

Standing Committee on
Planning, Transport, and City Services
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Ms Clay, Ms Orr and Mr Parton

Inquiry into Woden's recreation precinct and facilities

We are writing to request an inquiry into the recreation precinct in the Woden Town Centre.

On 30 November 2021, two petitions were tabled in the Legislative Assembly seeking the Government to invest in a multi-purpose sports stadium in Woden (23-21) and to keep the Phillip Pool open until a solution for a 50m pool in Woden is found (42-21 and 47-21). These petitions have been referred to your committee for consideration.

The significant number of signatures on these petitions demonstrate that there is concern in the community about the loss of the basketball stadium and the 50m pool in the Woden Town Centre.

It is worth noting that the 2015 Woden Town Centre Master Plan provides for a recreation and living precinct however there has not been a plan to determine how the facilities and residential towers will co-exist. Unfortunately, the outcome has been towers replacing recreation facilities.

The demise of Woden's recreation precinct began with the YMCA moving to Chifley, then the tennis courts, basketball stadium, bowling greens and pitch n putt were closed. **See Attachment A.**

The Southern Cross Club built Stellar (primarily a gym and 17m pool) on part of the pitch n putt site and the government announced a new ice rink in Tuggeranong.

The loss of the popular ice rink is a major setback to the social and economic development of the Woden Town Centre. We understand that the revenue from the ice skating rink subsidises the pool and without the ice rink there is no long term financial incentive for the private owner of the Phillip Swimming and Ice Skating Centre to invest in the pool. Unfortunately, the pool will not open this summer and its future is uncertain.

Even though the site is zoned for a 50m pool and an ice rink, there does not appear to be active management of the future of the site as a community facility, and it is seen as a private sector problem to solve.

We have also lost the 50m pool at the Oasis Leisure Centre in Deakin. It was reduced to 25m to make way for office accommodation and is now used for swimming lessons - it does not service the community's broader swimming requirements.

We still have the Phillip Oval in the precinct however it is locked and not accessible to the community for general use. The squash courts are available to the community.

As you know, recreation facilities provide many benefits to communities by bringing people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds together to socialise and keep fit. In addition to the physical and mental health outcomes, they can inspire and motivate people while fostering community pride.

Unfortunately, the closure of the Woden basketball stadium has left a shortage of indoor facilities and the local Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club is turning players away. The netball, volleyball and other sports clubs in the area also require access to facilities for their members.

Under the National Capital Plan, to which the Territory Plan must not be inconsistent, future population growth is to be accommodated by continuing the development of distinct and relatively self-contained towns with a major activity centre for employment and community services and facilities.

Facilities in the town centres are accessible by public transport and attract people to these major hubs to create activity for the community and to support small business.

The Woden Town Centre is the central hub in Canberra's south servicing a very large area. Its central location provides a convenient place for the broader community to meet and engage in the social, physical and mental health benefits of culture and recreation.

While the new planning framework being developed by the ACT Government is outcomes based, we are concerned that the outcomes sought by the community are different to those being implemented in the precinct.

We are seeking an inquiry to provide transparency around the outcomes being delivered in the Woden Town Centre, including the Government's policy for:

- recreation facilities in the Woden Town Centre – see **Attachment A**
- an equitable distribution of recreation facilities across Canberra – see **Attachment B**
- accessibility of facilities by public transport
- governance arrangements to ensure the proactive management of the recreation precinct and the Phillip Swimming and Ice Skating Centre
- ownership and funding for major recreation assets – private v public.

