

2022-23
ACT Government
Budget Submission



Lyons shops – there has been little investment in the shops and surrounds since the establishment of the shops

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the 2022-23 ACT Government Budget process. The Woden Valley Community Council (WVCC) is an Incorporated Association with objective of contributing to the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of Woden Valley residents.

The WVCC believes that planning and good governance is central to enabling economic and social development. The WVCC understands the housing pressures facing the Canberra region and the urgent need for affordable and sustainable housing. We also understand and welcome the changing demographics of Canberra and the demand for housing that is suitable for young people and families.

Careful town planning is required to ensure there is enough affordable housing and an equitable distribution of social and economic activity across Canberra. We look to the ACT Government to safeguard community interests and ensure that new development balances community amenity and environmental considerations with the needs of new residents. District strategies should be treated as long term, living, renewable documents requiring substantial consultation with community members to ensure they evolve with shifting demographics and community needs. See **Attachment A**.

The WVCC is particularly concerned to ensure planning decisions for the Woden Valley maximise opportunities to create public spaces and amenities. We seek to build a strong and inclusive community in the Woden Valley to enable residents to engage with each other and encourage economic and cultural activity. This can only be achieved if new developments are informed by robust planning principles and standards which prioritise sustainability and enhance quality of life for residents. This is particularly important for the CIT which has the potential to bring public spaces and cultural activity to the core of Woden. See **Attachment B**.

In practice, this means high rise buildings on the perimeter of the Woden Town Square are limited to the existing height to reduce overshadowing, active street frontages are encouraged to enable community and economic activity, and strategies are put in place to green the overwhelming concrete spaces. For infill in suburban areas, care should be taken to protect green space and strictly enforce existing planning requirements to minimise overlooking and the loss of privacy neighbours are experiencing. There is also an urgent need to revitalise the local shops across the Woden Valley to create hubs for community engagement.

To implement this vision, the WVCC seeks the following outcomes:

1. Woden Valley residents (and the broader region) have access to centrally located community facilities that are accessible by public transport
2. The long-term development of Woden Valley is in-line with good planning principles
3. Woden Valley residents are engaged with their community.

We have developed specific recommendations for the ACT Government to support each of these outcomes for the betterment of the Woden Valley.

1. Woden Valley residents (and the broader region) have access to centrally located community facilities that are accessible by public transport - high quality social, cultural and sporting facilities provide lasting benefits to communities by bringing people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds together to engage with each other. In addition to the physical and mental health outcomes, there are important economic benefits achieved through aggregation of community activity which supports local businesses. Bespoke cultural facilities inspire and motivate people while fostering community pride.

- a) **An arts centre** – the refurbishment of the Woden Library included community rooms which provide an opportunity to enable the local art community with workshops and exhibitions.

Recommendation 1 – install hanging racks for art exhibitions in the community rooms and café foyer of the Woden Library.

- b) **Shelter for artists in the Town Square** – the refurbishment of the Woden Town Square has improved the area, however our experience hosting events has shown that it is still windy and that the lack of shelter causes problems with musicians reporting illness from the heat.

Recommendation 2 – install shelter and wind mitigation for the Town Square stage to create a weather-proof events space allowing events to take place regardless of weather conditions.

- c) **A multi-purpose sports stadium** – the ACT’s increasing population has a severe shortage of indoor sports facilities (exacerbated by the closure of Woden’s basketball stadium) leading to our local teams turning players away. Our petition received almost 2,000 signatures demonstrating the community’s need for a facility.

Recommendation 3 - build and own a multi-purpose indoor sports stadium in the Woden Town Centre that can be hired at a reasonable cost by local community sports groups.

- d) **A community centre** – In October 2018, the ACT Government committed to a community centre in Woden. We would like to see the plans and a commitment to fund it.

e)

Recommendation 4 – fund Woden’s community centre.

- f) **An Aquatic Centre** – with the commitment to move the attached ice rink to Tuggeranong it is increasingly likely the Phillip pool will close. Planning should be undertaken to provide an indoor/outdoor aquatic centre that is centrally located in Woden and convenient to access by public transport. As evidenced by the recent petition, which garnered over 500 signatures, there is strong community demand for pool facilities in the Woden Valley. The building of pools within the residential towers does not meet the broader community need.

