



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into skateboarding and skate parks in the ACT

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Submission towards your Inquiry into Skateboarding and Skateparks in the ACT [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]
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Attachments: [REDACTED]

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Dear ACT Government,

I became aware of the ACT Government's inquiry into skateboarding and skateparks in the ACT through the Canberra Skateboarding Association's online presence. I appreciate the opportunity to submit my views. Thank you.

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Firstly, I recommend reading the Skate Melbourne Plan produced in 2017 (attached). I have not sought permission to include this in my submission to this inquiry, however it is a publicly available document found online here: [Skate Melbourne Plan | Participate Melbourne](#), and I'm sure the authors would not mind their work contributing to an increased understanding of the activity/culture of skateboarding, the desired facilities, and the challenges and opportunities in managing this fun, creative, healthy, inspiring and inclusive activity. Some of the statistics and costs might be a little out-of-date, however I recall it was an excellent document/plan. No need to re-invent the wheel!

Canberra once WAS a must visit destination for enthusiasts and families wanting to test out the best skateparks in the country, but now Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle region, the Gold Coast, Perth, Adelaide and even Albury are the go to destinations for 'skate tourists'. I envy the locals in those locations who get to use a variety of high quality, well designed modern skateparks on a regular basis.

The two newest skateparks in Canberra, Belconnen (lake Ginninderra foreshore) and Woden (Edison Park), are very good, reasonably well maintained and well patronised facilities in fantastic locations. Thank you ACT Government for your role in providing these and the ongoing commitment to users. However, I believe most other skatepark facilities in the Australian Capital Territory are either predominately unsuitable for the vast majority of users (for example, the Kambah U-pipe, Fadden Pines, Charnwood snake run/bowl, Crace Ledges, Erindale brick banks) or they are so old the surface has deteriorated and the design is out-of-date (Gungahlin, Weston, Tuggeranong, and also those listed earlier in this sentence). The decreasing number of mini-ramps in suburban areas are also in poor condition and mostly unusable for modern riders. Although I certainly support the concept of having modern well designed skate 'features', and dedicated small sized skateparks as part of local parks/recreation areas or scattered throughout the neighbourhoods of Canberra.

I recently provided input to the ACT Government regarding the future of Tuggeranong skatepark when it was suggested minor maintenance should occur. My views on Tuggeranong skatepark also apply to the other more significant older Canberra skateparks - Gungahlin and Weston.

This is what I submitted regarding Tuggeranong skatepark - While any ongoing maintenance of skateboard facilities in the ACT is appreciated and necessary for the safety of users and the community, I suggest urgent consideration should be given to a complete redevelopment and modernisation of the Tuggeranong Skatepark. I recall Tuggeranong Skatepark was a popular and much loved facility when it was built around 25 years ago, but in that time skatepark design, construction techniques and materials, and the aesthetics of high quality, popular outdoor 'youth' precincts have changed significantly and improved immensely!

The design and layout of the features at Tuggeranong Skatepark do not meet the needs of the current and emerging generation or users who typically seek skatepark facilities that either mimic 'street' style urban plazas, or include well-designed bowl and transition elements. Even better is a good mix of all styles of skate 'features'. Newly constructed skateparks in other capital cities, particularly Sydney, Melbourne and Perth include many excellent examples of inclusive and inspiring designs and construction methods. The size of Tuggeranong Skatepark is impressive and compares to the square meters of other big Australian skateparks, but the layout of the current features in entails is actually too expansive for skateboarding and most younger users can't flow from feature to feature with adequate speed because the surface is rough (worn out, ancient concrete), many features are too far apart, and the transition and bank features are intimidating, lumpy, inconsistent and hard to use. It seems to suit BMX users who like larger sized features somewhat, but all other users (skateboards, scooters, rollerblades & skates) it's somewhat terrible and almost not worth a visit!

