



Submission 2016-17 ACT Budget Consultation

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ACT Budget Consultation

Chief Minister, Treasury & Economic Directorate

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Preamble

Woden in the last eighteen to twelve months has suffered from federal public servant cuts and also federal and ACT public servant employment relocation. This has had a major impact on small business, small to large retailers and service traders in the Woden area. Several office buildings remain empty, either to be demolished or refurbished and repurposed. This has seen the economy in Woden stagnate somewhat even with significant growth in residential development. Many facilities are ageing in and around the town centre and in need of renewal.

Poor initial planning when the town centre was first developed located the Canberra (formerly Woden Valley) Hospital 1.5km away from the town centre. Locating the hospital closer to the town centre could have buffered small businesses and retail from the current economic conditions. During the hospital rebuild process this should have been a consideration but wasn't.

Unlike other town centre areas in Canberra, Woden has limited urban amenity and public open space within the core area. This could be greatly improved, which would add to the liveability and vitality of the area.

The WVCC recognises the recent 2015 budget announcements, to upgrade Phillip oval and provide a synthetic grass football oval at Melrose High School. Feasibility studies for improving walking and cycling around the town centre and the start of improvements to the Woden Bus interchange. But more work needs to be done.

Many Woden residents feel that infrastructure is deficient or inadequate in relation to community and arts facilities and indoor sporting facilities. The ACT Government taxation reforms has seen a significant increases in home owner land rates, with many not seeing a benefit from this reform until they decide to sell or buy a new home.

Most ACT budget revenue that is generated through land sales, parking fees fines and land rates go towards consolidated revenue rather than funding infrastructure improvements within that local area. Parking revenue for example should be used to fund walking, cycling, street lighting, intersection upgrades and extra parking, where that revenue is generated.

Health and education will and should receive the bulk of Budget funding but improvement to the health and wellbeing can also be funded through preventive measures like recreational facilities and amenities that increase physical exercise and mental health.

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Woden is also the home of the Federal Government Health department. The ACT Government could build on this 'health' related theme to rebrand Woden as a health research and science innovation hub.

Incentives for private health services and research companies to relocate in Woden should be considered. The retention of higher education facilities in Woden based on health, research and science related services should be considered. This would expand the employment base and economic activity in Woden which would intern increase revenue for the ACT Government.

2016 -17 Budget priorities for the Woden

The WVCC believes that there are five main priorities for Woden. They include:

- **Funding for a new Woden Community/Arts Centre**
- **The upgrade of Woden Bus interchange and associated transport infrastructure**
- **Fund or release sites for an enclosed multipurpose indoor sports facility which includes an Aquatic facility**
- **Yarralumla Creek revitalisation project - Woden Wetlands / Channel naturalisation**
- **Street Lighting renewal**

Woden Valley Community/Arts Centre

The release of the consultant report into the Woden Community centre has been welcomed be the WVCC which has suggested three sites for the potential of a Community centre. These all consider the repurpose of existing building located in the town centre.

The Building to the east of the town centre Callam Offices has recently been vacated by ACT public servants and as the building is heritage listed and owned by the ACT Government, would be ideal for a community centre. Initial costings for refurbishment are in the several millions which would mean that funding needs to be sort either by land release around the site and a staged refurbishment process of the three buildings.

Further investigation and consultant work is still continuing and it is hoped that a solution can be finalised for Budget consideration in 2016 – 17. The WVCC supports the re use of Callam Offices for a community/arts centre and possible land release to fund the refurbish work needed.



Tuggeranong and Belconnen Community / Arts centres

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The upgrade of Woden Bus interchange and associated transport infrastructure

WVCC welcomes the ACT Government allocation of funding in this year's Budget for the redesign and upgrade to install new stairs and a glass lift. But further funding is required to complete the full upgrade of the Bus interchange, given that the shopping Mall extension has been postponed indefinitely. The ACT Government should proceed with this project without the shopping mall owners.

The Woden interchange for its time was nationally recognised in design and providing comfort for bus commuters. The new bus interchange should also be architecturally designed that is regarded as world standard as must include all weather protection.



It is clear from these Bus station designs from around the world that cover can create light filled spaces while protecting commuters from rain which could be fully enclosed or open at the sides.

