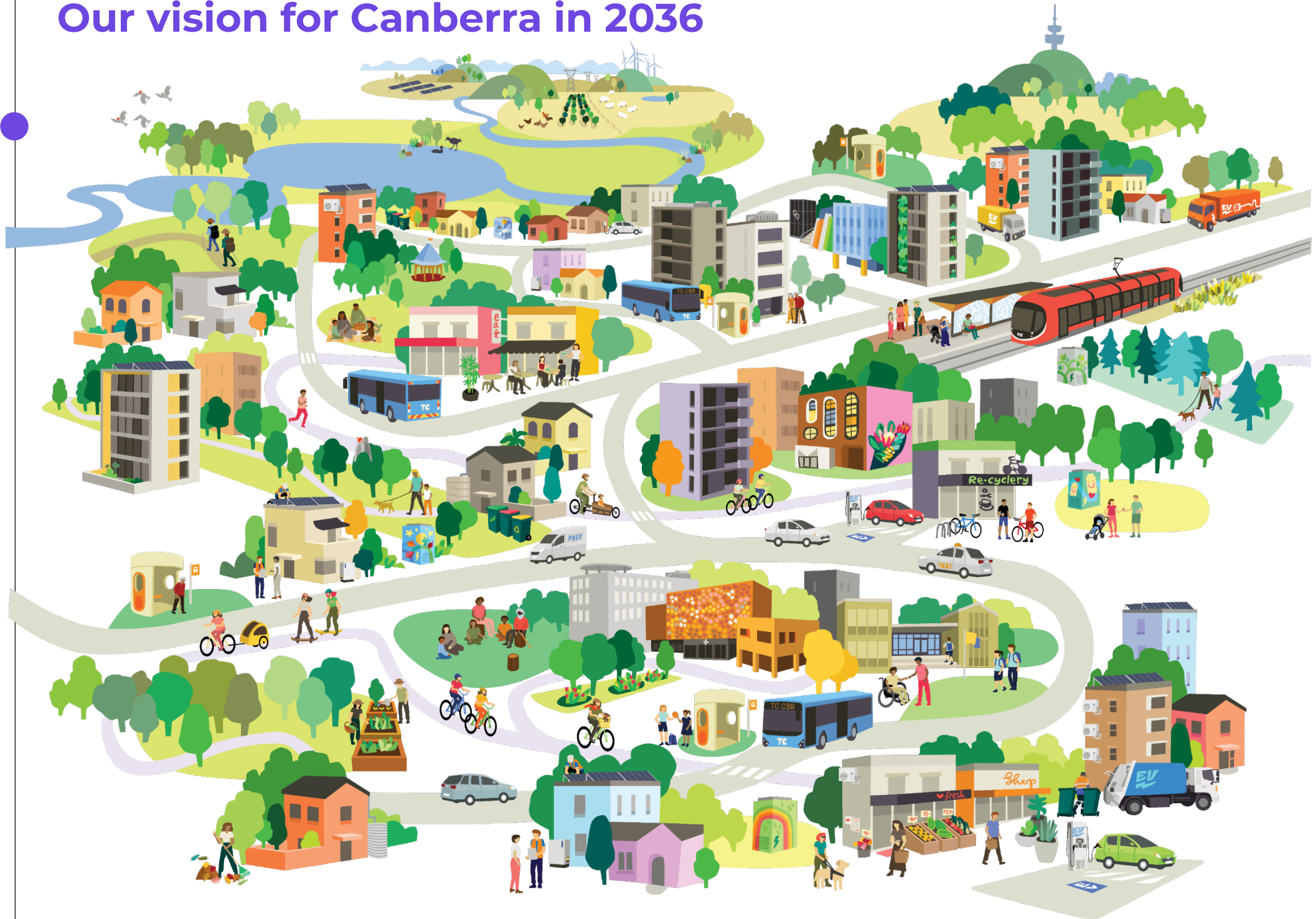
A climate and nature positive future reflects our ambition to go beyond net zero by further reducing emissions and increasing the removal of carbon from the atmosphere. In doing so, Canberra can move from simply doing no harm to making a positive contribution to our future and providing positive benefits for the environment.

Planning for a climate and nature positive future must begin now. The systems, land-use decisions, partnerships and investments required to deliver climate benefits beyond 2045 will take time to establish and mature. Delaying action would limit future options and increase long-term costs.

This Strategy provides the key steps for achieving net zero and lays the foundation for a climate positive future post-2045. This may involve the use of additional land-based carbon sequestration or the use of high-quality carbon removal offsets, while also continuing to undertake additional actions to reduce remaining emissions.



Our vision for Canberra in 2036



Mitigating emissions

Key milestones to net zero and beyond

The ACT's pathway to net zero emissions by 2045 is a deliberate, staged transformation from early climate leadership to a fully decarbonised, resilient and circular economy. Building on our achievement of 100% renewable electricity, the next two decades will focus on reshaping the systems that drive emissions – transport, buildings, waste and urban form – through coordinated planning, infrastructure investment, and market transformation.

The ACT's pathway to net zero is not just about switching energy sources; it is about systemic change over time, from building the enabling infrastructure and policy frameworks, to scaling zero-emissions technologies and completing the phase-out of fossil fuels. By combining electrification with a sustained shift toward public and active transport, alongside action on aviation, waste, refrigerants and the land sector, the ACT can achieve a deeply decarbonised economy.

This integrated approach positions the ACT not only to reach net zero by 2045, but to create a healthier, more connected, and more liveable city, and to move beyond net zero toward long-term climate repair.

Building the foundations (to 2036)

Through the late 2020s, the ACT will lay the foundations of a zero-emissions city. The release of the Planning and Transport Strategy will provide a critical integrated framework aligning land use, mobility, and infrastructure investment, ensuring that growth supports emissions reduction rather than locking in future demand.

Urban form will begin to shift towards transit-oriented development, for example, along the Southern Gateway, embedding higher-density, connected communities around public transport. This will enable a significant mode shift toward walking, cycling and public transport, reducing reliance on private vehicles and lowering emissions at the source.

At the same time, the delivery of new food and garden organics (FOGO) and materials recovery facilities will transition the waste system towards a circular economy, significantly reducing landfill emissions while recovering valuable resources. Landfill gas capture will further reduce methane emissions, addressing one of the ACT's most potent greenhouse gases.

Electrification will accelerate across the built environment. By 2030, all feasible public housing is fully electric, which will reduce cost-of-living pressures, and government buildings are electrifying, demonstrating climate leadership and establishing supply chains and workforce capability for broader electrification adoption.

This period will also see progress in less visible but high-impact emissions sources. The phasedown of high global warming potential refrigerants will accelerate, driven by the Commonwealth's gradual phasedown of hydrofluorocarbons. This will lower emissions from air conditioning and refrigeration across the economy. Early actions in aviation will begin, with increased uptake of sustainable aviation fuel and electric aviation on short regional routes as technology matures. The ACT will maximise land sector sequestration efforts, including urban tree canopy growth, soil carbon initiatives, and ecological restoration.

