



**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: 058

Submitter: Pedal Power

Date authorised for publication: 11 September 2025



Ms. Jo Clay,

Chair.

ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services

Inquiry: Role and Future of the Woden Town Centre: in the context of a compact city

Submission by Pedal Power ACT Inc 02/09/2025

Dear Jo Clay,

Please find attached a comprehensive response from Pedal Power ACT for consideration by your committee.

The recent urban developments in the Woden Town Centre have highlighted considerable issues impacting on the liveability of the town centre and particularly on recreational and commuter bicycle activity.

Pedal Power is actively committed to assist the ACT Government in its pursuit of Active Travel and in providing safe bicycle infrastructure to support our promotion of Any Bike, Anywhere, Anytime.

As Woden continues to develop as a Town Centre with an expanding population we believe adhering to ACT Government design principles for Active Travel and for retro-fitting and upgrading existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will add significant social amenity to the centre.

I commend our submission to you and your committee and Pedal Power looks forward to the opportunity to address the committee directly on any of the components of our submission.

Best Wishes,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of David Whitney.

David Whitney

President Pedal Power ACT.

ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services



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

### **Submission by Pedal Power ACT Inc 02/09/2025**

Contact: [REDACTED] - Pedal Power ACT Inc grants approval for publication of this submission and is prepared to meet the Standing Committee.

#### **Summary**

Is Woden town centre a liveability city, i.e. one where residents combine well-designed apartment living with a satisfying and active life-style involving recreational, sporting and cultural opportunities? This submission contends that the elements of a truly liveability city have not kept pace with the rapid emergence of the town centre as a place to live. In some respects, the liveability factors have fallen behind. Actions are suggested that will help rectify this situation. Active travel has an important role to play especially to replace short car trips. The emergence of e-bikes and other forms of e-mobility have opened up more possibilities but require careful regulation and a new approach to the provision of infrastructure. Motor vehicles still dominate as a mode of travel. Over time, factors such as cost of car ownership, parking availability and cost, and road congestion, will swing the balance in favour of active travel. The submission explores what more the Government can do to encourage this trend.

#### **Recommendations**

1. That the Standing Committee recommend the ACT Government:

- a) give greater emphasis to liveability considerations when making decisions on the future of the Woden town centre such as zoning, building heights and setbacks, avoiding over-development of blocks and over-shadowing;
- b) undertake a review of demand for additional community facilities in the town centre including those lost through re-zoning of land, and proceed with planning and building of those facilities;
- c) encourage more employment opportunities to counter the town centre becoming a dormitory city;
- d) [REDACTED] infrastructure, be more pro-active in implementing its people-first approach, with a higher priority to walking and cycling over traffic flow considerations;
- e) ensure paths, kerbs, bike racks and priority crossings are suitable for a busy town centre including adequate path widths and building set-backs;
- f) ensure all new buildings have adequate end-of-trip facilities including the provision of secure lock ups for bikes, and encourage building owners and employers to establish end-of-trip facilities in existing buildings;
- g) ensure development approvals do not result in vehicles obstructing paths (as at the Hellenic Club); and secure compliance in cases of approval non-compliance; and

h) work with the Commonwealth, and other States and Territories to introduce sensible standards for e-bikes to counter the import and use of over-powered and high-speed models.

2. That, in respect of specific infrastructure measures, the Standing Committee recommend the ACT Government:

- a) install removeable bollards to prevent general traffic on the new road that cuts across the CIT Western Plaza/boulevard, but allow service and emergency vehicles;
- b) install additional cycle lockups at major destinations in the town centre to alleviate concerns about bike theft especially expensive e-bikes;
- c) in the proposed Woden Village development, ensure wide paths and setbacks on Bowes & Callam Streets and the internal north-south street;
- d) complete the town centre cycleway by building the eastern (Callam St) leg and construct the proposed link from the Woden interchange to the hospital;
- e) upgrade the C4 trunk route to modern standards and future proof it with widening and separation, and complete its re-surfacing;
- f) ensure the developer (Hindmarsh) provides the promised raised priority crossing where the C4 trunk path crosses Wilbow St; and
- g) finish the planning for the separated Woden-Civic Cycleway and proceed to the construction phase (independently of the light rail project) to make it easier and safer for town centre residents to commute to Civic and the Parliamentary Triangle.

