



Australian Institute of  
Landscape Architects

Climate Change Policy  
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate  
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Dear Sir/Madam

**ACT's Climate Change Strategy: To a Net Zero Emissions Territory  
Discussion Paper December 2017**

Thank you for allowing the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects ACT Chapter (AILA ACT) to make a late submission on the. **ACT's Climate Change Strategy: To a Net Zero Emissions Territory Discussion Paper December 2017** (Discussion Paper).

**The** AILA ACT is heartened by the leadership the ACT Government is demonstrating with its emission targets and action on climate change. This kind of leadership is important nationally, setting an example and the much warranted pace for action.

Because the 'living infrastructure' can make an enormous contribution to Canberra's resilience to climate change, the AILA ACT also commends the ACT Government on its preparation and release of the **Canberra's Living Infrastructure: Information Paper, February 2018**.

**Specific Feedback**

The Discussion Paper poses a number of questions to garner feedback on the targets, policies and actions outlined for the sectors of Transport, Energy, Waste and Land Use.

AILA ACT:

- Applauds the adoption of a net zero emissions target by 2045 (or earlier) and encourages the ACT Government to take innovative measures across all sectors of its administration to effect the step change needed.
- Agrees with the interim targets proposed, however, given these are based on several 'key considerations', it would be appropriate to 'back' these up with some contingency planning. Undertaking some scenarios around diminishing the ACT's capacity to be carbon neutral through a diminished 'relative prosperity' could well be instructive for developing more equitable measures. There is a great deal that can be achieved through more responsive urban planning and landscape design with an emphasis on creating 'district' initiatives for reducing carbon emissions.
- Concurs with the recommendation on the 'social cost' of carbon and the decision to invest in abatement measures rather than purchase offsets to achieve targets. This is an investment in change. However, as activities and actions that generate carbon emissions cross geopolitical boundaries, so too should 'carbon accounting' and abate actions. As Canberra is at the centre, and influences, a region of diverse, natural and agricultural landscapes along with their associated communities, the decision as to where to invest in abatement measures should be on where it will have maximum effect. This could well

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be outside the ACT borders and include conservation/rehabilitation of significant landscapes.

- Supports the push for all energy to come from renewable sources (and alternatives such as biogas) but also considers that policies must address reducing the demand and cost of energy. Good canopy trees, roof gardens and green walls can do a lot to change the energy demanded to cool, heat and ventilate buildings. However, innovative design and investment in new technologies in the public realm can also create opportunities to generate renewable energy at the local and district level. A 'distributed', diverse energy system makes sense with regard to keeping running costs lower and improving the resilience of the system and community to recover from extreme events.
- Favours the approach to create effective, more equitable choice in the transport system. Reducing the need for commuting and further investment in public transport are important but if active travel - walking and cycling - are to become 'mainstream' choices then the design of direct, safe and highly accessible routes and amenities must be prioritised. Giving emphasis to the 'active travel' infrastructure will require a shift in how redevelopment, new subdivision and transport projects are delivered – it will mean, essentially, that to ensure connectivity in the system the public spaces have to be delivered 'upfront'.
- Considers that waste has become such a significant issue that emphasis has to be on both technology (i.e. its effective recovery and re use) and behaviour change, particularly with regard to reducing consumption. As with energy, local or district waste, compost and gardening initiatives can be incorporated into the public realm that encourage people to participate and take responsibility for the issue.
- Believes that investment in our 'living infrastructure' is a priority (and merits greater feedback) but there are other issues that must also be addressed under 'land use' to facilitate a step change to achieve carbon neutrality. These include the:
  - distribution and intensity of land uses to achieve a more efficient city form;
  - overhaul of current administrative planning, development and management regimes that present barriers to innovation; and
  - trialling of cooperative economic/contractual models to deliver precinct/section wide redevelopment with associated community and public benefits.

### **Supporting Behaviour Change**

For individuals and communities to invest in 'greener, cleaner' options and lifestyles, there has to be a change in the urban environment. Clearly the intent of the policies set out in the Discussion Paper are aimed at this, however, to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 this change has to be both profound and timely.

Understanding and leveraging off the synergies between the actions is as, if not more, important to delivering this change in Canberra's urban form. This will require a shift in administrative processes to avoid placing actions and responsibilities in the most convenient 'silo'. For example, initiatives targeting the uptake of active travel is a transport priority but until land use policies make delivering 'accessible and connected' infrastructure an upfront priority in urban redevelopment, then the potential success of the initiatives are compromised.

Some review of administrative processes is warranted to ensure these processes are in themselves resilient and:

- support multiplicity in decision making;
- make monitoring of impacts 'mainstream'; and
- are responsive and can be judiciously adapted.

### **Living Infrastructure**

Not surprisingly, of prime concern for the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects is

advocating for good design, capital and management investment in living infrastructure. The benefits of such investments to improving the resilience of Australian cities, towns and regions is now being recognised and quantified.

The ACT's living infrastructure is enviable. Its extent, diversity and connectivity ameliorates the impact of extreme heat and wind on the city, means that Canberrans can quite literally enjoy nature at their doorstep and is drawing an increasing number and variety of visitors to the Nation's Capital.

AILA ACT endorses the development of a Living Infrastructure Plan to identify regulatory actions, maintenance regimes, consistent design approaches, costing and investment strategies as well as the promotion of exemplar projects.

In moving forward with these actions it is critical the 'threats' to the living infrastructure are identified. Some of these are from climate change, other planning priorities but many are from current land planning, management and budgetary practices:

- Prolonged heat, reduced and more variable rainfall. To retain significant vegetation and critical ecosystems will require strategic landscape planning and management. This does mean mapping the living infrastructure, ensuring there is connectivity, monitoring its quality and taking restorative or remedial action.
- The imperative for urban intensification and a more efficient city form. This should not be achieved through compromising the quality, connectivity and diversity of the public realm. Strategies to deliver public spaces at the outset of any development or redevelopment must be identified along with performance targets for delivering shade, water detention and harvesting, waste and energy reduction measures.
- Ambiguous Development Codes and Regulations. While estate development and multi residential codes have sections on the provision of open space and 'deep root landscape zones', a great deal is left to interpretation. Again, identifying performance targets and or ratings for shade, water harvesting, habitat development or the provision of community gardens would be appropriate.
- Asset Standards. The strict enforcement of engineering and landscape standards, especially in regard to the size and species of street trees, understorey planting in parks and verges has limited the opportunities to establish both meaningful public spaces and significant living infrastructure.
- Lack of investment in the 'urban forest'. Failure to commit appropriate funding to renew and enhance Canberra's living infrastructure is perhaps the most serious threat. The difficulty in ascribing a monetary value to this 'asset class' cannot be used to put off the expenditure given the enormous opportunity costs to individuals and the community associated with its loss.

Research and action on climate change adaptation is a priority for the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA). Alongside the other built environment professions, the AILA has sponsored public activities (Living Cities Workshop, Australian Parliament House 2016, Future Street, Sydney 2017) and prepared papers that has influenced the Australian Government's urban planning policies (notably the Department of Infrastructure's paper *Future Cities: Planning for our Growing Population* February 2018).

Similarly AILA ACT is keen to continue assisting the ACT Government and welcomes being a part of the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Sustainability Alliance Group.  
Yours faithfully

Gay Williamson  
AILA ACT President  
27 April 2018