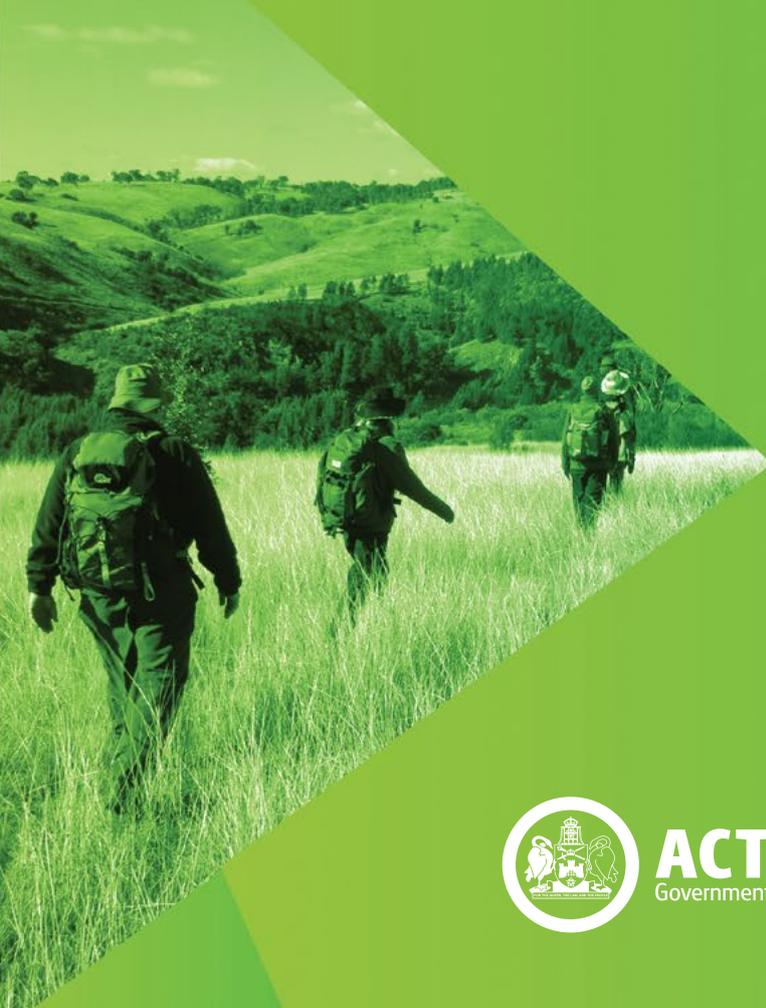


# CONNECTING & BUILDING RECREATION A VISION FOR THE TERRITORY



**ACT**  
Government



CANBERRA



# A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE

CANBERRA RESIDENTS AND OUR VISITORS ARE ENGAGED IN ACTIVE RECREATION AND PLAY THROUGH ACCESSIBLE QUALITY EXPERIENCES THAT ATTRACT AND ENCOURAGE USE, EXPLORATION AND APPRECIATION OF OUR NATURAL AREAS, PLAY SPACES AND SPORTING AMENITIES.





## WHY THE VISION?

There are concerning rises in the occurrence of obesity, heart disease and sedentary behaviours in the ACT, with 63% of adults and 26% of children (5–17) now overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup>

Increasingly we are leading sedentary lifestyles in the ACT, with 40% of adults and 77% of children not sufficiently active to maintain their health.<sup>2</sup>

The number of ACT children using electronic media is on the rise, with half of Canberra's kids spending longer than the recommended maximum of 2 hours per day glued to their screens.<sup>3</sup>

Canberra has an ageing population. By 2059 the proportion of the ACT population aged 65 and over will increase from 11% in 2012 to 22%.

Against this background we are witnessing changes to the way in which people spend their leisure time and engage in physical activity. Reflective of this change, Canberrans and our visitors are seeking new opportunities for active recreation to enrich their everyday lives and visitation experience. In the ACT and elsewhere peoples' preferences for exercise, active recreation and experiencing nature and the outdoors are changing with societal conditions and lifestyles.<sup>4</sup> To retain strong participation rates, in the future sport and recreation will need to cater for varied demographics and the changing cultural make-up of Australia. Organised sport will always be a popular means for adults and children to get their physical activity "fix", but organised, competitive participation is clearly not to everyone's taste.

The challenges do not stop there. In the ACT we have pockets of social disadvantage, residents with a disability, older adults and sedentary people who have limited access to physical activity opportunities. These members of our community need information and assistance to begin and stay active. Similarly, many children and young people are not introduced to outdoor physical activities that are meaningful to them. Time poor parents and societal concerns about safety can limit outdoor play, active travel and activities in natural environments.



