



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY
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Submission Coversheet

Inquiry into ACT Budget 2020–21

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ACT Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality and ACT Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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INQUIRY INTO ACT BUDGET 2020–21

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the 2020-21 budget. Friends of Hawker Village Inc. (FoHV) is a voluntary community group active within the four suburbs around the Hawker Group Centre, namely Page, Scullin, Hawker and Weetangera. Our focus is maintenance and enhancement of residential amenity locally and Canberra-wide, along with the broader issue of climate change.

In response to the guiding questions:

- Our organisation has not developed a written analysis of the ACT Budget that it would like to submit to the Committee.
- Our three key priorities for the ACT Budget are:
 - i. Monitoring and enforcement of verge management provisions, including illegal parking. It is essential to maintain weed-free, green cover necessary for the reduction of heat, and to avoid leaves and gravel from entering the storm water system, thus adversely affecting water quality in the lake;
 - ii. Regular monitoring and maintenance of public footpaths in an effective manner rather than the currently ad hoc process, which is inefficient and ineffective in keeping them safe for active travel. Our suburbs are now fifty years old and relying on residents to report problems via FixMyStreet is inadequate as it results in fragmented repairs and a continual cascade of broken and hazardous sections;
 - iii. Pressure on local primary schools. Our suburbs are attracting new families under generational change. Many choose this area because of the four schools: Weetangera and Hawker Primary, Belconnen High and Hawker College. The closure of the two

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primary schools in Page and Scullin has created considerable pressure on the remaining two primary schools which are near capacity. Whilst the Page school was demolished, the Scullin school remains but is dedicated to early childhood care and education. It would be possible to return the primary school component to Scullin and, thus, remove the pressure on Hawker and Weetangera Primary (as well as Florey Primary). The Budget does not seem to provide for any solution to this need.

- Our organisation's views on the ACT Budget in relation to these key priorities are:
 - i. Budget Statement E (EPSDD) indicates that funding is being provided for "Implementing invasive species management programs following significant invasive plant growth, as a consequence of La Nina weather patterns". This, however, is in the context of endangered grasslands and woodlands. There is no indication that this applies to suburban areas. City Services declares that it has "a strategic objective of ensuring that city services are consistently of high quality, timely, effective and cost efficient and meet the needs of the community. It is committed to ensuring that the city is well maintained". The state of the suburbs disputes this claim.
 - ii. The latter statement includes community paths but there is no indication in the Budget as to whether additional funding has been provided for this specific purpose. This statement is repeated in Budget Statement H (TCCS) which also includes the aim of "Keeping our city looking good by responding to La Nina wet weather impacts on mowing and road surface maintenance". Again, there is no indication of how this will be achieved;
 - iii. Budget Statement F (ED) makes the following statements about school infrastructure:
 - Undertake feasibility and master planning for future new school infrastructure in Gungahlin, Woden, Belconnen, Molonglo, Inner North and Inner South.
 - Deliver new school infrastructure and expansions at Franklin School, Campbell Primary School, Amaroo Senior School and Gold Creek Senior School.
 - Undertake school maintenance works, sustainability upgrades and hazardous material investigations/remediation works.None of these seem to apply to a solution to the schools in our area.
- Our organisation provided a submission to the ACT Government 2020–21 Budget Consultation. We do not think the ACT Budget has addressed the issues raised in our submission.
- Any views your organisation may have on the gender impacts of the ACT Budget? NIL
- Any views your organisation may have on the COVID-19 recovery initiatives in the ACT Budget? NIL

- Any other issues that you wish to bring to each committee's attention.
 1. FoHV are concerned about the long-term delays in ensuring adequate health care facilities and staff to cater for the needs of our continually growing population. Allocation of funding seems to regard this as of minor importance.
 2. FoHV also believe that water affordability is essential to maintaining grass and trees to offset the heat island effect of intensive development. Population growth adds to the demand for water and a consequence is high prices that have discouraged care of nature strips and front yards, with large areas being covered in hard surfaces that absorb and radiate heat. The only water supplier in the ACT is Icon Water Limited, an unlisted public company owned by the ACT Government. The company's voting shareholders are the ACT Chief Minister, Andrew Barr MLA and the Minister for the Environment and Heritage Mick Gentleman MLA. Accordingly, there should be some budgetary measure that can improve the water-pricing system.

Yours sincerely,

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Convenor
Friends of Hawker Village Incorporated