



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Transport
and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the effectiveness of Fix My Street

Submission number: 047

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Submission to Inquiry into the effectiveness of Fix My Street

I am pleased that a review is finally now occurring into the 'Fix My Street' website but I simply ask how ridiculous is it, in 2025, that when I come across an urban maintenance issue, I can't take photos of it with a smartphone app such as Snap Send Solve, capture the GPS location with the app, and submit the issue there and then from my smartphone.

In contrast, with Fix My Street I need to take the photos on my smartphone, go home to my computer, crank up the Fix My Street website, login, upload my photos, try to pinpoint the location on a map, and then submit. And when I do submit an issue, no feedback is received as to the status of the issue.

The cynic in me says that the ACT Government has little interest in replacing the poorly functioning Fix My Street with an easier to use app as it will likely be swamped with maintenance issues submissions as a result of the continuing decline of ACT urban infrastructure due to inadequate maintenance, and in some cases due to poor build quality in the first place.

When we are at the South Coast we use the Snap Send Solve app in the Eurobodalla Shire and it works extremely well – in part due to the Eurobodalla Shire Council being far more proactive in their maintenance activities than what many of us Canberrans have experienced over recent years with the ACT Government and the continuing decline in urban maintenance.

An effective 'Fix My Street' or equivalent solution is undoubtedly an important component for managing urban maintenance activities, but if the government did its job in the first place and performed regular, quality maintenance, the volume of 'Fix My Street' submissions would likely be considerably less. And it is likely that the current volume of submissions is significantly less than it would be due to many people – including ourselves – giving up making 'Fix My Street' submissions due to the poor, or sometimes non-existent, management of the case.

When I enquired at one point in 2024 as to the status of a Fix My Street submission I made that had been marked as closed. I was advised that the case "*has been delayed and closed due to **system glitch** and has not been responded.*" (sic). Upon asking for details of the 'system glitch', I was required to lodge a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to receive an answer. The response that I finally received was "*in the email provided to you on April 19 2024, advice was provided to you that your requests had been closed due to a system glitch. Whilst this was the understanding at the time, subsequent enquiries indicate that the cases were manually closed by staff. Your cases had been mistaken as old requests that no longer required action and were closed.*"

I also lodged a separate FOI request for data on a range of urban maintenance activities. My FOI was unsuccessful due to approximately 23,793 datasets¹ being identified as requiring review. A number of other issues regarding data quality were also raised in the FOI response. My interpretation of the FOI response was that the systems and processes underpinning ACT Government urban maintenance are disjointed, do not adequately capture the necessary data for the effective management of urban maintenance, and suffer from data quality issues.

In addition to poorly designed systems and processes, the human component of managing and performing infrastructure projects and maintenance tasks must also be considered.

Infrastructure projects which are poorly done will typically lead to increased maintenance issues in the future. With many of these projects outsourced by the ACT Government, there seems to be a lack of supervision – including on-site supervision and inspection – by ACT Government officers.

Similarly, the quality of maintenance tasks does not seem to be monitored. Here are just a few examples:

- Road resurfacing. Weeds that had been growing out of the road were simply asphalted over and now continue to break up the road.
- Tree pruning. When they are eventually pruned, trimmed branches are simply left on the ground.
- Lawn mowing:
 - Mowing over litter and producing hundreds of pieces of litter as a result.
 - Mowing over obvious wet ground in a heavy mower and leaving deep tyre tracks in the now ripped up soil.
- Litter collection (something not seen in our area before the 2024 election):
 - Watching two ACT Government employees pick up litter but turn around after 30m and head back to their vehicle despite obvious litter remaining on an oval.
 - Regularly seeing one ACT Government employee sitting in their vehicle whilst their colleague does litter collection.

It seems that far beyond just replacing Fix My Street, City Services needs a good shake-up to better deliver its services, and the ACT Government needs to significantly lift its game in terms of properly funding urban maintenance in ALL areas of Canberra and not just a select few areas.

I hope that the Assembly recommends a speedy replacement of the Fix My Street website with a more contemporary smartphone app. As a now retired ICT and business systems consultant can I offer a suggestion that the ACT Government steer well away from trying to build your own. Please just use something that other jurisdictions already use!

Regards

Paul Smith

21 August 2025

¹ A dataset typically refers to a collection of data records. 23,793 datasets in this context is an enormous number of datasets and indicates that a large number of highly disparate record collection systems are in use and that there is no cohesive urban maintenance system in place.