Other transport upgrades for 2016 -17 would also include:

- Feasibility study for the Rapid transport corridor that connects Callam Street to Yarra Glen.
- Funding of \$3.4 million for the upgrade of the Woden Bus depot has previously been allocated in a previous budget, though design and construction has yet to start. This Depot needs to be functional to prevent continuing dead running of bus services.
- Road duplication of Athllon Drive between Melrose Drive and Shea Street with bus slip lanes into the bus depot. This work should be considered even if vehicle counts

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do not meet levels required for duplication. This road could reduce traffic levels on Melrose drive while providing dedicated bus lanes on Athllon Drive.

- The upgrade of Yarra Glen and Adelaide Ave T2 lanes to dedicated bus lanes and the construction of the missing southern bus lane to Yarra Glen roundabout from Cotter road overpass.
- The staged roll out of median bus stops on Yarra Glen/Adelaide Ave, which planning and constant work has already been completed in 2012.
- Feasibility study on a possible new dedicated bus road connection off Adelaide Ave to Parliament house with dedicated Bus lanes along Commonwealth Ave. This work would involve the National Capital Authority (NCA).
- The WVCC welcomes the feasibility to improve walking and cycling connections around the Woden Town Centre but it is time to look at world's best practice for active travel design including the design of traffic light intersections that are safe for all users. The WVCC would support an international consultant or consultancy to conduct workshops and provide a report before any project options are considered.

Multipurpose indoor sports facility including an enclosed Aquatic Facility.

The Environment and Planning directorate in 2012 commissioned several reports for the Woden and Mawson master plan process. The *Community, Sport and Recreation Facilities Study* by consultants Buckley Vann Town Planning, Strategic leisure group and Briggs & Mortar Pty Ltd recommended that a multipurpose indoor sports facility would be desirable given that the existing facilities are privately owned, ageing, at capacity and have an extremely uncertain future. A facility that is located within the town centre precinct which would benefit from public transport access and demand generated from the workforce entering the town centre on weekdays.

The study also recommended that the current privately owned pool facility is inadequate for the Woden - Weston district and that along with indoor sports facilities a new indoor aquatic facility would be the preferred outcome to cater for local residents and the daily workforce.

This study backs up a previously commissioned and unreleased report by ACT sports and recreation in 2011. The *2011 Draft Aquatic and Related Facilities: ACT Strategic Plan 2011-2030* by consultants: HM Leisure Planning Pty Ltd, Sutera Architects Pty Ltd and C Leisure Pty Ltd, stated that the provision of pool facilities in the Woden/Weston are deficient and that the Phillip venue is increasingly incapable of meeting community needs. The Phillip site has development constraints and given the co-location of the ice skating rink it is unlikely that a modern indoor facility could be accommodated on that site.

The state of the Phillip pool and lack of future upgrade opportunities is a source of immense frustration to the Woden community. The reason behind granting a 99 year lease to the lessee Glencora Pty Ltd was to help encourage private investment to upgrade the facility. Seven years on and that has not happened. Given that the company does not own any other sports facilities or major commercial properties in Canberra or Australia it is unlikely that a

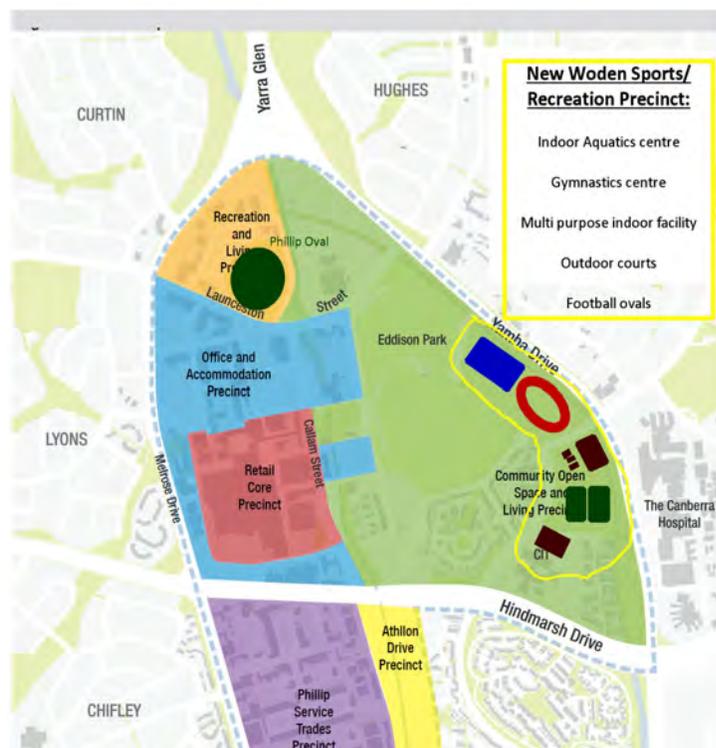
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private investor in this current climate would invest in this facility without a sound business case and or public investment.