Strategic policy cycles, including further Climate Change Strategy Action Plans, the next Integrated Energy Plan and the Circular Economy Strategy, will ensure adaptive, evidence-based decision-making as technologies and markets evolve.

Scaling and acceleration (2036–2040)

By the mid-2030s, the ACT will reach a tipping point where low-emissions technologies become the default.

Transport transformation will accelerate on two fronts: mode shift, enabled by a mature public transport and active travel network, and electrification, with 100% of new passenger vehicle sales zero-emissions by 2035.

The extension of light rail to Woden will anchor a high-capacity transit spine, supporting significant mode shift away from private vehicles, reducing congestion and emissions and providing more equitable and accessible transport.

Active travel will become a mainstream mode for short trips, supported by cycling corridors, safe, walkable neighbourhoods and good integration with public transport.

Attention will then turn to the managed decline of fossil fuel use. The gas network will begin to be decommissioned in some areas, marking a decisive shift from incremental reduction to system phase-out. This transition will require careful coordination to ensure equitable outcomes for households and businesses, as well as alignment with electricity network upgrades.

A new Climate Change Strategy and the third Integrated Energy Plan will reframe the task from transition to completion—focusing on the remaining emissions sources, system resilience, and the integration of distributed energy, storage, and demand management.

Completing the transition (2040–2045)

By 2040, the ACT's core systems will be largely decarbonised. A fully electric bus fleet and a mature light rail network will form the backbone of a zero-emissions public transport system, while active travel will be embedded as a normal, convenient part of daily life. Travel behaviour will have shifted structurally with compact urban form supporting reduced travel distances and a greater share of trips via public and active transport.

Government operations will reach net zero, setting a benchmark and showing the way for the broader economy.

This stage will target residual emissions and legacy infrastructure. Fossil fuel vehicles will be phased out, and the gas network will be fully decommissioned by 2045, completing the transition to an all-electric built environment.

Remaining emissions – primarily from waste, refrigerants, and other diffuse sources – are addressed through a combination of further reductions, high-integrity offsets, and land-based sequestration.



Net zero and beyond (to 2050)

By 2045, the ACT will achieve net zero emissions, with a fully electrified energy system powered by renewables, a zero-emissions transport network, and a mature circular economy minimising waste. A highly efficient, transit-oriented, and walkable city form, combined with carbon sequestration, underpins this phase.

Beyond this milestone, the ACT will shift from emissions reduction towards climate positive action. This will be supported by a nature positive approach where urban greening, ecological restoration, and other carbon drawdown strategies will deliver broader environmental and community benefits.

Adapting for a warmer world

Key milestones for a climate-adapted and resilient ACT

Unlike emissions reductions, climate resilience cannot be ‘achieved’ at a fixed moment in time. It is a continuous process of informed decision-making and adjustment as the climate changes. Progress will be reflected in the ACT’s ability to maintain essential services, protect community wellbeing and sustain the natural environment under more frequent and intense climate impacts.

The ACT is well placed to accelerate action on climate adaptation and resilience, supported by strong policy frameworks and engaged communities. Adapting to a changing climate is a complex and evolving task that will require sustained effort over the long term. As risks intensify and new challenges emerge, ongoing investment, continuous learning, and adaptive decision-making will be essential to ensure Canberra remains resilient, liveable, and prepared for future climate impacts. Actions will be required across all sectors and systems to reduce Canberrans’ exposure to climate-related hazards.

We will focus on building climate-ready communities, where Canberrans are supported to prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate impacts through strong social connections and responsive government services. This includes strengthening community organisations and preparing the health system for emerging challenges such as extreme heat. At the same time, we will shape a climate-ready city. Canberra’s built environment will be progressively improved to reduce urban heat and maintain liveability. We will design well-connected neighbourhoods and resilient infrastructure, including well-designed nature and biodiversity networks to help cool the city and manage stormwater. Complementing this, our climate-ready government will ensure that critical services, assets, and operations remain resilient to the forecast change. This means integrating climate risk and adaptation planning across government to manage risks to our services and infrastructure.

Our pathway is grounded in a nature positive approach, which seeks to halt and reverse environmental loss and actively recover and regenerate ecosystems. Climate change is driving significant ecosystem shifts, so ambitious nature restoration requires conservation practices that account for and embed climate adaptation.

While uncertainty will remain, the following timeline outlines a practical pathway for progressively strengthening resilience over time.

Building capability for a climate-ready ACT (to 2036)

Through to 2036, the ACT will establish the core systems, knowledge and capabilities to better understand and manage climate risk. Climate risk assessment and adaptation planning will be embedded across government, supported by ACT-wide vulnerability assessments and consistent guidance.

Communities will be supported to respond to climate risks. Community Service Organisations will be better able to assess and manage risks to their operations - for example, developing heatwave response plans to maintain service continuity during extreme weather events.

Urban heat islands will be mapped, and associated planning controls strengthened. Tree canopy cover within the urban footprint will continue to expand in line with the 30% target. Nature-based approaches, informed by the Nature Conservation Strategy, ACT Landscape Plan and Planning and Transport Strategy, will begin to play a prominent role in cooling the city and improving environmental outcomes.

In the natural environment, conservation practices will increasingly incorporate adaptation to reduce pressures such as invasive species and habitat degradation. Water efficiency measures will also be progressing towards long-term targets, supporting ecosystem and urban resilience.

Climate resilience becomes business as usual (2036 – 2040)

By the mid-2030s, climate adaptation will be embedded in how the ACT operates.

Climate risk management will be integrated into standard business processes. New ACT Government policy and programs will include climate scenario analyses and account for climate impacts, and asset management plans will prioritise addressing risks for infrastructure exposed to climate hazards.

Communities will become increasingly resilient to climate risks, with community-led greening and shading projects supporting urban cooling and strengthening social connections. During heatwaves, cooler spaces will be available for vulnerable people, and continuity plans will support essential services like education.

Businesses will increasingly adapt to climate conditions by investing in energy-efficient cooling and protecting assets from climate damage. New economic opportunities will also emerge in areas such as climate risk advisory services and resilience-focused design and construction.

Tree planting will be complemented by targeted cooling measures in areas where tree planting is not feasible. These will include shade structures and water features for areas like town centres or playgrounds. Planning and building controls will increasingly encourage the use of reflective materials to reduce heat and permeable surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff.



Realising the benefits of adaptation action (2040 – 2045)

By 2045, climate adaptation will be deeply embedded, and Canberra will effectively function as a climate resilient city.

Government services, assets and operations will be designed and managed for the future climate. Infrastructure projects and new government assets will be routinely designed using future climate parameters – for example, road materials and buildings will be specified to withstand high temperatures and drainage systems to handle more intense rainfall.

Communities will be confident and capable in responding to climate risks. Social networks, resilient services and accessible information will enable effective preparation for climate events. The health system will have adapted to the growing impacts of climate change, with improved capacity to manage heat-related illness and other climate-driven health risks. Early warning systems, service planning and infrastructure design will all support a more resilient health response.