Recommendation 5 – fund planning for Woden’s aquatic centre.

2. The long-term development of Woden Valley is in-line with good planning principles for social, economic and environmental development

- a) **The Woden Town Square** – as outlined in the vision contained in the Woden Town Centre Master Plan, the Woden Town Square is the heart of Woden:
- *‘Woden Town Centre is a **major** community and commercial **hub** for the Woden Valley and wider Canberra region. It will be a place that **attracts people** to live, work, socialise and enjoy throughout the day and **evenings**. The **town square is the central focal point** for social and community activity that will **connect people** to a network of safe and active streets and public parks.’*

Unfortunately, planning decisions have severely reduced the desirability of the Woden Town Square as a place for the community to congregate. The decision to zone for 28 storey buildings around the perimeter of the square will cause overshadowing and this will exacerbate the wind tunnel. There are no cafes or restaurants around the Town Square to attract people to a day and night time economy. Often the lights are not on and people feel unsafe walking through the core of Woden in the evenings.

While we welcome new additions such as Bradey St and the Alby, these are not connected and create scattered activity. Activating the Town Square and connecting to other parts of the Town Centre would lead to a more walkable and liveable Town Centre. This would lead to more people visiting the area and strengthening of the social, cultural and economic activity.

Recommendation 6 – fund a new plan for the built form in the Woden Town Square that includes sites for community facilities and green sunny spaces and considers actions that can be taken to encourage the social, cultural, economic and environmental development that connect to other parts of the Town Centre.

- b) **The CIT** – while education is the primary objective, this centrally located facility has the opportunity to provide cultural activity with local hospitality venues and a street theatre. Unlike the Town Square which has privately owned shop fronts, the Government has the opportunity to deliver a town park (west of the CIT) and the CIT as a central hub that connects with the Hellenic Club in the north, the Southern Cross Club (and Bradley St) to the south, the Town Square to the west, and public transport to the east.

Recommendation 7 – plan the CIT to be a major contributor to the social and cultural heart of the Town Centre, with a Street Theatre on the ground floor and a large park to its west connecting through to the Town Square and other parts of the Town Centre.

- c) **Greening the Town Centre** – there is too much concrete in the Town Centre and more trees and understorey are required to cool it and soften the harshness of the concrete.

Recommendation 8 – plan the greening of the Town Centre and start with funding a new park west of the CIT and trees and gardens along north walk to make comfortable places to meet friends and relax, and for children to play.

- d) **Naturalise parts of Yarralumla Creek** – the creek is a concrete drain and needs to be naturalised to encourage biodiversity that connects with the surrounding hills and ridges. We acknowledge the water can rise quickly, particularly with climate change and the amount of concrete from surrounding development causing run off. Tragically lives were lost in the 1971 floods and studies need to be undertaken to ensure safety. In the short term the southern end of the creek could be naturalised where less water is collected in the drains.

Recommendation 9 – naturalise the southern end of Yarralumla Creek along Athllon Drive and plan for other opportunities for naturalisation north of Hindmarsh Drive.

3. Woden Valley residents are engaged with their community - in addition to larger facilities in the town centre, our local shopping hubs and parks need upgrading to enable local communities to get together and build local resilient networks.

a) **In the suburbs** – there is an immediate need for upgrades to the shops, footpaths, parks and ovals. Some examples include:

Recommendation 10 – fund the following upgrades:

- **Lyons shops playground (including bbq and toilet) and irrigate the oval:** In line with election commitments, there is an urgent need to upgrade playgrounds in Lyons. All existing playgrounds in the suburb are in a poor state and inadequate to meet the growing needs of the community. We recommend the playground on the Lyons Common be upgraded and preferably relocated to the green space adjacent to the Lyons Shops. This would enable the use of parking facilities and would increase economic and community activity around the shops. We strongly support a nature play approach with toilet facilities and a community garden.
- Chifley – open the primary school and irrigate the oval
- Phillip – Colbee and Dundas Courts – co-design and stage construction funding
- Paths and wayfinding between the community facilities, the suburbs and the hospital.

We call on the ACT Government to plan and fund these actions to support the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of Woden Valley residents. We stand ready to work with the Government to achieve lasting benefits for the Woden Valley and surrounding regions and can assist in ensuring planning decisions are informed by the views of residents of Woden Valley.