### **Role of Active Travel in a liveable city**

The Chief Minister stated recently...*'We've evolved from a place designed primarily around freeways and cars to a city that prioritises neighbourhoods, walkability, cycling, active transport and public transit.'* Source: Canberra Times All Homes supplement 2 August 2025

Cycling and walking (active travel) have a critical role to play in a liveable city. They offer alternative ways of getting around, improve health and encourage social connectivity. They reduce road congestion and pollution thereby contributing to sustainability. In densely populated cities where space is at a premium, bikes take up less space. Six or seven bikes can easily park in one car parking space.

The Government's Active Travel Plan 2024-30 promotes active travel by the provision of best-practice infrastructure focusing on safety and priority for people over motor vehicles.

### **Is Woden town centre a liveable city?**

Pedal Power ACT has no special expertise in town planning. We offer these comments from our observations of the changes occurring in the town centre and from our knowledge of the role active travel can play in making heavily populated zones more liveable.

The Woden Valley was laid out in the 1960s for the era of the motor car. People lived in surrounding low-density suburbs connected by wide and fast-moving roads. The town centre comprised retail and office buildings but no residential buildings. Ample car parking accommodated all who wished to drive and park for free. Hardly anybody lived in the town

centre but there were many employment opportunities especially with Government Departments.

Quite quickly, in the last 10 years, high-rise accommodation towers (some of them converted office buildings) have emerged and more are being built. Surface car parks are disappearing. The town centre is no longer a place just to shop and work but is on the way to becoming a densely populated precinct. At the same time, some Government Departments have left meaning many of the new residents are travelling out of town for employment.

While residential buildings are appearing quickly, those aspects that make the town centre a liveable place have not kept pace, and in some respects have gone backwards. There are examples of blocks being over-developed with some apartments having restricted outlooks, less-than-desirable amount of sun, and without cross-flow ventilation. The spaces at ground level can be unwelcoming shadowy canyons with vacant active frontages. One unfortunate example (and one that was foreseeable) is the over-shadowing of the beautifully designed low-rise CIT building by the 24-storey nondescript Grand Central Towers. The town square is a walk-through zone, not a place to linger and have a coffee.

The re-zoning of community services land in the north of the town centre for residential purposes was granted without the revenue so generated being used to re-locate those lost facilities within easy distance of town centre residents. The result is a cultural and recreational desert.

### **What people want**

Residents demand a pleasant, safe, and convenient place to live in light-filled apartments. They want opportunities to walk in the park, play sport, ride bicycles, join clubs, attend performances and art shows, and have convenient transport options and path links within and without the town centre. They want to feel they belong to a community where they know their neighbours, footpaths are busy, frontages are active and there are shops particularly convenience stores with extended hours catering for residents returning late from work. Building tall residential towers, as if they were office buildings, with people funnelled through a single entrance, is not conducive to knowing your neighbour or feeling part of a community.

Land is still available within and around the town centre to establish an aquatic centre, indoor sports arena, and a community/performing arts centre. Scope exists to link these facilities to a network of walking and cycling paths making them conveniently available to town centre residents.

But, more than that, a re-think by planners and the Government is required to avoid the mistakes of the past and build on what is necessary to create a more liveable city.

The following sections address what might be done in relation to active travel.

### **Motor cars still dominate**

Corinna St is often clogged with cars creeping to and from the free parking in Westfield. Yet most homes in the Woden Valley are no more than three to four kms from the town centre which is a doable bike ride. The residential towers in Irving St are only one km from Woden Westfield. The emergence of e-bikes and other electric mobility options make the idea of leaving the car in the garage more attractive. Some people moving into the town centre may have ideas of selling their cars in the future and relying on walk/cycling, ride sharing and public transport. They might hire a car as required.

On the face of it, conditions are right for walking and cycling to replace some short trips by motor car. However, anecdotal evidence suggests this is occurring only slowly. Motor cars still dominate as the preferred way to travel in Woden even for short trips.

### **Driving versus walking and cycling**

People will not walk or ride or take public transport just because the Government says it is good for them or the environment. So long as motor vehicles remain affordable to own and operate, roads are not too congested, and parking is available for free or at low-cost, people will favour the convenience of motor vehicles. These factors are all still basically at play in the town centre. Westfield offers two to three hours free parking. The cost of surface parking varies according to time spent but it is still affordable. Parking spots are generally available although peaks times are becoming more difficult.

Another factor in Woden town centre, but not uniquely so, is there are no primary schools. This means that children will be driven to an out-of-area school from where the parents will drive on to work, creating habits of car dependency in children, and depriving parents and children from some purposeful exercise together.

The emergence of the town centre as a place to live has occurred at a time when some Government agencies have left. Accordingly, many residents find it more convenient to rely on cars to get to work. The Woden town centre is not so much a liveable city as a dormitory city.

