

# Water Resource Management Policy and Strategy

2005

**Our mission:** to build the National Capital in the hearts of all Australians



Australian Government  
National Capital Authority

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# Water Resource Management Policy 2005

The purpose of the National Capital Authority is to manage the Commonwealth Government's continuing interest in the planning and development of Canberra as the National Capital under the provisions of the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*.

## Our Vision

A National Capital which symbolises Australia's heritage, values and aspirations, is internationally recognised and of which Australians may be proud.

## Our Goals

*To realise the promise of the city plan and the ideals of the founders we will work toward a robust and sustainable planning framework that supports the needs of the Capital now and in the future, and establishes a dynamic relationship between the Capital's cultural and natural settings.*

*To foster an awareness of Canberra as the National Capital we will work toward broadening the experience of all Australian citizens of their National Capital and stimulating their understanding of country and culture.*

*To develop the special character of the National Capital we will work toward:*

- *the retention and enhancement of Canberra's unique landscape character and recognition of Australia's diverse cultural heritage;*
- *the management and enhancement of the value of national land and assets for current and future generations; and*
- *building accessible and affordable national public places and facilities for all Australians.*

Our key environmental objective in the *National Capital Plan* is to support and promote environmentally responsible urban development and management practices. Water resources management in the National Capital will sustain this objective through the development and implementation of measures and the adoption of technology that prevent and minimise pollution, and reduce waste, energy and natural resources use.





The National Capital Authority will:

- incorporate water sensitive design principles into the development of land that has the special characteristics of the National Capital (Designated Areas); and
- maintain the special character of the National Capital through the efficient management and use of water to enhance national land and assets.



# Strategy

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## Preamble

The National Capital Authority (the Authority) holds a unique position in managing Commonwealth land and water resources under the *National Land Ordinance 1989* and the subsequent provisions under the *Lakes Ordinance 1976*. As defined in the *National Capital Plan* “it is critical that water over which the Commonwealth has paramount rights should be allocated, as a matter of priority, to serve the needs of the National Capital”.

Historically; water has played a significant role in the vision for the National Capital. Discussions at the 1901 Congress of Engineers, Architects, Surveyors and Others Interested in the Building of the Federal Capital of Australia, focused on the layout and building of the Federal Capital around a significant water body. Ornamental basins formed the monumental centrepiece of Griffin’s 1912 competition winning plan.

In the late 1950s through the actions of the Commissioner (Sir) John Overall and guidance by (Sir) William Holford, the National Capital Development Commission sought Federal Government approval to build the lake that featured in Griffin’s visionary plan. The ornamental waters of Lake Burley Griffin (the Lake) were inaugurated by the Australian Prime Minister, (Sir) Robert Menzies on 17 October 1964.

Lake Burley Griffin is an *Area of Special National Concern*<sup>1</sup> – the water resources in general and Lake Burley Griffin in particular playing a critical role in defining the national significance of the National Capital. It is the recognition of this critical role that has influenced the Authority’s need to establish a Water Resource Management Policy and Water Resource Management Strategy.

## Purpose

The purpose of the *Water Resource Management Strategy 2004* is to address key water resource issues for the National Capital and establish the Authority’s objectives for the management of water resources under its control.

## National Water Reform Strategy

Australia has a comparatively short history of climate records. With increasing awareness since the 1980s of the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO)<sup>2</sup> and concern over the potential for global climate change, the need for integrated water resource management strategies has arisen.



In February 1994 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to implement a “strategic framework to achieve an efficient and sustainable water industry”. The *COAG Water Reform Framework 1994*, made in response to the country’s deteriorating water resources and the impacts of economic activity, formed the overarching framework for national water management strategies. It called for all levels of Governments to implement reforms by setting up comprehensive water allocation systems which take into account the sustainable use of resources and environmental and special needs. The framework proposed an integrated approach to address environmental issues covering water consumption and quality, sustainable development, institutional reform, ground water protection, catchment management and micro-economic reform.

