



**Legislative Assembly** for the  
**Australian Capital Territory**

Standing Committee on Environment,  
and Planning

# Submission Cover Sheet

## **Inquiry into the Role and Future of the Woden Town Centre in the context of a compact city**

Submission number: 038

Submitter: Bill Gemmell

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Submission by Bill Gemmell to:

**Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Environment,  
Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into the Role  
and Future of the Woden Town Centre in the context of a  
compact city**

**Contact details:**

Bill Gemmell

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Chair and Committee Members

I welcome the ***Inquiry into the Role and Future of the Woden Town Centre in the context of a compact city*** and appreciate the opportunity to provide relevant comments.

I intend to confine my comments against the point: **Transport and accessibility, to and within the town centre**, in particular **the Corinna St precinct and connections to The Canberra Hospital**. I am a regular user of Transport Canberra services (for over three decades), and a regular domestic and international traveller who uses local public transport as the preferred mode of travel in places visited.

A reliable public transport system that has broad community confidence is essential if the Australian Capital Territory is to successfully achieve both its densification and climate change policy ambitions. I see the compact city objectives as being relevant as well. Delivery of such a system requires positive customer experience and community buy-in. Unintended consequences must be avoided.

For the three decades that I have been an active user of the Woden Town Centre for work, shopping and recreation, Corinna St has always been a conduit to major employers, the library, health providers (including the health centre), major supermarkets, department stores and restaurants. Corinna St had always been accessible to motor vehicle and public transport services, until 2020. It has always been a challenging place to access either on foot or by bicycle.

In 2020, the ACT Government announced implementation of cycling and pedestrian improvements in the Woden Town Centre, a project that included:

- A bi-directional cycleway from Launceston Street, along Furzer Street and Corinna Street, and onto Callam Street.
- Raised areas within the roadway to encourage motorists to slow down and improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Pedestrian/priority crossings.
- One-way traffic sections on parts of Corinna Street and Furzer Street.
- Additional soft landscape planting.

During construction of this project, bus services to the Corinna Street precinct were suspended temporarily to avoid conflicts with construction work. Unfortunately, following completion of the project services were not restored. I have been unable to locate an official announcement that services will either be returning or not be returning to Corinna St. Rumour has it that the Transport Workers Union has imposed some sort of restriction on its members driving buses along that street. This was clearly an unintended consequence, casting doubt over the quality of the project planning and consultation.

The main consequence of the closure of the Corinna St stop is intending bus passengers now being required to traverse Woden Plaza or the Town Square walking route to the temporary bus interchange, or the new interchange when it opens. The approximately 500 metre walk is not an issue for a fit and healthy person in fine weather, but a significant number of people seeking this service would have some level of incapacity or be caring for young children. A significant portion of the intending travellers will have retail purchases with them as well. There is also the issue of exposure to elements or

some of the undesirable elements around Woden after dark. Anecdotally, I have been advised that previous travellers have abandoned the current bus service offering and either drive or are driven, or go elsewhere.

Clearly, this also impacts negatively on the Government's policy of achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions through modal shifts towards public transport!

The catchment for services departing from this stop would be suburbs to the west of Woden (such as Chifley, Lyons, Torrens), Weston Creek, Kambah and potentially Molonglo suburbs. A not insignificant population.

Similarly, people intending to catch buses headed to other town centres or the Canberra Hospital would be impacted by this denial of a connecting service.

Once the light rail service to Woden commences, one would assume passengers would reasonably expect a public transport service that will connect them to the western side of Woden Town Centre to access the goods and services available.

I would suggest that reopening the stop could be done with minimal cost, as the infrastructure remains in place. Perhaps the section of Corinna St between Furzer and Brewer Streets could be designated as "one way", southbound if suitable space for a Transport Canberra bus was otherwise not available.

I had raised the closure directly with the responsible Minister and been advised in vague terms that the Directorate had been tasked with developing options for servicing the precinct, possibly by opening a new stop on Melrose Drive. I also raised this issue with a high-profile ACT Murrumbidgee Election candidate (now MLA) who rather condescendingly suggested that it was only a stop used by "oldies wanting to access cheap scripts".

### ***Possible recommendations***

The Committee may like to recommend:

1. The Minister direct Transport Canberra to recommence servicing Corinna Street immediately, including regular services to the new Woden Bus interchange; and
2. The Minister direct Transport Canberra to develop more effective ways of servicing the Canberra Hospital Precinct to minimise passenger transfers at the Woden Interchange

I would be available to discuss my input with the Committee, if requested.

Regards

Bill Gemmell

20 August 2025