In the long run, the factors favouring private motor vehicle transport will tend to militate. Roads will become more congested, parking spots will shrink and the cost of parking will rise to ration spaces. At the same time, walking and cycling and public transport will become more attractive.

In the following sections we discuss what the Government can do to anticipate and encourage these trends.

### **Measures to promote active travel as a contribution to liveability**

The Government needs to be more pro-active in implementing its policy of promoting active transport over private motor vehicles. Too often, Pedal Power sees hesitancy and caution by officials when balancing traffic flow considerations against encouraging walking and cycling. Similarly, Ministers seem overly sensitive to complaints from motorists about congestion and pot holes.

Existing urban and traffic planning norms need to adapt. Road designs to aid fast traffic flow and car parking for all (including rules requiring at least one car park per apartment), are not sustainable in the long run. In essence, officials and Ministers need to plan for people first – how they use spaces, how they move about, how places can be attractive to linger and commune with nature.

The **Attachment** sets out examples of good and bad active travel projects in the town centre. We offer these examples to show what should change to encourage active travel and how best-practice infrastructure can have a beneficial effect.

### **The role of paths in a liveable city**

It's axiomatic that the higher the density of a city's population, the busier paths become. Accordingly, it is important to have a well-connected and smooth network of paths - built and maintained to modern standards.

Much of path network in Woden was laid out in the 1960's and doesn't meet modern path widths or smoothness standards. This needs to be rectified for the safety and convenience of all path users. The emergence of micro-mobility in its various forms (ebikes, cargo bikes and scooters) is increasing traffic on paths leading to concern for pedestrian safety. Wider paths are necessary to accommodate this growing diversity of path users. In busy sections of the path network, pedestrians and bikes should be separated. This would avoid conflicts and encourage participation.

Paths are increasingly used for al-fresco dining and pop-up kiosks. Deep-rooted shade trees require extra space. Street furniture and bike racks also take up room. All these elements contribute to liveability but require wide pavements and path designs suitable for people of all ages and abilities.

### **Building setbacks, kerbsides and deliveries**

Allowing developers to build on their boundaries will not achieve liveability objectives. Assessing the future use of pavements should be at the forefront when DAs are considered.

Moreover, the regulation of kerbsides needs to be revised. Long-stay parking at kerbs should be secondary to parking for short-stays, drop-offs, taxis/uber, and service/delivery vehicles. Indicative plans for the Woden Village development show how this can be done. Delivery vehicles entering the town centre should be limited in size and out-moded external loading docks should be modified so as not to block paths. All new buildings should have internal loading docks and rubbish removal facilities.

### **Bike Lockups**

The risk of having expensive e-bikes stolen is a factor discouraging people from riding into the town centre. Secure and covered bicycle lock ups at the major employment/retail destinations would help alleviate this anxiety. The provision of end-of-trip facilities including secure storage is now required for new developments. Employers and landlords need to be encouraged to retrofit these facilities in existing buildings. Two covered bike lockups will be part of the new bus interchange. Their design is an integral part of the interchange

architecture and illustrate that lockups can blend into streetscapes. There is scope for the similar bike lockups to be installed at the major Woden town centre destinations. Similarly, short-stay racks near entrances are important.

### **The C4 path**

The Principal Route (C4) along the eastern side of the town centre is an inter-city trunk route with connections into the town centre. The existing path width of 2.5m wide is sub-standard. The ACT MIS05 (Active Travel Facilities Design) stipulates 5m width (3m minimum) for a two-way path with high levels of pedestrian and cyclist use. It is bumpy in places where re-surfacing has not been undertaken. It needs to be widened to the modern standard and the commendable resurfacing, which has started, should be completed. Consideration should be given to duplicating the path to separate pedestrians and cyclists at the busy sections as it passes the town centre.

### **The future Woden to Civic Cycleway**

The Government has commenced planning to fulfil its promise for a separated Woden to Civic Cycleway along Yarra Glen, Adelaide Avenue and Flynn Dr. This is a major project and will shorten cycle commuting times and improve safety by separating bikes from the 80km/hr traffic. Pedal Power is urging the Government to finish the planning and proceed with construction independently of light rail stage 2B project which will inevitably be on a longer timeframe.

### **e-Bikes**

The emergence of e-bikes and other forms of e-mobility, have the potential to move the balance in favour of riding to work over cars. Sales of e-bikes are growing and now account for 25% of all bike sales (Source: 30 July 25 letter to Federal Ministers by Bicycle Industries Australia and cycling peak bodies – see below). This trend is not without its challenges. Mentioned above is the hesitancy to ride to work or shop if there is no secure, covered storage at the destination. Also, rising numbers of e-bikes on paths increases the need for path upgrades, widening and fixing missing links.