In my experience visiting and riding close to 100 skateparks, It is tricky to get skatepark design perfect, but you would be aware that many dedicated 'skater owned' companies have emerged in the last 15 – 20 years that specialise in design and construction of skateparks and youth 'spaces' featuring extensive consultation with local users and enthusiasts. Thankfully the days of extremely poor designed and 'council built' skateparks are behind us. Honestly, some of the older skateparks around the place (several examples are: Tuggeranong, Crace Ledges, Marulan, Yass, Queanbeyan, Moruya, Holbrook, Bungendore to name a few in the region) do not inspire anyone to become involved in a healthy, active, creative and socially positive pastime and some would possibly be considered a poor value for money over the long term expected life of such a facility. On the other hand, a high quality, well designed skatepark will deliver fantastic value for money and have a long term positive impact for the community every time. Canberra's newest and best designed skateparks (Belconnen & Woden) prove this with excellent patronage every day (and night under lights) throughout the year. Instead, poorly designed drab grey concrete skateparks covered in terrible graffiti, in 'hidden' locations segregated from the broader community attract people who are not skatepark enthusiasts and use them as a location for unsocial behaviour and crime. I get annoyed at the media reporting of the 'Weston Creek Skatepark Stabbing' because I believe these reports reflect negatively on the skateboarding community when groups of misguided young people (who are almost never dedicated participants in skate sports) go to the facilities because they're dark, hidden, unfrequented, dingy and a seemingly good place to cause trouble! But, I digress..... I highly recommend investing in (paying additional money) consultation with core groups of users and getting the

most contemporary and durable design.

Again, I'd like to say that any public funds directed to new skateparks or maintaining quality skateparks are highly appreciated, but I suggest the existing Tuggeranong, Gungahlin and Weston skateparks are not worthy of any additional injection of money given their current styles and layouts. It would be better to save and increase any funds available and invest in replacement skateparks in these locations that are modern, interesting, aesthetically pleasing, caters to all levels of users, particularly beginner to intermediate level users as that is 95% of skatepark users. The 5% of advanced and professional users have 'historic' and culturally significant places like the Belco Bowl, Kambah U-Pipe, Erindale Brick Banks and I suspect they will like the recently announced Belconnen Vert Ramp. However from my observations the only users of these facilities are a small group of older and vocal proponents (some of whom I'm good friends with....) who continuously advocate for keeping them because some American professionals have skated them a handful of times in the last 30 years, or the 'old dudes' will have a session there once a year (but they mainly just stand around the intimidating bowl/ramp and drink beer.....). This should not be at the expense of alternative modern and more accessible skate facilities for all, particularly children and teenagers to enjoy.

While I'm at it, I did praise Belconnen and Woden Skateparks, but even these are now getting old and are not as inspiring as they once were. They were built over ten years ago! Sydney has at least 6 excellent skateparks within a 5 km radius of the CBD that are less than 3 or 4 years old. I travel to Sydney regularly to use these skateparks which entails spending money on accommodation, food and hospitality.

I believe the location of skateparks is vitally important to their patronage and value to the community. The old and 'conservative values' way of thinking was to locate a skatepark away from as many people as possible, usually on the edge of sporting fields that are on the edge of town surrounded by paddocks or mud and dirt... The new and sensible way of thinking is to integrate skateparks in the heart of activity and popular locations as this is convenient for users to get to and integrates them into the community and fosters mutual respect, compliance and visibility. The Civic skatepark on the side of a Canberra Centre multistorey car park is sort of adequate (although the design is quite out dated), but what is the story with that location! I assume it was part of the deal with the Canberra Centre developers that they contributed to funding it and the misguided desire to get users away from all other people (as discussed above). The current optimal location for a state of the art skatepark is Haig Park in Braddon. Yes, right smack bang at the end of Lonsdale St! Also, I suggest a modern, architectural, sculptural, multi-use, colourful, and inspiring skatepark (including features made from Canberra red bricks and themes inspired by Canberra's cultural institutions) would be AMAZING as part of the Acton Waterfront redevelopment, with a nearby light rail station! The perfect thing for youth, families, old people not wanting to grow old, tourists and to bring some of the fringes of the community together! Just saying.

I understand some of my fellow enthusiast may advocate for skatepark facilities to be added to Stromlo Forrest Park. I think this is a wonderful idea as it brings together several 'action' sports into a destination precinct, and may help attract large scale events/competitions. However, in my experience, skatepark users gravitate to skateparks that are close to public transport, shops, food outlets and the heart of urban settings and these locations should be strongly considered for new skatepark investment and to keep up with ACT population growth.

I look forward to a new skatepark as part of the Kippax shopping centre redevelopment. And I question what is happening with a skatepark in Dickson that I recall was a feature of the Dickson redevelopment plan?

Thank again for the opportunity to provide my views.

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