



ACT
Government

Statement on progress in considering an urban growth boundary

Response to Assembly Resolution of 10 April 2025

City and Environment Directorate

July 2026

Introduction

On 10 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)(e) 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

In accordance with the Legislative Assembly's resolution, CED continues work to support the establishment of an ACT urban growth boundary (UGB).

The UGB is intended to help protect environmentally and agriculturally significant land while supporting the Territory's long-term housing, employment and infrastructure needs. It complements existing protections under the National Capital Open Space System, which safeguards Canberra's hills, ridges and river corridors from urban development.

No decisions have been made on the final form or location of the UGB. Current work is focused on research, policy development and strategic planning to inform future Government decisions.

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

Progress January–July 2026

Key progress during the reporting period includes:

- Continued work on a new integrated Planning and Transport Strategy.
- Continued research and policy analysis to support consideration of a UGB.
- Ongoing investigations of the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre areas to inform future planning decisions.
- Recruitment of the ACT Government Landscape Architect.

This progress is consistent with the Statement of Planning Priorities 2025–28 which includes actions to:

- Progress investigations of the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre areas.
- Consider additional environmental protections in key locations.
- Support development of an ACT Landscape Plan.
- Develop an urban growth boundary in consultation with regional partners.

Planning and Transport Strategy

The ACT Government is developing an integrated Planning and Transport Strategy to replace the existing ACT Planning Strategy 2018 and Transport Strategy 2020.

The strategy will provide a long-term framework for managing growth and coordinating land use, housing, employment, transport and infrastructure planning. It will also support future work on the urban growth boundary, protection of environmental and agricultural values, and consideration of climate change in broader land use decisions.

The community will have opportunities to provide input as the strategy is developed.

ACT Landscape Plan

The ACT Government is progressing development of an ACT Landscape Plan, led by the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water.

The Landscape Plan is expected to provide an important evidence base for future planning decisions, including consideration of an urban growth boundary and the protection of environmentally significant areas.

Initial work has begun to review critical landscape values with regard to urban, cultural, environmental and agricultural landscape uses. The commencement of the Government Landscape Architect in late July 2026 will continue to progress these investigations in coordination with updates to interrelated work across policy areas including nature conservation, climate adaptation and planning and transport strategies

Research and Policy Development

The ACT Government is continuing work to ensure that any future Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) is informed by a strong evidence base and aligned with broader strategic planning, climate and biodiversity objectives.

Current activities include:

- Environmental surveys
- Climate-informed mapping of Priority Conservation Areas as part of the Nature Conservation Network
- Analysis of strategic planning options for non-urban areas;
- Consideration of how a future UGB could align with the Territory Plan and other planning frameworks;
- Coordination across ACT Government agencies to align planning, climate and biodiversity outcomes; and
- Early planning for future community engagement, including engagement with Traditional Custodians and First Nations peoples.

This work will continue to inform the Government's consideration of an urban growth boundary for the ACT.

A UGB is intended to help protect land with environmental, landscape and agricultural values while supporting the Territory's long-term housing and employment needs. It also reflects the broader planning objective of maintaining Canberra's defining landscape setting, consistent with protections provided through the National Capital Open Space System under the National Capital Plan.

No decision has been made on the form, location or implementation of a future UGB. Current work is focused on building the necessary evidence base, policy framework and strategic options to inform future Government decision-making.

Consideration of a UGB is being undertaken as part of the broader planning reform agenda, including development of a new integrated Planning and Transport Strategy for the ACT.

Research and policy alignment

As part of the Planning and Transport Strategy program, CED is undertaking a range of research, policy and integration activities that will support future consideration of a UGB.

Strategic integration

CED is identifying and mapping critical habitats, ecosystems and ecological connectivity corridors, including identifying potential priority conservation areas for inclusion in the nature conservation network. This work will inform the development of the Landscape Plan and support a more integrated approach to environmental protection across the Planning and Transport Strategy, District Strategies and Territory Plan.

Future planning for non-urban areas

CED is exploring longer-term strategic planning options for non-urban areas of the ACT, including rural lands and broadacre areas. Subject to future Government direction, this work may inform development of planning frameworks for non-urban areas following completion of the Planning and Transport Strategy.

Alignment with the Territory Plan

CED is ensuring that strategic policy investigations remain aligned with the Territory Plan and other statutory planning mechanisms. This will help provide a clear link between future strategic policy directions and the planning system's regulatory framework.

Cross-government policy coordination

CED continues to work with ACT Government directorates and agencies to ensure consideration of a UGB aligns with related government policies and programs. This includes coordination with the ACT Climate Change Strategy and ACT Nature Conservation Strategy, helping to embed climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use outcomes into future planning decisions.

