

# Statement on progress in considering an urban growth boundary

Response to Assembly Resolution of 10 April  
2025

February 2026



## Acknowledgement of Country

The City and Environment Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

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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# Introduction

On 10th April 2025, the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution about the measures to protect the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre area and the establishment of an urban growth boundary.

The full text of the resolution is provided below:

“That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
  - (a) the ACT State of the Environment Report 2023 detail “continued, relentless degradation of the natural environment”;
  - (b) the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment’s first recommendation in that report was to legislate for an urban growth boundary;
  - (c) putting homes near jobs, shops, community infrastructure, parks and public transport encourages active travel and public transport, reduces the cost of transport and cost of living, and reduces climate emissions;
  - (d) urban growth boundaries have been established in Adelaide, Melbourne and cities overseas including Portland and Vancouver; and
  - (e) the ACT Greens and ACT Labour agree to set an urban growth boundary this term as part of the confidence and supply agreement;
- (2) further notes that:
  - (a) Canberra’s urban footprint spans a distance equivalent to Greater London (population 9 million) of Sydney (population 5.3 million) but with a fraction of the population;
  - (b) between 2006 and 2022, Canberra’s urban area increased from around 22,230 hectares to 24,990 hectares;
  - (c) greenfield development costs Government more than infill as it requires new roads, sewerage, stormwater networks and schools, with the average cost of Government in Whitlam of \$68,600 per dwelling versus \$6,500 per dwelling in Woden; and
  - (d) ACT Government already has a compact city policy, and work from District Strategies and the Missing Middle project will show where and how to deliver more infill homes;

- (3) calls on the ACT Government to protect the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre Area by:
- (a) committing to the full nature protection for the whole of Bluetts Block including Block 402 Stromlo;
  - (b) outlining any further studies needed to allow the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to designate Block 402 Stromlo as a nature reserve;
  - (c) removing the Future Urban Area overlay for Block 403 and part Block 12 Section 2 Denman Prospect and implementing this by releasing an amendment to the Territory Plan by 30 June 2025;
  - (d) committing to release the Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment by 31 July 2026; and
  - (e) publishing a report on these measures by 31 July 2025 and tabling this report in the first sittings after that; and
- (4) further calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) set an urban growth boundary this term;
  - (b) when setting this boundary, consider the need to preserve land of environmental value, the future land needs of the Territory, the need to protect the Western Edge, and the need to preserve agricultural land use as established in the Eastern Broadacre study;
  - (c) conduct public consultation to establish the urban growth boundary based on the good consultation principles established in the Planning Act 2023;
  - (d) release an amendment to the Territory Plan to establish the urban growth boundary by June 2027; and
  - (e) publish half-yearly statement on progress, beginning in the first sittings of 2026”.

# Response to the resolution

This report responds to Part 4 of the Assembly resolution of 10 April 2025 on the Urban Growth Boundary Establishment - Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre (resolution). It fulfills the requirement to publish half-yearly statements on progress in delivering an urban growth boundary (UGB) on the ACT Planning website, beginning in the first sittings of 2026.

*Part (4)(3) publish half-yearly statement on progress, beginning in the first sittings of 2026.*

## Background

The ACT's population is projected to reach 700,000 by 2050, creating a critical need to plan for the long-term supply of housing and employment land while protecting areas of environmental and agricultural value. This balance underpins the rationale for establishing an UGB.

The ACT Government's commitment to managing future land needs and preserving environmental assets is reflected in key strategic documents, including the [ACT Planning Strategy 2018](#) (Planning Strategy), [District Strategies 2023](#) (District Strategies) and the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development's [Statement of Planning Priorities 2025-28](#).

The Planning Strategy provides the strategic vision for land use in the ACT, structured around 5 themes: compact and efficient, diverse, sustainable and resilient, liveable and accessible. It informed the development of District Strategies, introduced under the ACT's outcomes-focused planning system in November 2023.

A review of the Planning Strategy was considered in 2023 under the former [Planning and Development Act 2007 \(repealed\)](#). The Executive determined that a review was not required, as the strategy remained consistent with legislative objectives (see [Planning and Development \(Review of Planning Strategy\) Notice 2023](#)). Under the current Act, the next review must occur before September 2028.