**3,510 km**  
**of trail network**  
**for recreation**  
**and commuting**



**Town Parks**  
**Formal parks adjacent to**  
**main town centres**



**Community Parks**  
**Combine sport and recreation**  
**infrastructure, playgrounds**  
**and picnic areas**



**6,000 ha**  
**surrounding the Cotter**  
**available for low impact**  
**recreation activities ie**  
**cycling, walking**



**18,000 ha**  
**of pine forests for social**  
**sport and recreation use**

1 ACT Government (2014), *Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2014*. Canberra.

2 ACT Government (2014), *Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2014*. Canberra.

3 ACT Government (2014), *Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2014*. Canberra.

4 Hajkowicz, S.A., Cook, H., Wilhelmseder, L., Boughen, N. (2013). *The Future of Australian Sport: Megatrends shaping the sports sector over coming decades*. A Consultancy Report for the Australian Sports Commission. CSIRO, Australia

## BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS...

Challenges aside, we have strong attributes and a solid foundation to build upon. The ACT boasts the highest participation rates in sport and active recreation in the country. Canberrans have the highest life expectancy in Australia. There is increasing interest in, and access to, equipment and events for adventure, lifestyle, extreme and alternative sports and associated communities. Social media and the internet are increasingly important to us as sources of information and networking on lifestyle activities including sport and fitness.

We have an abundant network of intriguing trails, parks, pine forests and open spaces, uniquely positioned within or adjacent to our urban landscape, as well as proximity to waterways and rural and alpine borders. We have hundreds of hectares of irrigated sportsgrounds, and a bountiful provision of local play spaces and community facilities throughout the city. These places are intrinsic to Canberra as a planned city cradled by native bushland, adding to the vibrancy of where we live.

Our natural and recreational assets are important resources that are integral to the health and wellbeing of our people and our environment. Our urban planners recognise this and new developments and master planning work value these assets. Surrounded by nature, we have a source of inspiration and rejuvenation that is rare in many cities throughout the world. Not only does open space provide opportunities for a variety of outdoor physical activities, it

builds social connectedness, allows opportunities for community involvement in nature conservation, and prompts the development of community education and recreation experiences. It encourages us to be stewards, protecting the quality of our environment which is essential for life, the biodiversity of our bushland, our ancient cultural heritage, and the amenity of our landscapes.

Let's make the most of this and share our lifestyle and natural setting with our neighbours and visitors.

Whilst a majority of our residents are blessed with backyards and outdoor play spaces around their homes, our public spaces are key locations for a myriad of recreation activities including, amongst others, organised sport; outdoor adventure; informal walking, cycling, skating, horse riding, fitness activities; water-based recreation; social gatherings; community and special events; and nature appreciation. They are used by families, sporting and recreational clubs, school groups, community groups, volunteer groups, tourism operators and fitness and health providers.



**106,000 ha**  
**of wilderness area for**  
**active recreation use**  
**at Namadgi**



**Backyards**  
**Areas for informal play**  
**and family socialisation**



**200,000**  
**visitors per year to**  
**Tidbinbilla for nature**  
**and wildlife education**

## WHERE ARE WE AT?

In 2011, the ACT Government and sporting industry jointly launched **Active 2020** – a strategic plan for sport and active recreation in the ACT and Region 2011–2021. This document aims to provide an overarching strategic plan for sport and active recreation in the ACT. It champions the need for long term investment in infrastructure and facilities, and better marketing of opportunities to get the community actively involved. It aligns us with a national effort captured in the **National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework. Connecting and Building Recreation: a vision for the Territory** is about activating the recreation component of Active 2020.

Following Active 2020 was the launch of **Towards Zero Growth: Healthy Weight Action Plan in 2013**, to address the rising rate of overweight and obesity amongst our population. The Plan promotes actions to improve the overall health of our community and to meet the target of ‘zero growth’ by keeping the rates of overweight and obesity at or below their current level. Aims include achieving an increase in active travel (walking, cycling and public transport) and to influence levels of physical activity through good urban planning.

Consistent with these strategies the ACT Government is strengthening our focus on enabling higher rates of participation in active recreation and play. Physical activity and connection with the world around us is positive for our physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing<sup>5</sup> and the benefits are undeniable. There is increasing scientific evidence that:

- lack of physical activity is an underlying cause of many preventable chronic health conditions and the global overweight and obesity epidemic;

- time spent in nature and exercising outdoors helps achieve and maintain a healthy weight and to improve health, assisting in recovery from stress and mental health conditions, helping to counteract the effects of long working hours, promoting concentration and productivity and assisting young people with learning and behavioural conditions; and
- unstructured nature-based play is essential for children’s cognitive, social, creative and emotional development. The decreasing time children spend outdoors is contributing to rising rates of childhood obesity, behavioural disorders and depression <sup>6</sup>.

We are perfectly positioned to unlock the potential of active recreation and play. The ACT has a diverse network of community, commercial and sporting organisations that offer, or have the capacity to offer, quality recreation experiences.