Preparation for community engagement

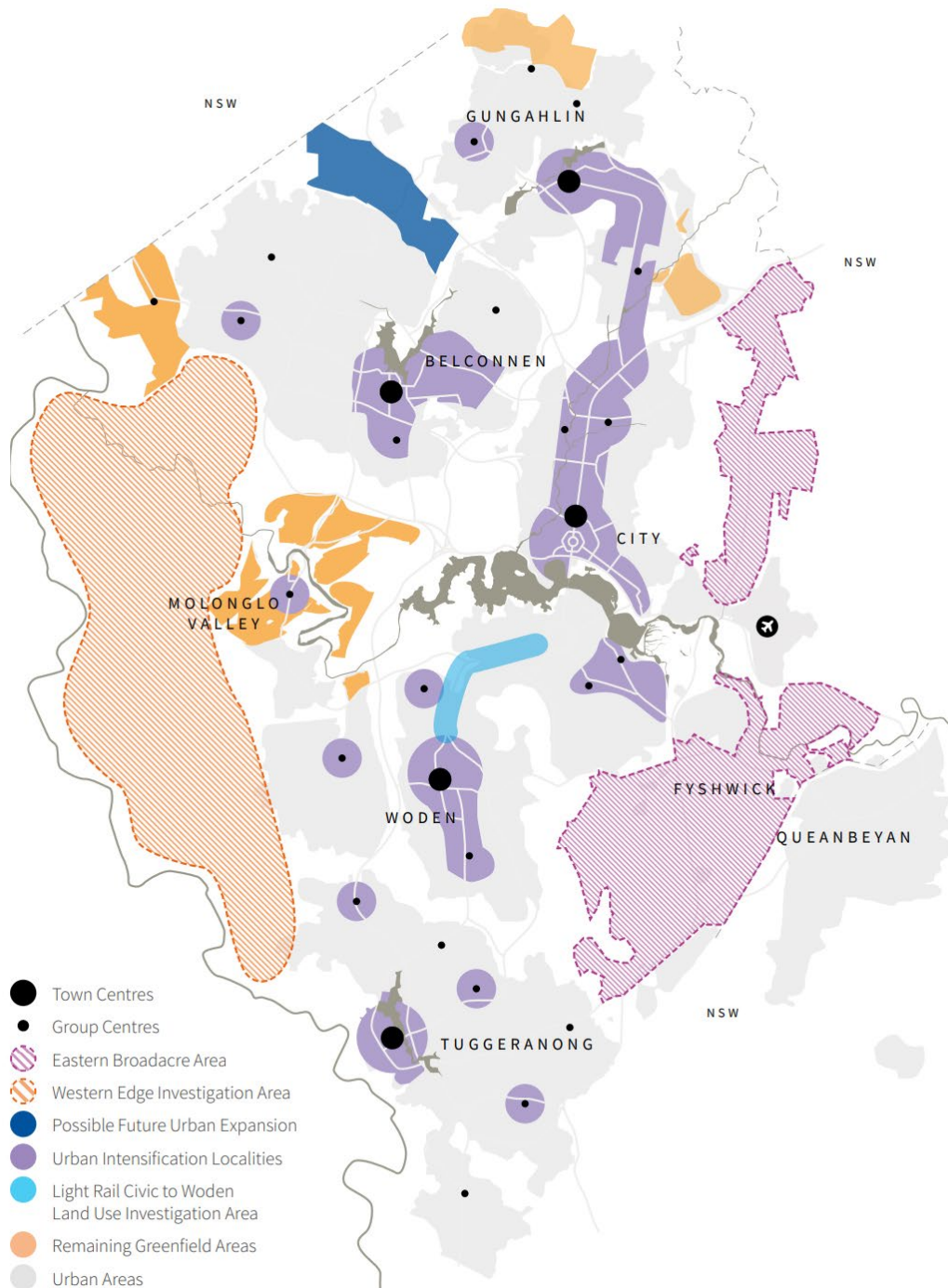
Early planning is underway for future consultation associated with the Planning and Transport Strategy. While public consultation is not expected in the immediate term, to allow further research and policy development to be completed, preparatory work has commenced to support future engagement activities. This includes early engagement planning with Traditional Custodians and First Nations peoples to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are considered in future discussions about the ACT's long-term growth and landscape planning framework.

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 potential 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).

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



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 studies to support the finalisation of the EBSA as shown in the table below

All other ecological surveys will be undertaken over two seasons in 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.

Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment Studies	Status
Eastern Broadacre Striped Legless Lizard Survey	Completed in December 2025
Eastern Broadacre Latham's Snipe Advice	Completed June 2026
EBSA Survey Season 1 (Spring/Autumn 2025/26) Stage 1 Ecological Assessment Report	Completed June 2026
EBSA Draft Conservation and Development Plan	Underway
EBSA Draft Strategic Assessment Report	Underway
EBSA Survey Season 2 (Spring/Summer 2026/27) Stage 2 Ecological Assessment Report	Commencing Spring 2026

The draft EBSA is currently scheduled to be re-submitted to the National Environment Protection Agency (formerly known as DCCEEW) later in 2026. Public exhibition is currently anticipated to commence in early 2027, 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 can be found at [Eastern Broadacre - City and Environment Directorate - Planning](#).

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](#).

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	Complete
Strategic Transport Assessment	Complete
Dam and Riparian Study	Complete
Small Mammal Survey	Complete
Vegetation Mapping and Threatened Species	Complete
Social Needs Assessment including education, sports and recreational activities	Complete
Economic and Market Analysis	Complete
Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment	Complete

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 \(CED, June 2025\)*](#).

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 late 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 early 2027.