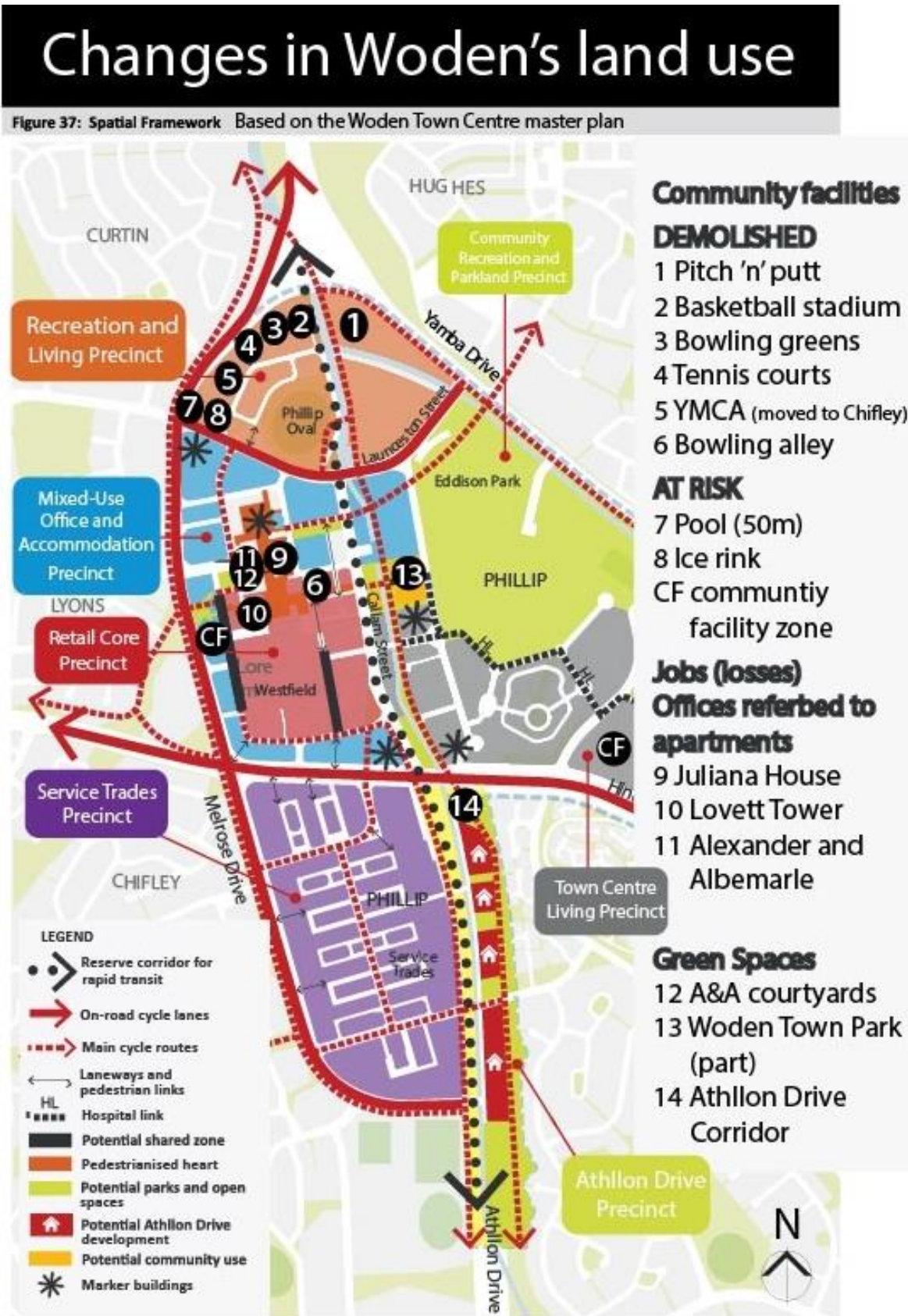
It is appropriate to cease the sale of public land in the Woden Town Centre until we have a plan for the community's recreation facilities. We are keen to work with your committee to promote transparency and identify any obstacles that might stop us from delivering better outcomes for the community.