Moreover, the lack of regulation of unsafe e-bikes is becoming a problem. Overpowered and fast bikes are appearing on our paths. This is an unsafe situation and threatens the use of legitimate pedal-assist e-bikes. Following is a link to a letter from the industry and cycling organisations to Federal Ministers calling for regulations (using European standards) to ensure e-bikes sold and used are fit-for-purpose and safe in terms of accepted international standards and speed capability. <https://www.weride.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/250731-Ltr-Treasurer-Chalmers-Minister-King-e-bike-regulations.pdf>

Below is a link to an article from The Conversation by researchers Richard Buning and Dorina Pojani who point out the advantages offered by e-bikes are at risk because of regulatory failure. <https://theconversation.com/e-bikes-could-slash-our-reliance-on-cars-but-overpowered-illegal-models-on-the-roads-make-us-all-less-safe-262871>

Pedal Power urges the Standing Committee to recommend the ACT Government take up this issue with the Commonwealth and other States and Territories as a priority.

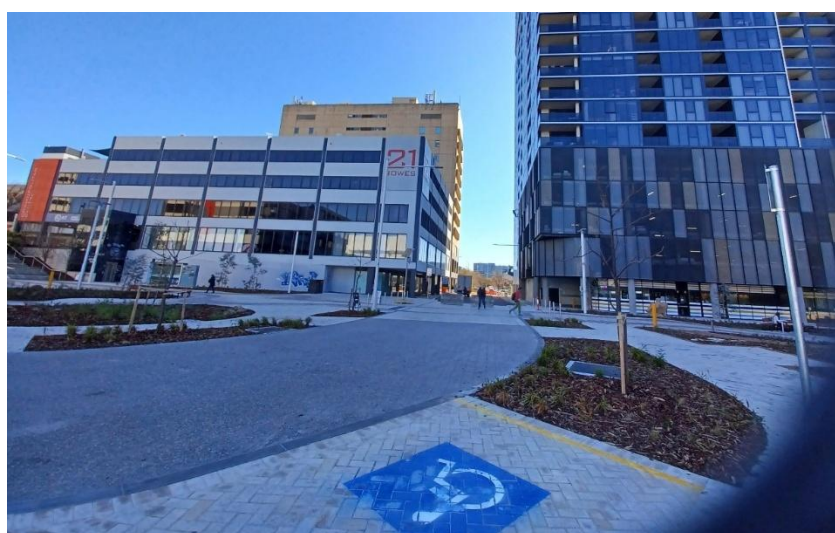
## APPENDIX (Pedal Power’s submission to the LA inquiry into the Woden Town Centre)

### Examples of poor outcomes for liveability

#### CIT Western Plaza and boulevard

Notwithstanding representations by Pedal Power and the Woden Valley Community Council, approval was given for a road to be constructed through the middle of the CIT Western Plaza and boulevard. While voices opposed the idea there were none in favour. The road places people at risk of injury and will not facilitate traffic flow. Its presence jibes with the designed use of the Western Plaza and boulevard as places to linger, hold events, and for children to run around safely. It was in conflict with the Government’s policy of prioritising active travel over motor vehicles.

