

Ms Meegan Fitzharris MLA
Member for Yerrabi
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Minister

RE Coordinated plan for Woden's urban renewal – sites for community infrastructure

We are writing to request your consideration of the development of a coordinated plan to rebuild Woden's community infrastructure to improve the health and well-being of our community. We acknowledge your attendance at our April 2017 public meeting, however, given the meeting was about public housing we would like to invite you to another public meeting to discuss matters relevant to your portfolio responsibilities.

We acknowledge the Government's policy on Healthy Living which states that there is *'growing recognition that the built environment influences levels of physical activity, whether for transport or recreation*. We also note the Chief Minister's Statement of Ambition for Canberra which includes the point that *'Cities don't succeed by accident or by leaving things to chance – they require design, good governance and great collaboration'*.

As you know, the planning intent for Town Centres under the *National Capital Plan* is that they are relatively self-contained social and commercial centres. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case for Woden as our basketball stadium was demolished, our bowling greens, tennis courts and pitch n putt have closed and our ice rink and pool are at risk of closure should a new ice rink be built. In addition, our CIT closed and we have never had a Community Hub. You may also be aware that Woden has become a graffiti hotspot, of media about Chinese students being bashed at the Woden bus interchange and children sitting on the dangerous derelict Alexander and Albemarle buildings.

The opportunities to build morale through activities in Woden are reduced because residents drive to other districts for social and recreational amenity.

Our vision is for the Woden community to have pride in the Town Centre and to strengthen connections between people by sharing social, cultural and recreational facilities and public spaces to build a strong and resilient community.

Research shows that social inclusion is important to people's health and wellbeing and basic facilities provide opportunities to build connections between people and develop mentoring relationships. A coordinated plan to rebuild the social capital of Woden is required to give residents the opportunity to have pride in their home, reduce the vandalism and improve the feeling of safety.

In December 2017, the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal released its report into the draft variation to the Territory Plan for the Woden Town Centre (DV344) making 31 recommendations across a wide range of issues, including amendments to DV344, to reserve a site for community facilities, identify entertainment areas for night time use and include the cycling network.

The Report also recommends that the ACT Government; deliver a broad-based urban renewal process for the Woden Town Centre that includes action on community facilities, recreation facilities, renewal of public areas and attraction of jobs to the Town Centre; and fund a long-term plan for community and recreation facilities in the Woden Town Centre, incorporating a Community Hub. This is a priority for the Woden community.

Woden is centrally located on the main north-south and east-west public transport alignments making it accessible and an ideal location to locate facilities. While it is currently rundown, densification from population growth and the commitment to light rail provides us with a unique opportunity to manage its renewal to the vibrant social and economic hub that it is supposed to be.

We note that the 2017-18 Budget provided funding for feasibility studies for multi-purpose sports halls, including in Woden, and a new ice sports facility. We are keen to engage to identify sites and deliver innovative solutions for facilities that will cater for a number of sporting groups, including the Woden Valley Gymnastics Club who are looking for accommodation.

While we acknowledge that you are not responsible for a Community Hub, it is the cumulative impact of the degradation of our amenity that is a concern. We are not clear about who is responsible for the urban renewal of town centres and would appreciate your advice on this matter.

We also acknowledge that there is a role for both the Government and the private sector in the provision of community facilities, however zoning for residential towers across the Town Centre makes it difficult to see where non-profitable community facilities would be sited.

To manage tensions created by densification we recommend a coordinated approach to implementing change through a two stage process to update the Territory Plan for the Woden Town Centre. Stage 1, the current DV344 could provide some certainty around buildings heights, similar to the building height hierarchy in Belconnen's Master Plan. The outcomes of coordinated planning for the social, cultural and recreational needs of the community could then be included in a second update of the Precinct Code for light rail.

In order to coordinate the urban renewal of Woden we have written to the Chief Minister seeking his consideration of declaring the Woden Town Centre as an Urban Renewal Precinct under section 35 of the *City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017*.

Finally, we would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss a coordinated plan to rebuild Woden's community infrastructure and matters in your portfolio that are relevant to Woden. We invite you to Woden to walk around the Town Centre with us to discuss these issues and we look forward to hearing if you are available to attend one of the WVCC's public meetings. I can be contacted on 0420 533 809 or at president@wvcc.org.au.

Yours sincerely

Ms Fiona Carrick
President
Woden Valley
Community Council

Mr Chris Redmond
CEO
Woden Community Service

Mr Tom Anderson
Chair
Weston Creek
Community Council