Yours sincerely



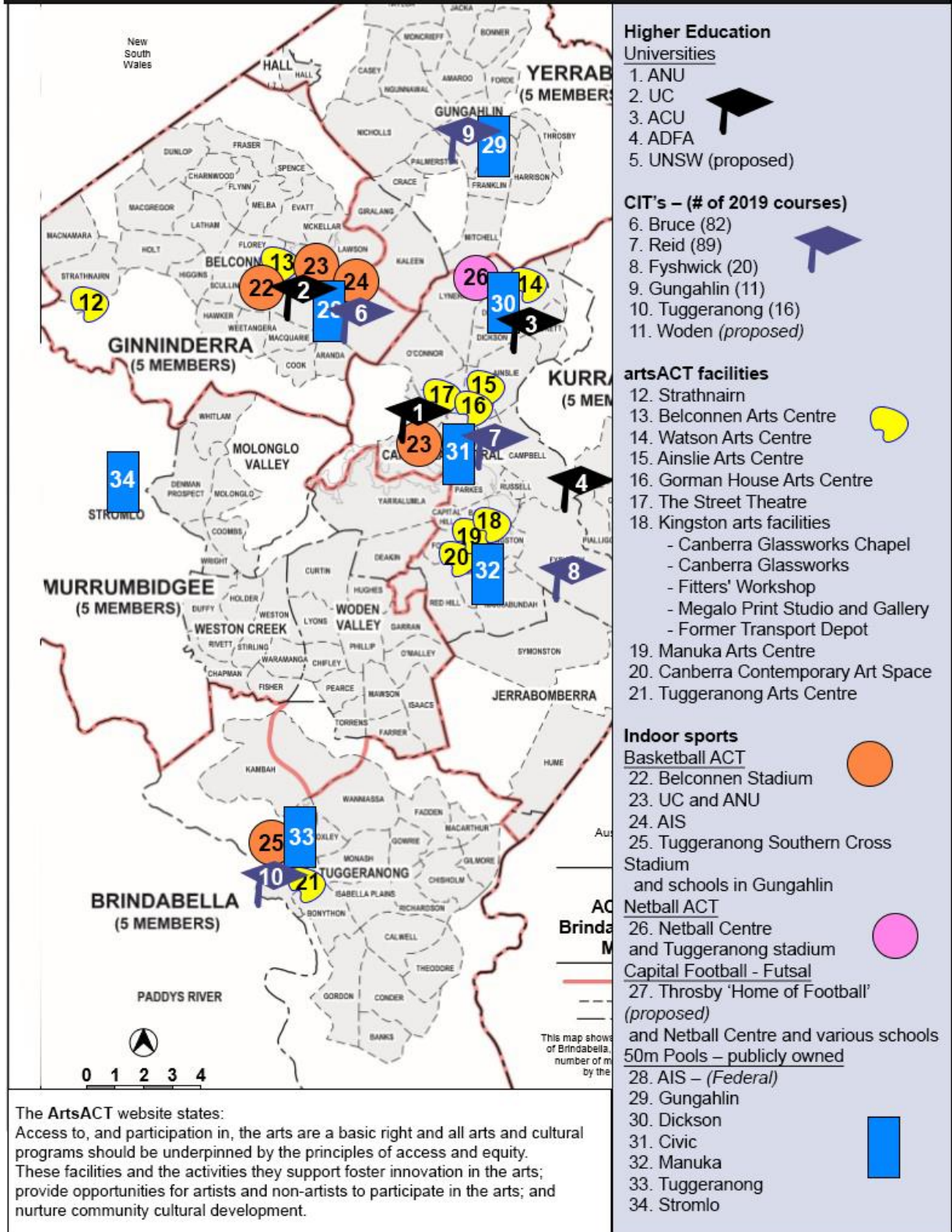
Ms Fiona Carrick
President
Woden Valley Community Council
13 January 2022

This map shows the loss of recreation facilities in the Woden Town Centre



This map shows the lack of equity in the distribution of recreation facilities across Canberra

Higher Education, the arts and indoor sports centres (basketball, netball & futsal)



Note – the Manuka Pool is 30m and not useful for 25m or 50m swimming training.