On 25 June 2004, COAG agreed to a new *National Water Initiative* that has the capacity to refresh and build on the 1994 water reform process. COAG noted the continuing national imperative of increasing the productivity and efficiency of Australia’s water use and to ensuring the health of river and groundwater systems. The *National Water Initiative* covers a range of areas in which greater compatibility and the adoption of best-practice approaches to water management nationally will bring substantial benefits. In particular, the Initiative will result in:

- expansion of permanent trade in water bringing about more profitable use of water and more cost effective and flexible recovery of water to achieve environmental outcomes;
- more confidence for those investing in the water industry due to more secure water access entitlements, better and more compatible registry arrangements, better monitoring, reporting and accounting of water use, and improved public access to information;
- more sophisticated, transparent and comprehensive water planning that deals with key issues such as the major interception of water, the interaction between surface and groundwater systems, and the provision of water to meet specific environmental outcomes;
- a commitment to addressing overallocated systems as quickly as possible, in consultation with affected stakeholders, addressing significant adjustment issues where appropriate; and
- better and more efficient management of water in urban environments, for example through the increased use of recycled water and stormwater.





<b>Objective</b>	Ensure that the water resources of the National Capital are managed and utilised in accordance with the Policies and Principles of the National Capital Plan
<b>Action</b>	Review the National Capital Plan and amend it when necessary in response to new requirements for the efficient management and utilisation of water resources in the National Capital
<b>Objective</b>	Identify water sensitive design principles into the development of land that has the special characteristics of the National Capital (Designated Areas)
<b>Action</b>	Identify water sensitive urban design principles into the development approval procedures for works proposed within Designated Areas and through works undertaken by the Authority on behalf of the Commonwealth and other stakeholders
<b>Objective</b>	Develop and implement measures and adopt technology that prevents and minimises pollution, reduces waste, energy and the use of natural resources
<b>Action</b>	Implement and operate an environmental management system to identify significant risks that are addressed through risk management plans Develop management strategies and, where appropriate, undertake works to improve the quality of stormwater entering Lake Burley Griffin Utilise computer aided technology to efficiently operate irrigation watering systems
<b>Objective</b>	Manage the water quality of Lake Burley Griffin to preserve and enhance its national significance, its ecological resources, its recreational use and its landscape setting.
<b>Action</b>	Implement the Lake Burley Griffin Water Quality Management Plan 2004 and monitor stormwater flows into Lake Burley Griffin. Review contractor performance for Lake and beach cleaning and weed cutting.
<b>Objective</b>	Establish water consumption and water level targets for Lake Burley Griffin that are sustainable and are compatible with broader catchment management regimes.
<b>Action</b>	Implement the Lake Burley Griffin Water Abstraction Plan Establish environmental flows for Lake Burley Griffin Facilitate research into catchment management and groundwater resources Improve water level and water flow real time monitoring
<b>Objective</b>	Maintain the special character of the National Capital through the efficient management and use of water to enhance national land and assets
<b>Action</b>	Facilitate the development of additional second class water resource projects including water recycling from buildings in the Parliamentary Zone Establish drought tolerant landscapes where practicable Monitor and review water use strategies to improve efficiency of irrigation of National Land



The key strategies of the *National Water Initiative* provide the framework for the *Water Resource Management Strategy 2004* and the management plans developed from the strategy.

## Water Resource Management Objectives

The water resource management objectives are to:

- ensure that the water resources of the National Capital are managed and utilised in accordance with the policies and principles of the *National Capital Plan*;
- incorporate water sensitive design principles into the development of land that has the special characteristics of the National Capital (Designated Areas);
- develop and implement measures and adopt technology that prevents and minimise pollution, reduce waste, energy and the use of natural resources;
- manage the water quality of Lake Burley Griffin to preserve and enhance its national significance, its ecological resources, its recreational use and its landscape setting;
- establish water consumption and water level targets for Lake Burley Griffin (and its catchment) that are sustainable; and
- maintain the special character of the National Capital through the efficient management and use of water to enhance national land and assets.

## Action Management Plans

The Water Resource Management Strategy will be implemented through administrative actions and policies, and the adoption of specific water resource management plans, including the:

- Lake Burley Griffin Management Plan 1995*;
- Lake Burley Griffin Water Quality Management Plan 2004*; and
- Lake Burley Griffin Abstraction Plan 2005*





## Regulatory and Policy Framework

The Australian Constitution (*Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900*) provides that the Seat of Government for the Commonwealth be determined by Parliament, and be within territory granted to or acquired by the Commonwealth, and be vested in and belong to the Commonwealth.

The *Seat of Government Act 1908* determined that the Seat of Government of the Commonwealth be in the district of 'Yass – Canberra' in the State of New South Wales.