Despite all of our wonderful assets and the opportunities that they present, their potential use for active recreation and play is relatively untapped or potentially unknown to many members of our community. These places and the opportunities offered need to be accessible, inclusive, promoted and signposted, relevant to people and appropriate to their needs. Access needs to be easy so that active recreation and play can be incorporated as part of daily life.

We need to reconsider how traditional activities might otherwise be offered or accessed. A stronger culture of active play needs to be fostered. Connections for all, particularly children and youth, with enjoyable outdoor physical activities need to be nurtured. An appropriate balance of risk needs to be understood. The community benefit that could be harnessed by unlocking the potential of active recreation and play holds brilliant possibilities.

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<sup>5</sup> Sources: Parks Victoria & School of Health and Social Development, Faculty of health, Deakin University (November 2014), Healthy Parks Healthy People: the State of the Evidence 2014 – Summary of Preliminary Findings, reported on <http://parkweb.vic.gov.au>; Healthy Parks Healthy People Global (2011), Protecting the Earth’s two most important assets: Introducing Healthy Parks Healthy People, [www.hphpcentral.com](http://www.hphpcentral.com).

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<sup>6</sup> [www.natureplaywa.org.au](http://www.natureplaywa.org.au); Louv, Richard (2008), *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Algonquin Books.

## WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

The ACT Government is committed to helping unlock this potential. We will work towards our vision by striving to:

1. *Grow participation* in active recreation and play for all Canberrans regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, mobility or financial situation;
2. *Raise recognition of Canberra as a destination of choice for recreation*, offering a diverse and rich range of experiences through an abundance of natural assets and sporting amenities;
3. *Support healthy lifestyles* through ease of access and activity as part of daily life;
4. *Encourage innovative use* of parks, reserves, forests, trails and sporting amenities by all sectors through forward thinking, an enabling government environment and adaptability to changing community needs;
5. *Invest in partnerships* to provide a broad range of experiences and activities that appeal to everyone in the community and our visitors;
6. *Build appreciation of our doorstep opportunities*, including exploration, stewardship, respectful and shared use of parks, places and recreation programs as part of a healthy lifestyle; and
7. *Inspire the younger generation* to adopt energetic lifelong practices that nurture good health, wellbeing and social cohesion.

Guided by these principles the ACT Government states a clear agenda to:

### **INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVE RECREATION AND PLAY ACROSS THE COMMUNITY**

We will build awareness of the quality of life on offer through participation in active recreation and play. We will look at ways to support a range of easily accessible activities, and sell the message that active recreation and play can occur anytime and anywhere.

### **INCREASE THE USE OF OUR NATURAL ASSETS, PLAY SPACES AND SPORTING AMENITIES BY RESIDENTS AND VISITORS**

We will build appreciation of the significant community benefits offered through our parks, pine forests, open spaces and sporting amenities as venues for active recreation, sport, health and fitness activities. We will highlight the opportunities the spaces offer for education and social interaction; business development and employment. We will draw visitors to the Territory through niche tourism opportunities and events to showcase our recreation setting.

We will strive to increase community and visitor participation in these spaces by making them relevant to more people. We will support and develop innovative active recreation programs that are meaningful to people's preferences, lifestyles, cultures and societal conditions. We will value investment in the management of these spaces and deliver better return on this investment.

### **DELIVER NEW OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

We will commit to effective and cooperative relationships between partners across government, community, commercial and non-government groups within the recreation sector to deliver programs and encourage participation.

THIS AGENDA WILL BE ACTIVATED THROUGH A RANGE OF INITIATIVES IN THE SHORT, MEDIUM AND LONG TERM. A LIST OF THE ACTIVATORS CAN BE FOUND ON BOTH THE SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES WEBSITE AND THE TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES WEBSITE. ACTIVATORS WILL BE REVIEWED AND UPDATED REGULARLY TO INCLUDE NEW PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES.

## WOULD YOU LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GETTING ACTIVE IN THE ACT?

For information on engagement in sport and recreation, visit the Sport and Recreation Services website at [www.sport.act.gov.au](http://www.sport.act.gov.au)

For information on engagement in recreation in our outdoor and natural areas, including access to open spaces, walking trails, nature parks and outdoor exercise options, visit the Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) website at [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)

For information and suggestions on how to live a healthy lifestyle, visit [www.act.gov.au/healthyliving](http://www.act.gov.au/healthyliving)



**Pools – year round aquatic access**



**Stromlo Forest Park**  
Multi-sport facility for both family recreation and social/competitive sport and recreation



**250 ha**  
of rolling hills and valleys at the National Arboretum



**Private facilities**  
indoor and outdoor venues catering for a range of activities



**Numerous reserves for family and social recreation**



**7,500 ha**  
of camping, active recreation and social use areas in river corridors



**6,000 ha**  
of formal parks, lakes and parkland with diverse sport and recreation opportunities



**Neighbourhood Parks**  
Small parks in residential areas with playground and picnic areas



**Over 280ha**  
of irrigated sportsground







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