The District Strategies highlight the importance of environmental connectivity and the protection of blue-green corridors across the city. As Canberra grows, safeguarding the interface between urban areas and nature reserves remains a key priority.

These strategies emphasise sustainable growth, environmental protection and the importance of maintaining the city's blue-green corridors and natural interfaces as urban areas expand.

## Progress statement

In accordance with the Legislative Assembly's resolution, the City and Environment Directorate (CED) is progressing work to establish an UGB for the ACT.

### Overview

The UGB is intended to protect land of environmental and agricultural value while supporting the Territory's long-term housing and employment needs. This approach aligns with the National Capital Open Space System (NCOOS) under the National Capital Plan, which safeguards hills, ridges and river corridors from urban development.

While no formal decision has been made on how the UGB will be defined, current work seeks to establish a strong foundation of research, strategic policy alignment and suitable options for an UGB for the Territory. This will help to inform future decision-making by government.

The UGB is being considered as part of broader planning reforms, including the development of a new, integrated Planning and Transport Strategy.

For the period July 2025 to December 2025, progress towards establishment of an UGB included:

- Release of the Minister's Statement of Planning Priorities 2025-28, which reinforces the government's commitment to protect and enhance the Territory's environment values and develop an UGB for greater Canberra.
- Commencing early work to deliver a new, integrated Planning and Transport Strategy.
- Undertaking initial research and policy alignment work to make sure establishment of an UGB aligns with the Territory's broader planning and policy framework.
- Continuing strategic investigations into Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre, which will inform establishment of an UGB.

### The Minister's Statement of Planning Priorities 2025-28

In November 2025, the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development released his [Statement of Planning Priorities 2025–28](#). This serves as a guiding document for how the ACT Government will deliver on its planning commitments in the short to medium-term.

The Statement of Planning Priorities 2025-28 establishes 10 key priorities, including **Priority 8** to 'Protect the environment and enhance the city's landscape' and **Priority 10** which relates to the 'Administration and delivery of priorities' and the development of a new, integrated Planning and Transport Strategy for the ACT.

Priority 8 reinforces the importance of protecting environmental values and enhanced as Canberra continues to grow. It outlines that the government will take a landscape-forward approach, including strategic spatial planning to proactively protect and restore key areas of environmental value for the future, both within the urban footprint and on the urban interface.

Priority 8 sets out a program of work to support its implementation, including to:

- Progress investigations for future urban and other uses in the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre areas to inform decisions on how the environmental values of these areas can be recognised, managed and protected.
- Consider additional environmental protections for Coombs Peninsula, Block 402 Stromlo and the Ainslie Volcanics sites.
- Contribute to the development of a landscape plan for the ACT by the ACT Government Landscape Architect.
- Develop an urban growth boundary for greater Canberra in consultation with the NSW Government and regional local governments.

Priority 10 of the Statement of Planning Priorities 2025-28 sets a clear direction for the ACT's planning system, including to call for the development of a refreshed Planning Strategy that integrates transport planning into a single framework. This priority reflects the ACT Government's commitment to coordinated land use and transport planning to deliver a compact, sustainable city.

## A new Planning and Transport Strategy

The ACT Government will develop a new, integrated Planning and Transport Strategy by 2028, as directed in the [Statement of Planning Priorities 2025–28](#). This strategy will replace the current ACT Planning Strategy 2018 and incorporate transport planning into a single framework, providing a modernised spatial vision and aligning land use, housing, employment and infrastructure planning with transport investment.

The new strategy will provide the spatial and policy foundation for key initiatives such as establishing an UGB, enabling transit-oriented development and protecting areas of environmental and agricultural value. Embedding these priorities within a new Planning and Transport Strategy ensures alignment with long-term housing, employment and infrastructure goals, while reinforcing climate and biodiversity objectives.

A dedicated Environment and Landscape chapter is being considered for the integrated Planning and Transport Strategy to support long-term integrated planning.

The establishment of a new Planning and Transport Strategy is a significant priority for the ACT Government. In accordance with the *Planning Act 2023*, the ACT community will have opportunities to have their say on the new strategy, which will set the long-term vision for growth in the Territory.

## ACT Landscape Plan

The ACT Government has committed to establishing a 'Landscape Plan' for the Territory. The ACT Landscape Plan is emerging as a key spatial and policy foundation for the UGB, with both expected to inform the extent of urban growth for the ACT and protect environmentally sensitive areas.

The Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water is leading this work and will continue to work closely with the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development.

Research contributing to the Landscape Plan will guide how the UGB is embedded in the new planning and transport strategy, District Strategies and statutory instruments such as the Territory Plan, ensuring consistent implementation and strong policy support.

## Research and policy alignment

Within its overarching program of work to deliver a new Planning and Transport Strategy for the ACT, CED is progressing research, policy analysis and integration activities to support the ACT Government's consideration of an UGB for the Territory.

These activities are outlined below.

- **Strategic integration:** CED is undertaking preliminary research, including critical habitat mapping, to inform the future Landscape Plan. This is with the longer-term view to embed evidence-informed approaches across the new Planning and Transport Strategy, District Strategies and Territory Plan to provide a clear policy basis for the UGB.
- **District strategy development:** CED is exploring options for a potential non-urban District Strategy to establish long-term strategic directions that address rural areas, broadacre land and hills/ridges/buffers.
- **Territory Plan influence:** As research and investigations progress, CED is monitoring alignment with statutory planning controls, like the Territory Plan, to make sure policy intent flows from strategic planning through to the planning system's statutory planning controls.
- **Cross-strategy alignment:** Engagement across ACT Government Directorates and Agencies remains underway to make sure that work to consider an UGB aligns with complementary government policies. This includes alignment with updates to the [ACT Climate Change Strategy](#) and [ACT Nature Conservation Strategy](#), which will help to embed biodiversity and climate adaptation in land use planning.
- **Early planning for community engagement:** CED has commenced initial planning for future consultation and engagement on the new Planning and Transport Strategy. While public consultation on the new Planning and Transport Strategy is not expected to occur in the short-term (to allow adequate time for ongoing research and policy analysis activities) early planning for public consultation on the new strategy is underway. Initial planning focuses on engagement with Traditional Custodians and First Nations People to ensure the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People inform the government's consideration of an UGB for the Territory.

## Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre investigations

Investigations are underway by the ACT Government for potential development in the Western Edge investigation area and Eastern Broadacre area to implement the government's key strategic directions.

Work is progressing on these greenfield areas, along with other urban areas, and is contributing to the resolution for the establishment of a UGB for Canberra. The Planning Strategy Growth Map (Figure 1) shows the Western Edge investigation area (orange hatching) and the Eastern Broadacre area (purple hatching).

## Eastern Broadacre

The Eastern Broadacre area is subject to a strategic assessment (Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment (EBSA)) under the Commonwealth’s Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, following the identification of threatened ecological communities in the area. The area contains critically endangered flora and fauna, such as natural temperate grassland, striped legless lizard and the grassland earless dragon.

The strategic assessment process will consider the potential impacts on nationally significant environmental values of proposed development in parts of the area. The strategic assessment will inform the future planning and potential rezoning of the district.

In April 2024, an initial draft EBSA was submitted to the Australian Government’s approval body, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

DCCEEW provided comments on the draft documentation in July 2024. As a result, further studies and ecological surveys are being undertaken to inform the final draft strategic assessment.

The ACT Government’s City and Environment Directorate (CED), with the support of consultants, will be undertaking the following ecological surveys support the finalisation of the EBSA. Striped legless lizard surveys were undertaken from late August to December 2025. All other ecological surveys over 2025-26 and 2026-27, including vegetation mapping and habitat mapping, including for Golden sun moth, Pink-tailed worm lizard, Canberra grassland earless dragon and woodland birds.

*Table 1 Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment Studies*

Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment Studies	
Eastern Broadacre Striped Legless Lizard Survey	Complete
EBSA Conservation and Development Plan (Program Report)	Underway
EBSA Strategic Assessment Report	Underway
EBSA Survey Season 1 (Spring/Autumn 2025/26) Stage 1 Ecological Assessment Report	Underway
EBSA Survey Season 2 (Spring/Summer 2026/27) Stage 2 Ecological Assessment Report – January 2027 TBC	Underway

The draft EBSA is scheduled to be re-submitted to DCCEEW in mid-2026. Public exhibition is anticipated to commence later in 2026, subject to agreement by the Commonwealth Government, noting there is no statutory timeframe for this to occur.