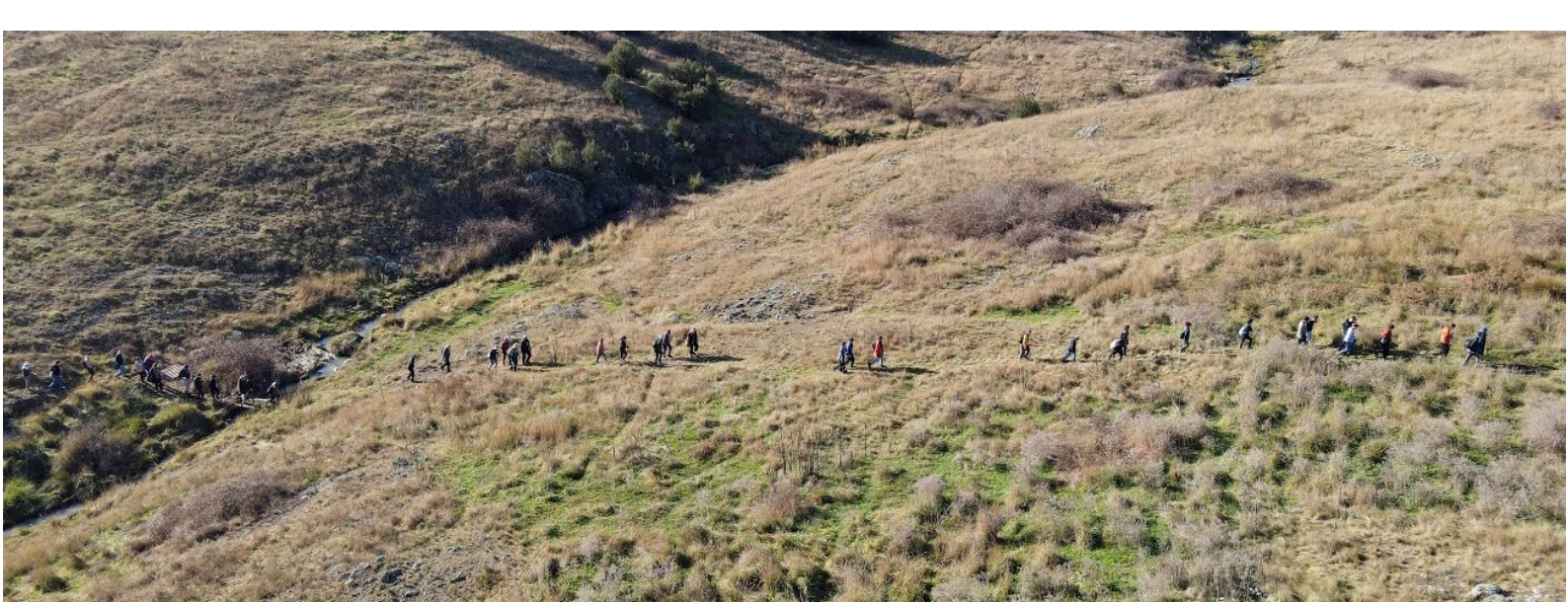
The community will become increasingly accustomed to dealing with warmer weather, particularly the increase in days above 35°C, as the urban environment design helps to mitigate heat impacts. The ACT reaches its target of 30% tree canopy cover and maintains it at that level thereafter. On particularly hot days, people will have access to either air conditioning in their homes or to easily accessible public heat refuges, equitably distributed across the city.

Maintaining climate resilience beyond 2045

The ACT's resilience will be sustained through continuous improvement and response to changing climate conditions.

Climate considerations will be an enduring feature of governance, with government and industry being responsive and flexible to adapt to new risks and conditions as they emerge. Communities will remain at the centre of adaptation efforts, with our resilience levels ultimately dependent on strong social cohesion and high levels of climate awareness.

Ongoing advances in climate science and adaptation technologies will further enhance the ACT's ability to manage climate risks over time.



● Our approach

Our goals

Our Strategy is driven by three fundamental goals we will aim to achieve by 2036 to meet our emissions reduction targets, prepare for a climate resilient Canberra and lay foundations for a climate and nature positive city.

Goal 1: Net zero

The ACT is accelerating emissions reduction efforts and is on track to meet net zero by 2045. We're building a net zero economy that supports everyone to participate in and benefit from the transition.

Reducing emissions is critical to limiting the scale and severity of future climate change impacts. While the ACT has made strong progress, particularly in decarbonising electricity, significant emissions remain in sectors such as transport, buildings and waste. Accelerating mitigation reduces long-term economic, environmental and social costs, and helps avoid locking in high-emissions infrastructure. It also positions the ACT to capture opportunities from the global shift to clean energy and low-carbon technologies, including job creation, innovation and improved energy affordability. Ensuring the transition is equitable is essential so that households, businesses and communities are supported to participate and benefit.



Goal 2: Restoring and supporting nature

Through a landscape-scale approach, the ACT is strengthening resilient, connected ecosystems and reducing pressures that limit adaptive capacity, supporting species and ecosystems to adapt and persist in response to climate change while maintaining ecological functions and natural values.

Healthy ecosystems are fundamental to both climate mitigation and adaptation. Natural systems such as forests, grasslands and wetlands store carbon, regulate local climates and help buffer the impacts of extreme weather, including heatwaves, fires and flooding. However, these systems are under increasing stress from climate change, land use pressures and biodiversity loss. Investing in nature restoration strengthens ecological resilience, enhances carbon sequestration, and supports cultural, recreational and wellbeing benefits for the community. A landscape-scale approach recognises that ecosystems are interconnected and that coordinated action is needed to sustain biodiversity and ecosystem services over the long term

Goal 3: Adapting our city

The ACT is prepared for the impacts of a changing climate. We're driving climate adaptation action across our community to protect people, mitigate urban heat, deliver more liveable neighbourhoods and support our natural environment.

Irrespective of the global emissions reduction trajectory, the ACT will continue to experience the impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, more frequent and intense heatwaves, bushfire risk and extreme rainfall events. Adaptation is therefore essential to improve resilience and safeguard people, infrastructure, services and ecosystems. Proactive adaptation planning can minimise economic disruption, reduce risks to health and safety, and improve quality of life, particularly for vulnerable groups. Integrating adaptation into urban planning, infrastructure design and service delivery ensures the city remains liveable, resilient and inclusive as conditions change.





Our core principles

To ensure that climate action is effective, coordinated and fair, the ACT Government will apply two core principles across all climate-related decision-making: **Equity** and **Resilience**. These have informed the development of this Strategy and will continue to guide its implementation, as well as broader climate action across the Territory. They shape how we design policies, prioritise actions and deliver outcomes. By applying them consistently, we can support a transition that benefits the whole community and stands the test of time.

Principle 1: Equity

The ACT is making real progress that is fair, equitable and doesn't leave anyone behind.