Australia's National Capital came into being when the Commonwealth through the *Seat of Government Acceptance Act 1909* accepted this land as a Territory. Under an agreement between the Commonwealth and NSW, this Act also established that the right to the use or control of waters from the Queanbeyan and Molonglo Rivers and their tributaries which lie to the east of the Goulburn to Cooma Railway by the State of New South Wales and its residents is subject and secondary to the use and requirements of the Commonwealth which were declared to be paramount for all the purposes of the Territory. The Act further established that the State not pollute, and protect from pollution, the waters of the Queanbeyan and Molonglo Rivers.

The Canberra Water Supply (Googong Dam) Act 1974 provides Googong Dam waters shall be supplied primarily and principally for use in the ACT, although the Commonwealth may enter into an agreement with the State of New South Wales to supply water from the Googong Dam Area for use in a place other than the Territory. The rights to use and manage Googong Dam Area waters are exercised by the ACT Government on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The *National Capital Plan*, established through the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*, has as its object that Canberra and the Australian Capital Territory are to be planned and developed in accordance with their national significance and provides amongst other things that the Commonwealth, a Commonwealth authority, the Territory or a Territory Authority shall not do anything inconsistent with the *National Capital Plan*.

The *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* sets out the statutory functions of the National Capital Authority. These include the preparation, administration and amendment of the *National Capital Plan*, the commissioning of works within Designated Areas of the *National Capital Plan*, and on behalf of the Commonwealth, the management of National Land set aside for the special purposes of Canberra as the National Capital.



The *National Land Ordinance 1989* and the applied provisions of the *Lakes Ordinance 1976*, as applied to National Land, establishes the area of Lake Burley Griffin and the statutory framework for the management of the Lake. The National Capital Authority has held direct responsibility for managing National Land since 1993. This responsibility includes the overall management of water abstraction, Lake recreational use, environment performance and landscape. The Authority has regulated, monitored and charged for the consumptive use of Lake water since July 2001.

The *National Capital Plan 1990* sets out the planning principles and policies for Lake Burley Griffin and Foreshores. *Appendix J* of the Plan provides technical and Management Guidelines for the Lake and that the National Capital Authority will prepare a Lake Burley Griffin Management Plan.

The *Lake Burley Griffin Management Plan 1995* sets out the management objectives for the Lake and that water quality guidelines, criteria for maintaining the Lake level and minimum releases from Scrivener Dam, and that arrangements for the abstraction of water from the Lake be determined.

The *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* provides the ACT with executive powers over water resources, public utilities and Territory land.

The *Water Resources Act 1998 (ACT)*, which does not bind the Commonwealth, provides that the right to the use, flow and control of all water of the Territory (other than ground water under land the subject of a lease of Territory Land granted before the commencement of this section) is vested in the Territory and, subject to any other Act, those rights are exercisable by the Minister in the name of and on behalf of the Territory. This Act does not govern the use of water associated with National Land, which includes Lake Burley Griffin and the proportion of its catchment that is National Land.

The ACT Government released Environmental Flow Guidelines for the ACT in 1999 and proposes to table its Water Resources Management Plan, *Think water, act water* April 2004 under the *Water Resources Act 1998 (ACT)*.

The *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992 (NSES)* provides broad strategic directions and framework for governments to direct policy and decision-making. The Strategy facilitates a coordinated and co-operative approach to ecologically sustainable development (ESD) and encourages long-term benefits for Australia over short-term gains.

The *Murray-Darling Basin Agreement 1992* outlines comprehensively the water resource potential, including water allocations and capping for the region. Under the capping, there is a requirement for each region to report on the





water usage on an annual basis. Lake Burley Griffin falls within the Murray-Darling catchment.

The *National Water Quality Management Strategy 1994 (NWQMS)* sets out a framework of institutional arrangements, a mix of regulatory and market approaches to water management, and explicit identification of the environmental and use values to be protected, and the water quality criteria related to their protection. It also identifies integrated catchment planning as the best strategy for implementing the sustainable use of water resources.

The ANZECC/ARMCANZ Australian Water Quality Guidelines 2000 — the Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality 2000 have been agreed as the National reference guidelines for setting water criteria.

*The National Water initiative (NWI)* – At the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting on 25 June 2004, COAG agreed to the *National Water Initiative* for adoption of best-practice approaches to water management nationally, which has the capacity to refresh and build on the 1994 water reform process.





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