Further information on Eastern Broadacre and the EBSA is available on the Planning website at <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/projects-priorities/eastern-broadacre>.

## Western Edge

Under the ACT Planning Strategy 2018 (Action 1.2.1), investigation of the Western Edge includes identification of suitable areas for nature reserves, environmental offset and potential environmental offset areas, consideration of cultural and heritage values, and other uses (rural, broadacre, major infrastructure, transport and services) as well as any potential new urban areas. Ongoing studies into areas like the Western Edge are needed to inform the UGB placement.

### Completed investigations

During 2020 and 2021, the ACT Government undertook preliminary environmental, planning, heritage and infrastructure investigations.

These studies have provided an initial understanding of the values of the area and provide the basis for further detailed studies over the coming years.

Please note that these preliminary reports are consultant advice based on their specific focus of engagement. The reports do not represent the ACT Government's position but will help inform future policy decisions including placement of a future urban growth boundary. Below is a table of all completed and underway studies in the Western Edge Investigation Area. Further information and copies of the publicly released studies can be found at [Western edge investigation - City and Environment Directorate - Planning](#)

Table 2 Western Edge Investigation Area Studies

Western Edge Investigation Area Studies	
Preliminary Geotechnical and Hydrogeological Assessment + Contamination Assessment	Complete
Water Values and Environmental Hydrology Assessment	Complete
Alternate Text for Western Edge Investigation Area Water Values and Environmental Hydrology Assessment Report	Complete
Preliminary Ecological Review and Assessment	Complete
Landscape Character Values and Visual Assessment	Complete
Preliminary Bushfire Risk Assessment	Complete
Preliminary Air Quality Assessment	Complete
Preliminary Assessment of Engineering Opportunities and Constraints	Complete
Cultural Heritage Assessment	Complete

Capability & Suitability Assessment	Complete
Capability & Suitability Assessment - additional amendments	Complete
Western Edge Investigation Area: River and Riparian Zone	Complete
Ecological Condition and Habitat Surveys	Complete
Little Eagle Survey	Complete
UXO Induction Training	Complete
Bird Surveys	Complete
A preliminary survey of small native mammals and their habitat at Stromlo East and West ACT	Complete
Bushfire Risk Assessment (3 areas)	Complete
Murrumbidgee Flood Study Scoping	Complete
Murray Crayfish Survey	Complete
Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment	Complete
Stakeholder Engagement Strategy	Complete
Stormwater Management Strategies -Options assessment for the WEIA	Complete
Plant Community Type Mapping	Complete
Vegetation Plot Mapping	Complete
Big Trees and Superb Parrot Assessment	Complete
Bat Survey	Complete
Pink-tailed Worm Lizard Habitat Mapping	Complete

Woodland Bird Survey	Complete
Utilities (including Water, Sewerage/Wastewater and Electrical Power) Serviceability and Options Study	Underway
Strategic Transport Assessment	Underway
Dam and Riparian Study	Complete
Small Mammal Survey	Complete
Vegetation Mapping and Threatened Species	Complete
Social Needs Assessment including education, sports and recreational activities	Underway
Economic and Market Analysis	Underway
Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment	Underway

Further details about current investigations are available in the June 2025 report: Urban Growth Boundary Establishment—Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre Area Protection Measures: Response to Assembly Resolution of 10 April 2025 (CED, June 2025).