We're supporting those most affected by climate change and most impacted by the economic and social changes in the net zero transition.

Equity is central to the climate challenge

Climate impacts and the costs of transition are not shared equally; they are felt most acutely by priority groups, including people on low incomes, renters, First Nations communities, people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, young and older people, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. At a time of broader cost-of-living pressures, climate change and economic security are deeply interconnected. These groups often have the least capacity to adapt, yet face rising energy costs, housing stress, and increasing exposure to extreme weather. Natural disasters can drive up food and insurance costs, while inefficient homes and reliance on fossil fuels lock households into higher ongoing expenses. Without strong and sustained government leadership, there is a real risk that climate action will widen existing affordability gaps, leaving those who cannot afford to transition or adapt even further behind.

Government has a critical role in supporting priority groups, addressing structural barriers, and providing targeted, accessible support to ensure climate action improves fairness and resilience rather than deepening disadvantage. This Strategy intends to provide clarity and certainty to the community about the Government's role and responsibilities, while ensuring Government effort and investment is focused on where it is most needed. This includes making sure that the community has the tools and support to take climate action and adapt to a changing climate to deliver a fair and equitable transition.

Communities play a meaningful and complementary role alongside government by shaping and sustaining local climate action where trust and local knowledge matter most. Communities have a role in building social resilience by strengthening connections, encouraging behaviour change, and fostering a shared sense of responsibility for responding to climate risks. These efforts must be enabled and backed by clear policy direction, investment, and leadership from government to ensure no one is left behind.



Caring for Country and working in partnership with First Nations people is essential to building a climate-resilient and culturally connected future for Canberra.

Canberra is located on Ngunnawal Country, an ancient and diverse landscape managed and cared for by the Ngunnawal People for tens of thousands of years. The Ngunnawal People have maintained tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connections with ACT lands and waters.

Climate change has potential to create disproportional impacts on traditional knowledge systems and the continued health and wellbeing of this community. It is important to consider how climate change may affect cultural connections to Country and caring for Country as part of continuing climate action efforts. The ACT Government is committed to working with the Ngunnawal people and other people or families with connection to the land to support community resilience to climate change and explore opportunities to integrate traditional knowledge into ongoing land management.

We have a clear duty of care to future generations to address climate change in ways that protect their health, wellbeing, and opportunities to thrive.

Decisions made today will shape the environmental, social, and economic conditions inherited by future Canberrans, including the severity of climate impacts they face and the costs they will bear.

In 2024, the ACT was the first Australian jurisdiction to enshrine the right to a healthy environment in our *Human Rights Act 2004*.

This ensures that all Canberrans have a right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. A healthy environment is the foundation for the full enjoyment of a vast range of fundamental human rights.

In developing climate action policies and programs, the inter-generational equity principle must be applied to the greatest extent practicable by the Minister as required under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010*. This ensures that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.



Principle 2: Resilience

The ACT community, infrastructure and ecosystems are resilient.

We're strengthening our communities, our services, operations and assets and supporting our natural environment to withstand, respond to and recover from climate shocks and stresses, while avoiding actions that make things worse.

Climate resilience refers to the capacity of our social, economic, natural and built systems to withstand and adapt to climate change. It can be measured by how well these systems cope with climate hazards such as increasing heat, reduced average rainfall and more intense storms, as well as managing their cumulative and flow-on effects such as ecosystem disruption, health impacts, economic pressures, continued growth of our local industry, workforce stability, and rising living costs. At its core, resilience acknowledges that change is inevitable but focuses on maintaining the essential functions and structures that allow our community to continue thriving. Embedding resilience in our policies and practises can take many forms. For example, designing infrastructure that effectively functions under more extreme conditions, supporting communities to withstand and bounce back from disaster events, and maximising our capture and re-use of stormwater.

Over the next decade, a more climate-resilient Canberra will be one where climate hazards will occur, but daily life can continue with few disruptions. For example, homes and workplaces staying cooler during heatwaves, neighbourhoods recovering quickly from storms, water being managed carefully through dry spells and community members reaching out and supporting each other through disaster events.

Climate change is already affecting our health and wellbeing through more frequent heatwaves, flash flooding and bushfires, as well as the cumulative physical and mental strain these impacts can cause over time. Building strong, connected communities is essential to responding to these challenges. It is important that people feel supported, can look out for one another and have reliable access to the services they need before, during and after climate events.





Our pillars for action

While climate action touches all parts of ACT society, our efforts have been organised around eight pillars to focus action over the next decade. These pillars reflect the major sources of emissions across the Territory such as transport and energy use, as well as the systems and environments most exposed to climate risk, including our natural landscapes, urban areas and infrastructure. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

Each of the pillars identifies our vision for the sector in 2036, where we are at in 2026, and what needs to be done to achieve our vision over the coming decade. The pillars also recognise that emissions sources and climate risks are interconnected; for example, how land use planning influences transport demand, or how the built environment shapes energy use and exposure to heat and extreme weather.

Each pillar has a focus on mitigation or adaptation, and in many cases both. Some pillars are more directly linked to reducing emissions from key sources – for example, the transport and hard to abate pillars focus on decarbonising major emissions streams – while others also play a critical role in enhancing resilience to hazards like heatwaves, bushfires and extreme rainfall. Cross-cutting pillars, including built environment, natural environment and government, address systemic challenges and emerging opportunities. Together, the eight pillars ensure a coordinated approach that targets our largest sources of emissions while preparing the ACT community, economy and environment for the impacts of climate change.



Pillar 1: Natural environment

Our vision for 2036 is that looking after nature is at the heart of our climate change action.

Natural environment covers the protection, management and restoration of landscapes, waterways and ecosystems as the climate changes.

Where we are now

The ACT's natural environment, with its landscapes, water catchments, rivers and unique biodiversity, gives our city a distinctive character and contributes significantly to liveability. Our landscapes also support emissions reduction, wellbeing, and our local economy. The ACT community, as well as animals and ecological communities, depend on the natural environment to sustain our way of life, in particular relying on clean water, cooler urban spaces, places for recreation, connection to nature and productive agricultural land.

Our natural environment also plays an important role in storing carbon and supporting a climate positive future, through healthy soils, vegetation and ecosystems. However, climate impacts such as increasing temperatures, droughts, bushfires and flash floods pose a risk to landscapes and the ecological communities that rely on them. Climate change is already causing visible shifts in some landscapes and ecosystems, especially in the high country.

What needs to be done

We must ensure our approach to protecting and enhancing our natural environment has a strong adaptation focus, anticipating and taking preventative measures to improve climate resilience which supports delivery of the ACT's obligations under the Right to a Healthy Environment. This includes supporting biodiversity in nature reserves across the ACT and planting more trees in urban areas. Our approach must be informed by our engagement with the Ngunnawal People who hold deep knowledge of the landscapes, ecosystems, catchments and waterbodies of the ACT region, and must recognise that these hold cultural, spiritual and ecological significance for Ngunnawal and other First Nations Peoples and families.