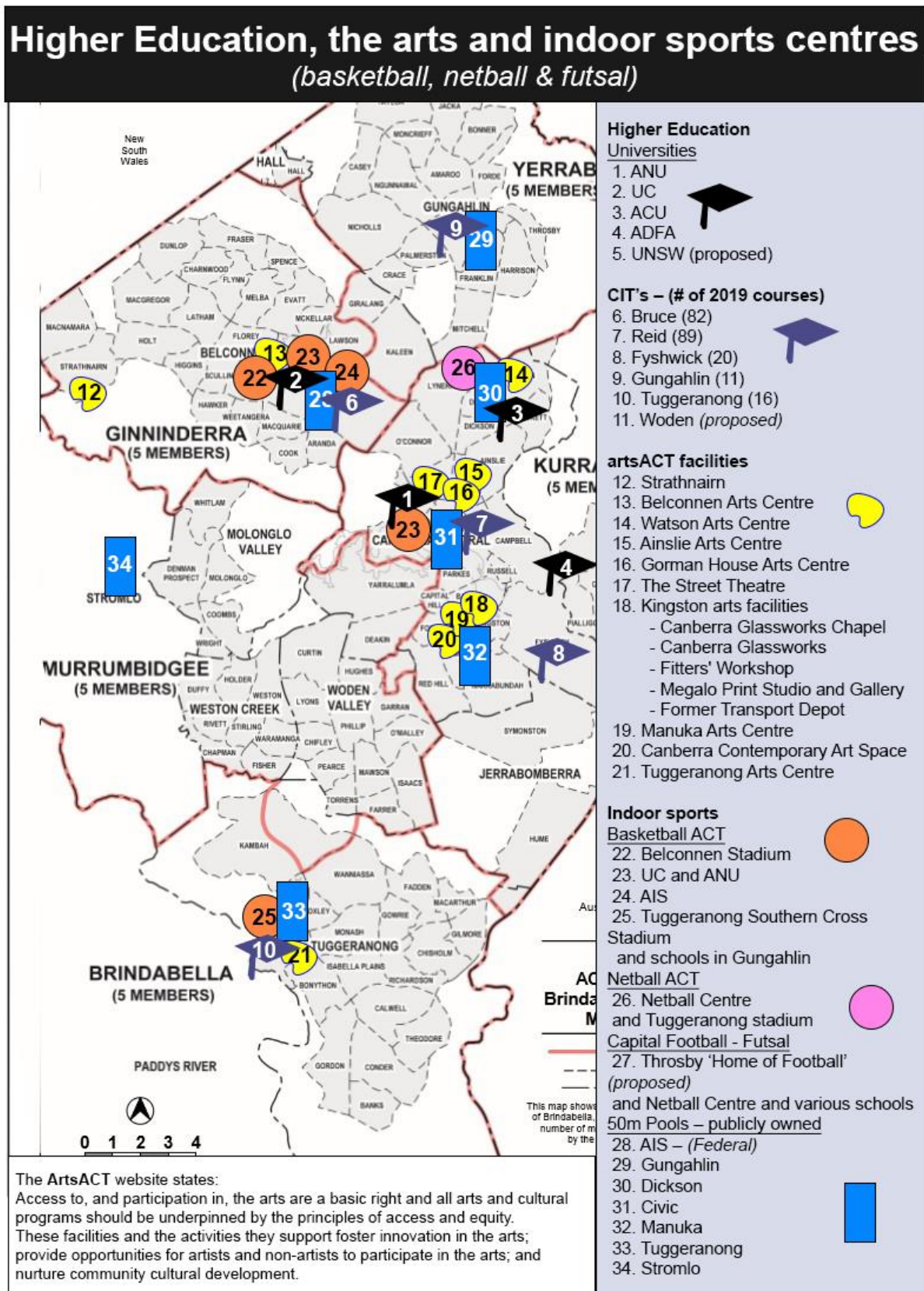
Yours Sincerely



Fiona Carrick
President
Woden Valley community Council

July 2022

The location of facilities across Canberra demonstrating the lack of facilities in the Woden Town Centre



Planning for social, cultural, environmental and economic development in the Woden core, connecting to the surrounding amenity