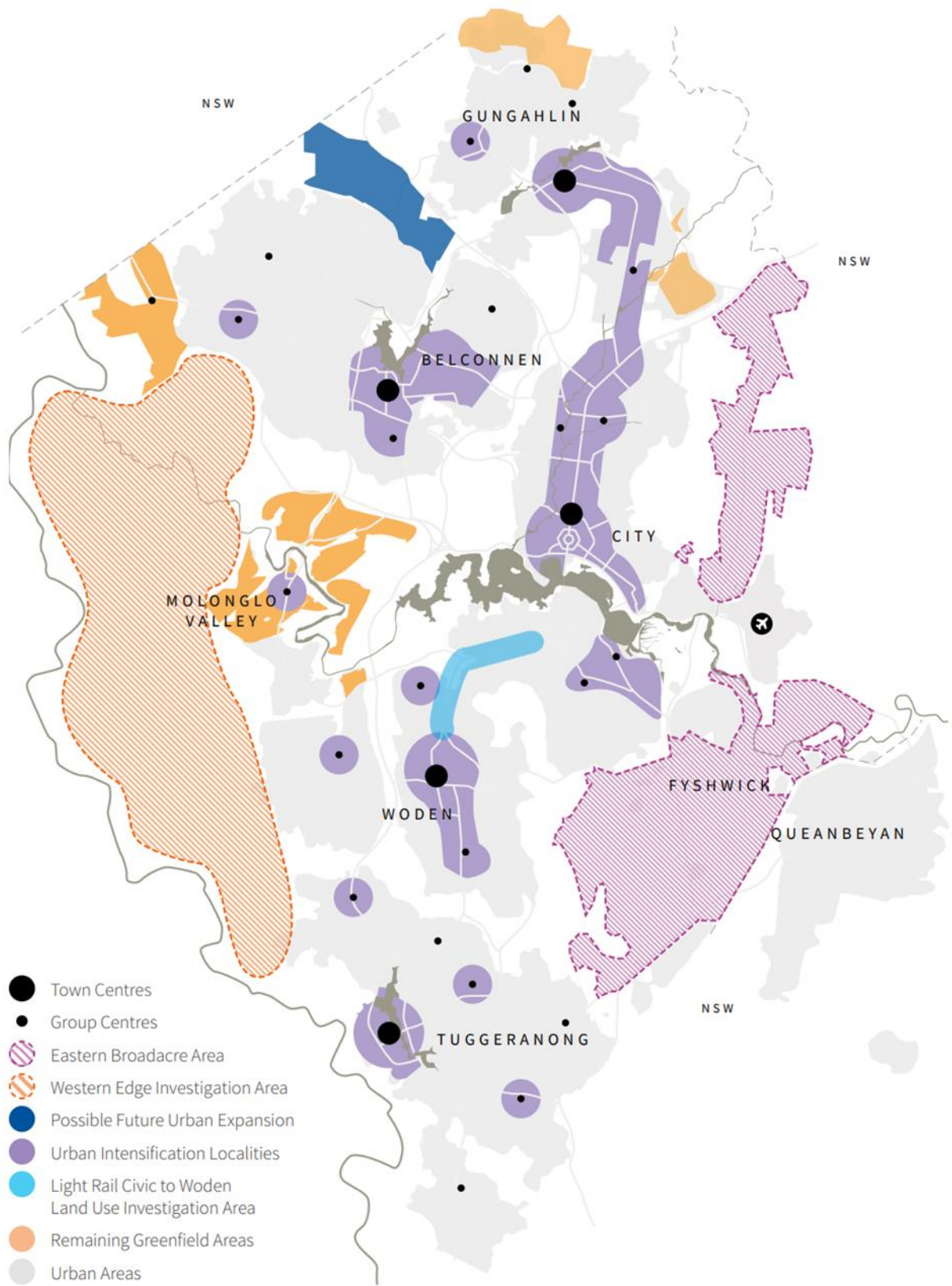


Figure 1 Planning Strategy Growth Map -Western Edge investigation area and Eastern Broadacre area

## Work progressing

The ACT Government will continue to consider an UGB for the Territory within the context of its broader strategic investigations and planning reforms.

Priority work to inform government consideration of an UGB expected to progress in the next 6-months includes:

- Continued work to implement the Minister's Statement of Planning Priorities 2025-28, including to address Priority 8 (Protect the environment and enhance the city's landscape) and Priority 10 (which includes to deliver a refreshed planning strategy, which integrates land use and transport planning).
- Comprehensive cross-government engagement to align UGB development with work to deliver a new Planning and Transport Strategy and complementary policies, including the ACT Climate Change Strategy and Nature Conservation Strategy.
- Early planning for future consultation with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to inform the new Planning and Transport Strategy, including how the government considers establishment of an UGB for the Territory.
- Continued technical investigations for the Eastern Broadacre and Western Edge investigation areas. This includes expected re-submission of the EBSA to the Commonwealth Government in mid-2026.

The ACT Government will continue to publish half-yearly progress statements on its work to consider an UGB for the Territory. The next progress statement will be published in mid-2026



**ACT**  
Government