Pillar 2: Built environment

Our vision for 2036 is for Canberra's homes, streets and neighbourhoods to be greener, more resilient and easier to live in – with fewer emissions, keeping people safe in extreme weather, and giving everyone access to comfortable, healthy and affordable places to live and gather.

The built environment encompasses buildings and infrastructure and urban design, including how they are planned, constructed and upgraded to reduce emissions and respond to climate risks. Because buildings and infrastructure are long-lived, their quality will impact Canberrans today as well as future generations. Sustainable urban design, infrastructure and buildings support the health, comfort and safety of our community, while also unlocking economic growth opportunities.

Where we are now

Our built environment is a complex system that has implications across mitigation and adaptation. While we do not attribute emissions directly to the built environment, emissions across most sectors including energy, transport, product use and waste are all linked with how we plan, build and use buildings and infrastructure in the ACT. Much of the emissions associated with the built environment are also embodied within materials and construction processes.

The way we design and plan our urban environment plays a critical role in how climate hazards such as urban heat and flash flooding impact homes and neighbourhoods. While Canberra benefits from extensive green spaces and tree canopy, these benefits are not evenly distributed, with some areas experiencing less natural cooling and greater exposure to heat. As our city grows and becomes more densely developed, we must carefully consider how our approach to urban planning minimises these climate risks

What needs to be done

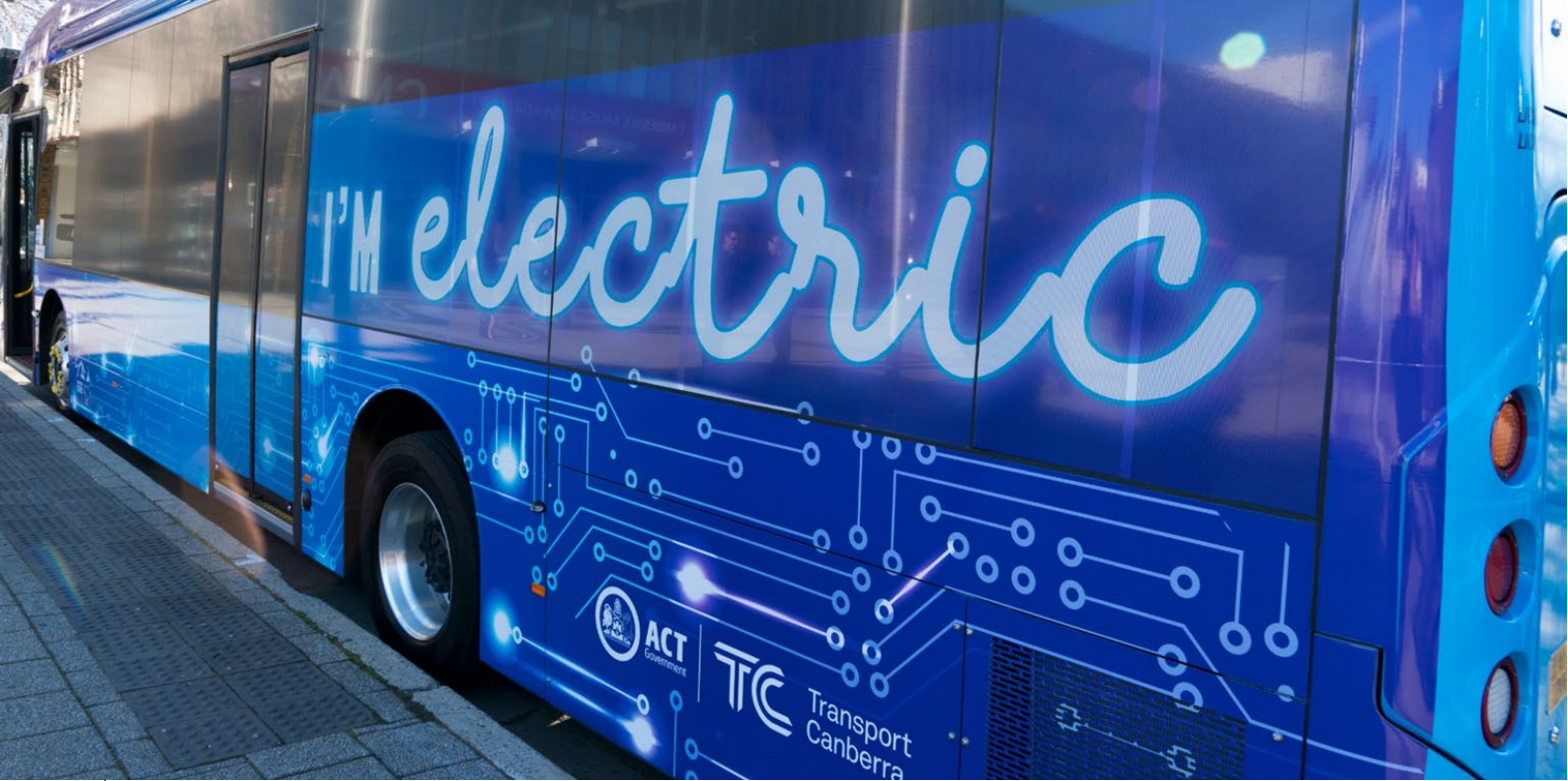
In 2036, Canberra is expected to house and support more than 560,000 residents, with planning and building underway to accommodate a population of over 680,000 by 2050. Balance is required to meet our housing goals, reduce emissions, and ensure our community can thrive in an increasingly hot and densified city. These different priorities can collectively be realised through a climate-ready approach to planning and urban design that ensures that homes and infrastructure are built to prevent, withstand and recover from climate change impacts.

Urban heat can also be effectively managed through cooling interventions such as planting trees throughout our neighbourhoods. Trees have a significant impact on temperatures but also provide wellbeing, ecological, economic and cultural value. Integration of green spaces and permeable surfaces similarly helps to cool the environment while also absorbing stormwater runoff and reducing flood risk. Some climate hazards need to be addressed at both the planning level, such as by avoiding urban expansion into areas with high bushfire risk, and at the building scale, such as through draught-proofing homes to keep out bushfire smoke.

Consideration will need to be given to reducing embodied emissions, particularly through construction supply chains. This includes the use of more sustainable construction materials and building practices. Embedding circular economy principles will allow resources to be used more efficiently across the full lifecycle of buildings and infrastructure, while also facilitating low-carbon choices in the community. While these emissions sit outside the ACT's current emissions inventory, their collective mitigation will contribute to global efforts. This is expanded further under the circular economy and waste pillar.

Equity considerations are also front and centre in our approach, recognising that not all sections of the community can easily improve the resilience of their homes and neighbourhoods without support. Our policy focus must comprehensively consider the needs of the whole community, encompassing homeowners, renters and public and community housing tenants.





Pillar 3: Transport

By 2036, Canberrans have multiple low-carbon transport options for moving around our city, including safe, accessible and convenient public and active transport, as well as zero-emissions vehicles.

