

ACT GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

INQUIRY INTO THE EXTENT AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SALINITY IN THE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT

An assessment of the long-term success of federal programs that seek to reduce the extent of and economic impact of salinity in the Australian environment, including:

- a) *Whether goals of national programs to address salinity have been attained, including those stated in the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, Natural Heritage Trust and National Landcare programs;*

The ACT is currently negotiating a bilateral agreement for delivery of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) funding in the ACT, hence no activity has yet taken place in the ACT for this particular program. Once a NAP agreement has been formalised for the ACT, projects focused on tackling salinity in accordance with the national goals of the program will be undertaken.

- b) *The role that regional catchment management authorities are required to play in management of salinity-affected areas, and the legislative and financial support available to assist them in achieving national goals;*

The ACT's equivalent of a regional catchment management authority is its Natural Resource Management Territory Body. It is anticipated that when arrangements for the delivery of the NAP in the ACT are finalised, this body will provide advice on projects focused on tackling salinity.

As a result of land tenure arrangements in the ACT, the majority of land is managed as public land either by the Australian Government or the ACT Government. Salinity is not currently seen as a significant threat to the productivity of land in the ACT. Legislative frameworks are in place for land-use in the ACT (ie. the Commonwealth's *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*, the National Capital Plan, the ACT's *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*, and the Territory Plan). Issues associated with surface water salinity are addressed through the ACT's *Think water, act water* strategy.

- c) *What action has been taken as a result of recommendations made by the House of Representatives' Science and Innovation Committee's inquiry 'Science overcoming salinity: Coordinating and extending the science to address the nation's salinity problem', and how those recommendations may be furthered to assist land-holders, regional managers and affected communities to address and reduce the problems presented by salinity.*

The ACT currently addresses the threat of salinity commensurate to the potential risk. There is some evidence of dryland salinity occurring on rural lands in ACT, although it is not considered to be a broad scale land management issue.

The ACT Government is preparing a project proposal to conduct a basic salinity study, and will seek Australian Government funding assistance for this project once arrangements are in place for delivery of NAP funding in the ACT. This study will include salinity mapping and provide a basis for programs on rural and urban land.

Targets for salinity in the ACT have been articulated in the ACT NRM Plan. Investment in actions and activities towards addressing these targets is awaiting an arrangement for the delivery of the NAP in the ACT to be finalised.

The ACT Government is responsible for the management of the majority of land in the ACT. Land use conditions for Rural Lessees are reflected in Land Management Agreements made with the ACT Government. Factors such as land capability and land condition are considered as part of these agreements.