



## Belconnen Community Council

Building a stronger community

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### Expression of interest: Inquiry into the Territory Plan and other associated documents

The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) is a not-for-profit, government-funded community advocacy group that represents the interests of our members and the community to the ACT Government on a range of matters affecting people who live, work, and play in the Belconnen District.

As the voice of Belconnen for over three decades, and with over 100,000 residents in our catchment, we are uniquely positioned to offer observations on what works for a range of diverse stakeholders.

The BCC welcomes the opportunity to express our interest in providing additional evidence to this inquiry. This EOI follows our submissions throughout the ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project.

#### Not a vision for the future

The Belconnen District is currently the largest district in Canberra and resplendent with natural beauty, yet we consistently hear concerns from residents about the barely sustainable level of infrastructure to support the district's current population, let alone the 70,000 new residents expected by 2060.

The new planning system claims to, *"reflect the long-term aspirations for Canberra and the importance of adapting to climate change and delivering the key infrastructure and greater housing choice and accessibility that growth requires."*

However, it is difficult to see how this is the case. The district strategies call for a significant number of reviews and investigations and, beyond identifying "future investigation zones" for development, provide little insight into how the Belconnen District will evolve without eroding the environment and buffer zones, including wildlife corridors.

Canberrans deserve a planning system that improves the liveability of their communities and provides for predicted population growth in a sustainable way. Put simply, the current trajectory of this planning system will not maintain Belconnen's attractiveness as a district.

### **No framework to deliver the district strategies**

The importance of collaboration across the ACT Government is highlighted throughout the district strategies. In the government's response to feedback, the district strategies are described as, "*a mechanism to improve coordination and collaboration, and to more clearly define responsibilities for implementation,*" and, "*a starting point for mechanisms to deliver on the strategic outcomes*". It is difficult to see where the mechanism to improve coordination and collaboration is located, or how it is a starting point that improves upon the status quo.

The planning system should contain a transparent framework outlining how effective, ongoing collaboration across the ACT Government would be achieved as a priority. Achieving meaningful progress on the objectives of the Belconnen District Strategy requires such collaboration, and a transparent framework would allow for active community participation in shaping initiatives as they are delivered.

### **No framework to assess good outcomes**

The planning reform is based around the idea of achieving good planning outcomes. This planning system has the potential to produce better outcomes, although better outcomes depend on considered and consistent decision-making from EPSDD and cannot be assumed.

We suggest establishing an evaluation framework after the new planning system is introduced, to examine whether good outcomes are in fact being achieved.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these further with the Committee, as well as raise our other concerns with the territory plan and associated documents.

Yours sincerely

Lachlan Butler  
Chair  
**Belconnen Community Council**