Transport covers how people and goods move around the city, including travel choices, vehicles and infrastructure. Transport is fundamental to a sustainable, resilient and liveable Canberra. It connects people to jobs, education, health care and social life, and plays a central role in shaping affordability, safety and quality of life across the Territory.

Where we are now

Transport is the largest source of emissions in the ACT. In 2024-25, the transport sector released 1,067 ktCO₂e, accounting for 61% of total Territory emissions. Emissions have remained relatively stable despite the population increasing. As such, per capita transport emissions have been falling year on year and are down 20% over the past ten years. The majority of emissions continue to come from private vehicles, meaning continued emission reductions in this sector is critical to achieving our legislated targets.

What needs to be done

Experience has shown that heavy reliance on fossil fuelled transport exposes households, businesses and essential services to price volatility, supply disruptions and broader economic shocks. These impacts are not felt evenly across the community. People on lower incomes, those living further from frequent services, people who cannot drive, businesses and workers with high travel needs, and households with limited travel options are often the most affected. Reducing transport emissions therefore goes hand in hand with reducing cost of living pressures and improving energy and economic resilience by expanding access to reliable, affordable and low emissions ways of getting around.

Population growth presents both challenges and opportunities. Without change, more people moving around the city can increase congestion and emissions. At the same time, growth and densification create opportunities to plan neighbourhoods where daily needs are easy to reach, public transport is frequent and dependable, and walking and cycling networks are safe and shaded, making short trips viable for people of all ages and abilities. Integrating land use and transport planning can reduce the need for long car trips, lower emissions, and improve resilience to future climate, energy and economic pressures.

A holistic approach – focused on avoiding unnecessary travel, shifting trips to public and active transport, and accelerating the transition to zero-emissions vehicles where cars are still required – will reduce emissions, ease congestion, support public health and wellbeing, and build a transport system that is more equitable, affordable and resilient over the long term.





Pillar 4: Energy

Our vision for 2036 is for the ACT to continue to be at the forefront of electrification and the phase-out of fossil fuel gas, with a focus on a just transition supporting those who need it most.

This pillar covers how electricity and other energy sources are generated, distributed and used across the community, including improving energy efficiency, increasing renewable supply and strengthening the resilience of the energy system to climate and other disruptions.

Where we are now

Fossil fuel gas accounted for 17.8% of the ACT's emissions in 2024-25, releasing 322 ktCO₂e. While emissions from fossil fuel gas have steadily declined from 438ktCO₂e in 2021-22, they are still our second-largest emissions source. The ACT is implementing a strategic pathway to reduce energy emissions across homes, businesses, and transport and electrify our city by 2045. It is critical that we maintain momentum in our energy emissions reduction efforts to reach net zero by 2045.

What needs to be done

Canberrans rely on constant access to energy, historically delivered through a mix of gas and electricity. Canberrans are embracing the ACT's transition to net zero through record levels of consumer energy resources, such as solar panels and batteries, transforming how energy is generated and used and reducing pressures on the grid. It is important to strengthen the resilience of our energy system and electricity grid in the face of a changing climate. It is also important to adopt and adapt to evolving technologies and take advantage of the economic opportunities in this transition.

At the same time, the ACT is progressively phasing out fossil fuel gas. Continued action to transform our energy system, including a managed transition away from fossil fuel gas, will be critical to achieve net zero by 2045. Part of this will include support for owners in complex buildings like multi-storey apartment blocks to overcome challenges associated with electrification.

Maintaining 100% renewable, reliable and affordable electricity is essential. Continued electrification will not only reduce emissions but also support lower bills, more comfortable homes and improved air quality.





Pillar 5: Circular economy and waste

Our vision for 2036 is that the Territory is becoming a circular city, through increasing rates of resource recovery and declining quantities of waste to landfill and that Territory-wide consumption emissions are reducing.

This pillar covers how materials are consumed, used and managed, including reducing consumption, preventing waste, reducing emissions from resource use, and reducing disposal of organic matter and construction material going to landfill. A circular economy approach recognises that a significant share of the Territory's emissions are beyond our direct control and occur across supply chains and end-of-life processes, including emissions associated with materials, construction, food and waste.

Where we are now

The ACT has made substantial progress in reducing waste-related emissions and transitioning toward a more circular economy. Over the past decade, the Territory has implemented a range of initiatives to reduce waste generation, increase resource recovery, and limit landfill emissions. Measures such as the container deposit scheme, the ban on single-use lightweight plastic bags, and the rollout of FOGO collection services have contributed to a steady decline in waste to landfill and improved recycling rates. These efforts have positioned the ACT as a leader in waste policy innovation.

However, waste remains a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, primarily due to methane released from organic materials decomposing in landfill. While landfill gas capture has improved, it does not fully eliminate emissions, and reducing the volume of organic waste entering landfill remains a key challenge. At the same time, overall waste generation has declined despite increases in population and construction activity. This highlights the ongoing need to shift beyond end-of-pipe solutions toward systemic changes that prioritise waste avoidance, reuse, and material circularity.

What needs to be done

A circular economy not only reduces emissions but also reduces environmental pollution, addresses increasing resource scarcity and creates opportunities for innovation and economic growth. The ACT has a relatively high per-capita emissions footprint, reflecting high levels of consumption of goods, services and materials whose emissions are generated outside the Territory. Emissions from consumption-driven sources represent a major contributor to the Territory's overall climate impact, even where local emissions are comparatively low.

Waste generation remains a persistent challenge, with organic and other materials producing avoidable emissions when disposed of rather than recovered or reused. If consumption and waste generation continue unchecked, these emissions will persist for decades, making it harder to meet our emissions reduction targets. At the same time, population growth in the ACT will continue to place upward pressure on overall waste volumes and associated emissions, even as per-capita performance improves.

Traditional waste management practices focus on the end of the resource cycle. While recycling will continue to have an important role in keeping materials in use, we are seeking to move towards a more circular future where waste avoidance is prioritised. We want to focus on how we consume materials and resources, how products are designed, how we can extend the life of products and how we can prevent waste generation in the first place.





Pillar 6: Hard to abate emissions

Our vision for 2036 is that hard to abate emissions are being minimised and managed responsibly.

Hard to abate emissions refers to residual emissions that are difficult to fully eliminate due to current technological limits or limited territorial influence, such as refrigerant or aviation emissions. We must also address emissions locked in by past infrastructure, development and investment decisions, that continue to shape emissions outcomes for decades. Organic waste, for example, generates methane for decades when sent to landfill.

Where we are now

While the Territory is well advanced in reducing emissions, residual emissions remain a critical area for climate action. Managing these emissions in a transparent, credible and durable way will be essential to achieving and maintaining net zero over the long term. To date, the Territory has prioritised direct emissions reductions over reliance on carbon offsets, with a clear policy preference to reduce emissions at source wherever possible.

