

Submission: ACT Climate Change Strategy 2026-35 Discussion Paper

From: Animal Justice Party (AJP) ACT

To: City and Environment Directorate, ACT Government

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) ACT welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft discussion paper for the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2026-35. While we acknowledge the ACT's leadership in renewable electricity, the next phase of climate action must move beyond technical energy shifts to address the fundamental relationship between our city, its natural environment, and the animals with whom we share it.

Our response focuses on how protecting animals and prioritising nature-based solutions is the most effective pathway to a healthy, habitable, and climate-resilient Canberra.

Background: The Animal Justice Party aims to give a political voice to animals, to pursue the vital issues of animal protection through Australia's political system and to encourage political parties to adopt animal-friendly policies

1. Nature-Based Solutions: Beyond Technical Mitigation

The discussion paper correctly identifies the "urban heat island effect" as a significant public health risk. The AJP ACT asserts that nature-based solutions are the most efficient tools to combat this.

- **Protection of Existing Trees:** We must move beyond "planting targets" to the strict protection of existing mature canopy. Established trees provide immediate cooling and habitat that new saplings cannot replace for decades.
- **Expanding the Urban Forest:** AJP ACT supports the 30% canopy cover target by 2045 but urges the Government to accelerate this to protect community health and biodiversity from more frequent heatwaves.
- **Biodiversity Corridors & Green Space:** As summers become longer and hotter, wildlife will face immense survival pressure. We call for the formalisation of biodiversity corridors in all new developments to ensure safe passage and habitat for native species.

2. Building a Healthy, Habitable City

The strategy must recognise that our relationship with nature is central to building a "climate-ready" city.

- **Public Health & Liveability:** Protecting animals and their habitats directly improves human liveability. Diverse green spaces reduce respiratory issues, improve mental health, and provide essential cooling.

- **Development Planning:** We advocate for "Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design" to be a mandatory requirement, not just a guide. New developments must include adequate planning to protect all local wildlife (native and non-native) and prevent the "extinction of experience" for Canberra residents.

3. Addressing the Root Cause: Animal Agriculture

While the paper mentions "Scope 1" emissions from agriculture and "on-farm carbon abatement," it stops short of addressing the massive climate and environmental footprint of animal agriculture.

- **Ending Animal Agriculture:** The AJP ACT calls for a planned transition away from animal agriculture in the Territory. This would include disallowing all animal agriculture activities on ACT leased land. The animal agriculture sector is a primary driver of land clearing, water scarcity, and methane emissions (the "powerful greenhouse gas" identified in your glossary).
- **A Shift to Plant-Based Resilience:** Transitioning to plant-based systems would free up land for wildlife, reforestation and carbon sinks while significantly reducing the ACT's contribution to global methane levels.

4. Disaster Resilience & Wildlife

The Vision for 2035 for Disaster Resilience focuses heavily on human infrastructure.

- **Wildlife in Emergency Planning:** The Emergency Plan must be updated to include specific protocols for the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife during the "earlier and longer" bushfire seasons projected for the ACT.
- **Natural Resources:** Managing water catchments sustainably must prioritise the needs of local ecosystems and aquatic life, not just human consumption and industry.

Conclusion

Ambitious climate action is indeed an opportunity to deliver co-benefits for the community. For the Animal Justice Party ACT, those benefits are found in a city that treats the natural world and all its inhabitants (human and non-human) with respect. By ending destructive industries like animal agriculture and prioritising the protection of our urban forest and biodiversity, the ACT can lead the way in creating a truly habitable, kind, and resilient future.