The WVCC believes that while the Government is pursuing a Molonglo facility which wouldn't suit may Woden residents, that a new aquatic facility should also be a priority. This could be by the following options:

- Releasing a site for sale to a private developer for to sole purpose of constructing an aquatic facility.
- A grant towards the construction of an indoor aquatics facility which would be by tender process. (Similar to the CISAC in Belconnen)
- A government built facility within Woden.

The WVCC submission to the Draft Woden master plan suggested a new sports precinct be located along Yamba drive which would include the newly upgraded Woden Athletics Park. The New Aquatics facility could be sited on a part of Eddison Park. This site has also been identified for the Woden cemetery expansion and also the location for wetlands/ ponds as part of the options for Yarralumla creek, ACT Basin priority project.



WVCC proposed site for a new sports/recreation precinct.

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Yarralumla Creek Revitalisation Project - Woden Wetlands / Channel naturalisation

Woden is the only district not to have a significant water feature like a lake or major wetlands or ponds.

The then National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in the early 1960's took a different approach based on American engineering solutions to create a concrete channel along the existing creek. The theory and practice, is to remove stormwater runoff as quickly as possible from the system. This in turn and with engineering mistakes led to the drownings of seven people on Australia day 1971.

The Yarralumla creek today or Woden stormwater channel as it is known has seen no work to remediate the concrete channels or create ponds and or wetlands.

The WVCC has been part of the community consultation and expert reference group on the Yarralumla creek catchment as part of the ACT Basin priority project. The Federal Government is providing \$ 85 million for the project with a further 10% coming from the ACT Government. This funding will be spread across the six priority catchments and from the options and cost for each catchment the funding will fall way short. The 25 to 30 options suggested for Yarralumla creek alone total \$132.7 million dollars. Though the process has been a worthwhile one as it has provided a blueprint for future upgrades to the catchment.

The WVCC would like to see the government make a commitment and establish the Yarralumla creek revitalisation project to continue on from the work by the ACT basin priority project. This will see the complete channel naturalisation of Yarralumla creek from Beasley Street in Mawson to McCullough Street in Curtin.

This the WVCC considers a long term process which can be considered for future budgets not only to improve water quality in the catchment but to improve the urban water amenity within the Woden Valley.



Los Angeles River Revitalisation concept design



Cheonggyecheon stream restoration, Seoul

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Potential Yarralumla creek design concept, Woden

Street light renewal

The current street lights in Woden are ageing and don't meet current Australian standards. The existing lights installed are not of heritage value and should be replaced to meet current standards. Also the major shared path network in Woden has no lighting since it was first installed in the 1970's. The cost can be spread across future ACT budgets starting with major collector streets, shared paths, minor collector streets, and access roads



Current street lighting conditions in Woden

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Other Budget considerations for 2016 -17:

- Upgrading Torrens neighbourhood oval (ACT Labor 2012 election commitment)
- Feasibility study for a new synthetic grass school oval at Curtin , Block 4, Section 60. Facility currently shared between two schools Curtin Primary and Holy Trinity schools. The potential upgrade would provide a similar outcome to the Gold Creek and Holy Spirit schools synthetic oval in Gungahlin.
- Feasibility study for new synthetic grass oval at Alfred Deakin High School. Similar to Melrose High school proposed facility.
- Upgrade Mawson sports oval (former golf driving range) to add another sports field.
- Feasibility on higher education facility focused on health services, research and science.
- Upgrade to Woden Square with possible new Woden Town Park, including a water feature and playspace.
- Feasibility study on new location site for Southside farmers market.
- Pedestrian crossing facilities on Mawson Place, Mawson Shopping precinct.

The WVCC welcomes the ongoing commitment to Health and Education as a priority for the ACT Government and the commitment to the complete removal of Mr Fluffy loose fill asbestos which will be a significant cost to future ACT Budgets. There are currently 244 affected properties in Woden which will require demolition over the next 3 years. This will significantly change the character of many suburbs within Woden

Once again the WVCC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the ACT Budget 2016 -17 budget process.

Prepared by

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On behalf of the Woden Valley Community Council

14 October 2015

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