Technologies to fully decarbonise certain activities are still emerging, uncertain, or not yet commercially viable at scale. There is a growing recognition that addressing residual emissions will require a combination of carbon management strategies, and where necessary, the use of high-integrity carbon offsets that remove and durably store greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

What needs to be done

If left unaddressed, these residual emissions will make it difficult to meet legislated emissions reduction targets. In addition, while per-capita emissions continue to decline, a growing population represents an ongoing challenge to reducing overall net emissions.

Programs that address residual emissions can also be used to go beyond net zero in 2045 and deliver climate positive outcomes by 2050.



Pillar 7: Agriculture

Our vision for 2036 is that the ACT's farms and rural lands are healthy, productive and resilient — supported with good water management, climate-smart practices, strong soil and landscape care, and effective partnerships that help local farmers in a changing climate.

The agriculture pillar covers farming and land-use practices that produce food and materials, including how these activities reduce emissions and adapt to changing climate conditions.

Where we are now

Agriculture is an important part of the ACT's landscape, economy, and community identity, shaping how land is managed and how food is produced. In 2024-25, the agriculture sector generated 33 ktCO₂e, with most of these emissions coming from livestock. While the sector is a relatively small contributor to the ACT's overall emissions, it plays a significant role in land stewardship and offers important opportunities to support emissions reduction, carbon sequestration and climate resilience. Many land managers are already adopting more sustainable practices, but at the same time, the sector is increasingly exposed to climate risks such as drought, heat, and changing rainfall patterns, which can affect productivity and long-term viability.

What needs to be done

Climate change presents growing challenges for the agricultural sector, including increased heat, changing rainfall patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events. Addressing these risks will be essential to maintaining sustainable food production, protecting natural assets and supporting rural livelihoods.

On-farm activities are also a source of greenhouse gas emissions, while well-managed land can act as an important carbon sink, helping to store carbon and support emissions reduction goals and a climate positive and nature positive Canberra.



Pillar 8: Government

In this decade, the ACT Government needs to continue to lead by example through decarbonising government operations, improving the climate resilience of government services and assets, and supporting the wellbeing of all Canberrans.

The Government pillar covers the role of the ACT Government in climate action, including leadership and policy but also its provision of critical services for Canberrans and everyday operations. Ambitious climate leadership by government strengthens the resilience of those services and operations, demonstrates to others the pathway that can be taken and builds industry capacity to make it easier for households and businesses to follow.

Where we are now

The ACT Government is responsible for building and operating long-lived assets and delivering wide-ranging essential services; it is therefore critical that government manages climate risks and undertakes adaptation measures to ensure longevity of infrastructure and ongoing delivery of services the community relies on.

The ACT's first Climate Change Risk Assessment, completed in 2022, identified and assessed the key risks posed by a changing climate—particularly those affecting government services, operations and assets. This work provides a foundation for understanding where vulnerabilities exist and how climate impacts may evolve over time.

The ACT Government has committed to net zero Government operations emissions by 2040, ahead of the community. In FY24-25, emissions were 62,840 tCO₂e, representing a 4% reduction compared to our 2019 baseline. The vast majority (92%) of these emissions come from ground transport and fossil fuel gas use, with the remainder largely from refrigerant leakage.

As a major purchaser and investor, government has a critical role in driving emissions reduction through its own operations and value chains. Government's influence through procurement, investment and contracting decisions should be leveraged to reduce both operational and Scope 3 emissions across supply chains and service delivery.

What needs to be done

As the climate continues to change, the ACT Government must build on this foundation to ensure its services, operations and assets are prepared for the impacts ahead. This means not only strengthening our ability to withstand climate risks – such as heat, bushfire and extreme weather, including cascading or compounding risks – but also ensuring we are ready to respond effectively when events occur.

In this context, government plays a critical role in maintaining essential services and supporting the community during times of disruption. By strengthening resilience within our own systems, we can continue delivering for Canberrans when it matters most, while also prioritising support for those most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Taking coordinated whole-of-government action now will also support intergenerational equity by reducing long-term costs and risks, while delivering co-benefits such as improved health outcomes, lower operating costs, increased resilience, stronger local industries and a climate positive Canberra.

The ACT Government must continue to lead by example. This means not only decarbonising our own operations, but also actively testing and demonstrating solutions that provide clear, credible pathways for the broader community. By piloting new approaches, reducing uncertainty, and building market confidence, government can help lower the risk of transition for Canberrans.

This leadership role extends beyond our direct emissions. The ACT Government has significant influence through its procurement and supply chains. By strengthening capability across these systems, we can drive wider change and support businesses to innovate and equipping workers with the skills needed in a low-emissions economy. In turn, this creates the conditions for households and businesses across Canberra to act with confidence – knowing what works, what is cost-effective, and how to transition.



● Delivering our climate vision

Partnering across government and community

Working together will be essential to deliver this Strategy. Achieving our climate goals requires coordinated action across all levels of government, as well as close collaboration with industry, community and the research sector. By working together, we can share knowledge, leverage expertise and accelerate innovation.

Climate action needs to be part of everything we do – it doesn't sit on its own. This Strategy builds on and aligns with existing government policies, plans and programs, ensuring a consistent and coordinated approach to emissions reduction and climate resilience. By connecting climate action with other priorities – such as planning, infrastructure, health and jobs – we can achieve multiple benefits at the same time and make the most of our resources.

Collaboration across government will be essential to embed climate considerations into everyday decision-making, planning and service delivery. This whole-of-government approach ensures that climate action is integrated, efficient and mutually reinforcing, supporting a coherent response across the Territory. By aligning efforts and working in partnership, we can deliver a resilient, climate positive future for Canberra



A coordinated approach to climate action

This Strategy addresses the recommendations of the [2024 Independent review of ACT Government action on climate change](#). The review found that the ACT has strong foundations to deliver net zero emissions and strengthen climate resilience. However, it noted a need for an overarching framework that consolidates relevant visions, targets and goals and highlighted the importance of a strong Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) framework. It also identified opportunities to facilitate stronger partnerships and greater coordination with the ACT community, to provide clarity on medium-term outcomes, and to develop adaptation resilience metrics. This Strategy addresses these recommendations and directs the community, business and government towards a climate positive Canberra.



Directing climate action

This Framework sets out what we want to achieve for Canberra on our way to 2045 and beyond with respect to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Establishing a strong MERI framework will be one of the first actions to be implemented under this strategy to ensure that climate action across government is working towards these shared goals and that climate action is coordinated and impactful.



Delivering action across sectors

To support the achievement of the goals identified in this overarching framework, shorter-term action plans will be released as part of the Strategy. Sector-specific plans will also support the overarching framework.



Aligning action across Government

This overarching framework sets out what we want to achieve in the medium and long term. Other ACT Government strategies and action plans will be crafted to align with this Strategy and will together work to achieve our climate goals. We recognise that decisions across a range of domains are connected and all contribute to our climate outcomes.