**Solution:** removeable bollards to prevent general traffic but allow service and emergency vehicles.

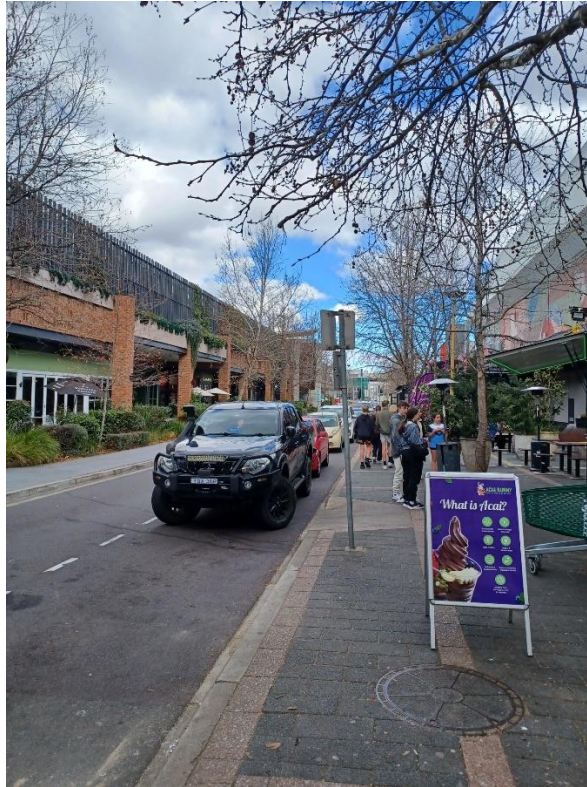


*Road Through CIT Boulevard*

#### Bradley Street

The refurbishment of Bradley St in 2018 activated the frontages on the eastern side. This was a positive move but the planners did not consider cycling. Bradley St is one-way north and it is convenient for bikes to ride with slow-moving vehicles in that direction. However, no clear route is available to cycle in a southerly direction. The footpaths do not easily accommodate bikes given the movement of people and the clutter on the pavement. This could have been avoided by right-thinking planners and proper Government oversight.

**Apply the lessons learned:** Ensure wide paths and setbacks on Bowes & Callam Sts and the proposed Woden Village north-south street.



*Bradley St - No Way Through For Bikes*

### **Hellenic Club loading dock on Matilda Street**

A cycleway was built on Matilda St built in 2017 as the eastern entrance to the town centre. The Hellenic Club's out-moded loading dock pre-existed the bikeway. The two could have lived happily together had the loading dock operated as approved, i.e. delivery vehicles backing into the dock clear of the paths. However, this has never happened and path users have been exposed to serious risk of injury and the inconvenience of dodging delivery vehicles illegally parked across both the footpath and the bikeway. Multiple representations over years to the Hellenic Club, officials, Ministers, and parking enforcement, have been to no avail. The increased risks to path users during construction and operation of the temporary bus interchange prompted authorities to pay for a traffic controller at the loading dock during working hours five days a week. This is an example of the poor regulation and enforcement and could easily have been resolved by requiring the Hellenic Club to operate the loading dock legally.



*Trucks Blocking the Matilda St Paths*

**Apply the lessons learned:** Ensure development approvals provide that the design and use of loading docks does not result in obstruction of paths; and secure compliance in cases of approval non-compliance.

## Examples of positive outcomes for liveability

### Woden Town Centre Bikeway

A two-way bikeway has been retrofitted along Corinna St and Furzer St. Given the constraints of fitting the bikeway into existing roads, this has been a worthwhile project. Traffic is slow-moving and separated kerbs/shared zones protect bike riders. The bikeway bounds two sides of the town centre. Constructing a connecting path along the eastern side of Callam Street would link Corinna St south to the new bus interchange. Such a path is provided for as a 'Main Future Route' in the Government's Active Travel Planning Tool. The Tool also identifies another important 'Main Future Route' linking the bus interchange with the hospital. The expansion of employment at the hospital, increasing pressure on parking, and future arrival of light rail in Woden, increases the case for this path.



Woden Town Centre Bikeway

## **Path Re-surfacing**

The aged path network in the Woden town centre generally needs a re-make as paths are below modern standard width and damaged by root intrusion and motor vehicles. Some re-surfacing of asphalt paths like the C4 has turned an uncomfortably bumpy ride into a joyful experience. However, the program is under-funded leading to piecemeal efforts when clearly the damage requires re-surfacing or replacement of long lengths of path. This program needs adequate financing.

Solution: To future proof the C4, fund widening or separation between Hindmarsh Drive and the Yamba Drive roundabout; and fund substantial lengths of re-surfacing of damaged path.



*Re-surfacing the C4 at Yamba Roundabout*

## **Raised priority crossing at Theodore St and Melrose Dr**

This crossing replaced an awkward and dangerous situation where path users were secondary to motor vehicles. The new crossing is set back from the intersection to improve sight lines, has overhead lighting, and allows priority for path users without blocking traffic on Melrose Dr. It has proven effective for both path users and drivers. The smooth approaches and clear sight lines allow drivers to slow while people cross safely and then roll through. It is a model that could be employed in other similar situations in Woden. It has been promised for the C4 crossing of Wilbow Street behind the police station.

Apply the success elsewhere: Ensure the developer (Hindmarsh) provides the promised raised priority crossing of C4 at Wilbow St.

## Heysen Street path with extension to Melrose Dr

The Heysen Street shared path over Okey Hill opened in 2020. Before the path was constructed, walkers and bike riders had to contend with the risk of using a rough verge close to fast-moving traffic. The path now provides a safe, convenient and separated link between northern part of Weston Creek and the Woden Valley. An extension was built to link the project to Launceston St. It was well executed and closes a missing link in the path network.



*Heysen St Before*



*Heysen St After*