Staying accountable

Strong governance is vital to help ACT Government, industry and community work together towards shared climate goals. Clear processes and accountability will help us stay on track, respond to new information and ensure our efforts to reduce emissions and manage climate risks are transparent and long-lasting.

The ACT Government will oversee the delivery of this Strategy through regular planning, monitoring and reporting. Progress will be reported annually to the community through the Minister's Annual Report under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010*. Reporting will capture climate action across government, recognising that climate outcomes are delivered not only through the Strategy but also through a range of related strategies and initiatives. Alongside expert advice and community feedback, this will provide a feedback loop to ensure our vision and outcomes continue to be effective, evidence-based and aligned to the Territory's needs.

Within this decade, climate science, technologies, markets and policies will continue to evolve alongside population growth, economic shifts and global action. Flexibility is needed to allow the Strategy to adapt over time and ensure it is continuing to support emerging issues and the Territory's needs. A 5-yearly independent review, as required under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010*, will provide the foundations to ensure our climate action remains relevant and effective. This work will support a mid-point review of the Overarching Framework in 2030. The separate Action Plans also allow Government to continue identifying and implementing actions that address evolving or emerging priority gaps and opportunities.

How we will collaborate

The Minister's Annual Report under the Climate Change and Greenhouse Reduction Act 2010 is released every year.

The **Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water** is responsible for administering the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010.

The ACT Government works with other states, territories and the Commonwealth to share knowledge, align policies and strengthen collective action.

The **ACT Climate Change Council** provides independent advice to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water on reducing emissions and adapting to climate change.

The **ACT Climate Change Council** meets quarterly to discuss emerging issues.

The ACT Government will continue working directly with community groups, businesses and local organisations to support ongoing programs and initiatives and to identify emerging community concerns.

The **Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment** is an independent statutory position that investigates complaints and conducts investigations related to the environment in the ACT.

The **Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment** delivers a State of the Environment report every four years.

Feedback and data from the community and other stakeholders will be fed back into internal ACT Government working groups and inform ongoing policy and program development and prioritisation.

The ACT Government is accountable for and provides access to key climate information so the community can track progress, learn about government initiatives and access data and resources to support individual climate action.

Data is collected to show progress towards climate action against performance indicators.

An independent review of ACT Government climate action must be conducted every 5 years.

Together, these arrangements ensure the ACT continues to work collaboratively and responds to community interest, scientific evidence, and long-term risks and opportunities

Glossary

Term	Definition
Climate change adaptation	Actions taken to help communities and ecosystems adjust to changing climate conditions and their effects.
Climate change mitigation	Efforts to reduce or prevent the release of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.
ktCO ₂ e	Kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This is the standard unit used in climate accounting to measure the total warming impact of various greenhouse gases, combining them into a single, easily comparable figure based on their heat-trapping abilities.
Consumption based emissions	These are the emissions linked to the goods and services the Territory uses, no matter where those emissions occur. This includes emissions from the supply chain of goods and services, including production, transportation and disposal.
Climate positive	Reducing emissions beyond net zero by removing additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and moving towards climate repair.
Embodied emissions	The generation and removal of emissions associated with the creation and end-of-life disposal of an asset. This includes the emissions associated with the production and transportation of materials, construction related emissions and end-of-life emissions.
Fossil fuel gas	The ACT Government uses the term ‘fossil fuel gas’ rather than ‘natural gas’ as it clearly identifies that we are discussing non-renewable gases. Fossil fuel gas is found in the Earth’s crust. It predominantly consists of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas; once extracted and burned, it cannot be renewed.
FOGO	Food organics and garden organics
First Nations	For the purposes of this Strategy, “First Nations” refers to the broader ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including groups with connections to the ACT.
Greenhouse gas emissions	Any of the gases whose absorption of solar radiation is responsible for the greenhouse effect including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorocarbons. Reference to emissions in this document refers to greenhouse gas emissions.
Light vehicles	Passenger cars and light commercial vehicles with a gross vehicle mass of up to 3.5 tonnes.
NARcliM	The NSW and Australian Climate Modelling project in which the ACT partners with NSW and other jurisdictions to provide regional climate projections for the ACT.
Nature Positive	A term used to describe circumstances where nature – species and ecosystems – is being repaired and is regenerating rather than being in decline.

Net zero emissions	When the greenhouse gas emissions released equal the amount captured from the atmosphere and stored. For the purposes of this Strategy, this refers to Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions only.
Ngunnawal	The ACT Government recognises the Ngunnawal People as Traditional Custodians of the ACT and surrounding region. The Government acknowledges that other people and families also have a traditional connection to the lands of the ACT and region, and we respect this connection to Country.
Operational emissions	Emissions generated during the use of the asset and can include operational energy, operational water, other operational processes and user's utilisation of the asset.
Priority groups	Some population groups are at increased risk in the changing climate. The following groups have been identified as priority and we will continue working to support these groups to transition to net zero and become more resilient: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, children and young people, renters, people with disability and chronic health conditions, culturally and linguistically diverse peoples, older people, low-income households.
Refrigerant	Substances classified as 'Scheduled Substances' under the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989 (OPSGG Act), commonly used in heat pump and reverse cycle air-conditioner (RCAC) equipment.
Resilience	The capacity of communities, environments and economies to cope with a hazardous event or disturbance, while maintaining their essential functions and structure.
Scope 1 emissions	At a territory level, these are emissions released from the direct combustion of fossil fuels or fugitive emissions from activities occurring in the ACT from owned or controlled sources. This includes emissions from cars, trucks and buses travelling within the Territory, agriculture, and waste disposal. Scope 1 emissions are also measured for ACT Government as an organisation and refers to the direct emissions from sources that are owned or controlled by ACT Government.
Scope 2 emissions	Any emissions associated with the use of grid-supplied electricity. Scope 2 emissions in the ACT, as a Territory and for ACT Government, is considered zero due to the commitment to 100% renewable electricity.
Scope 3 emissions	At a territory level, this includes all other indirect emissions that occur outside of our borders but are driven by the activities within the Territory. This includes emissions associated with the production, transport, use and disposal of goods and services consumed in the ACT, as well as emissions from construction materials, food, waste, aviation, and other activities influenced by ACT households, businesses and government. Scope 3 for Government operations relates to indirect emissions that are a consequence of ACT Government activities, including from purchased goods and services, business travel, employee commuting and leased assets.
ZEV	A zero emissions vehicle (ZEV) is any vehicle that does not produce greenhouse gas emissions when driven. A ZEV can be any type of vehicle from a motorbike to a passenger car to a freight truck. The two main types of ZEV are: • battery electric vehicles (BEVs - commonly known as EVs) which use electric motors and are powered by rechargeable batteries using energy from the ACT's 100% renewable electricity grid. EVs are the most common type of ZEV in the ACT and globally.

- hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles which also use electric motors, but don't use electricity from the grid. Instead, they use hydrogen as a fuel to generate electricity through a chemical reaction.

ZEVs do not include hybrid or plug-in hybrid vehicles.

ACT Climate Change Strategy 2026-36: Overarching Framework

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