



**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: 099

Submitter: Belconnen Community Council

Date authorised for publication: 16 October 2025



 [02 6207 1131](tel:0262071131)  
 [chair@belconnen.org.au](mailto:chair@belconnen.org.au)  
 [belconnen.org.au](http://belconnen.org.au)  
 PO Box 1131  
Belconnen ACT 2617

22 August 2025

Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
GPO Box 1020  
Canberra ACT 2601

Via *LACommitteeEnvironment@parliament.act.gov.au*

Dear Committee

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

The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry into the role and future of the Woden Town Centre.



While the focus is on Woden, the issues it faces are shared across all of Canberra's town centres, including Belconnen. Decisions made in one district often set expectations for others, making this inquiry an important opportunity to improve outcomes city-wide.

This submission highlights the governance and delivery gaps that hold back town centre renewal and offers practical actions to address them. By strengthening accountability, applying consistent frameworks, and tying infrastructure investment to growth, government can ensure town centres remain functional, attractive, and inclusive as the city grows.

Yours sincerely

Lachlan Butler  
Chair



 [02 6207 1131](tel:0262071131)  
 [chair@belconnen.org.au](mailto:chair@belconnen.org.au)  
 [belconnen.org.au](http://belconnen.org.au)  
 PO Box 1131  
Belconnen ACT 2617

The Belconnen Community Council welcomes this inquiry into the role and future of the Woden Town Centre. While the focus is on Woden, the challenges it faces are shared across Canberra's town centres: fragmented responsibilities, reactive planning, and inconsistent investment. This inquiry is an opportunity to close the governance and delivery gaps that hold back these vital places.

Across the city, growth, changing demographics, and shifts in how people live, work, and travel are placing new demands on town centres. Decisions made in one district often shape expectations and set precedents in others. When governments plan a town centre or invest in public infrastructure, they not only influence local outcomes, they also establish city-wide norms. The committee's recommendations should therefore aim for consistent, systemic improvements for all town centres, not just local fixes for Woden.

Right now, governance and delivery responsibilities for town centres are dispersed across multiple directorates and portfolios. This fragmentation makes it difficult to align planning, investment, and service delivery. Even well-intentioned policies and master plans can falter when no single body has both the authority and capacity to lead town centre renewal from end to end.




Woden illustrates the risks of this fragmented approach. When no one is clearly responsible, decision-making becomes reactive, opportunities for integration are lost, and public confidence erodes. Belconnen has experienced similar challenges, particularly when major developments outpace infrastructure or leave gaps in public realm investment.

To address these governance and delivery gaps across Canberra, the BCC recommends that the committee explore:

### **1. Models like Renewal Authorities, District Offices, and Inter-Directorate Taskforces**

There are a range of possible governance models that could help close the current gaps. The Belconnen Community Council has previously advocated for the establishment of a Belconnen Renewal Authority, as well as cross-directorate taskforces to coordinate planning, infrastructure, and service delivery. The Molonglo Valley Community Forum has similarly called for the creation of district offices to embed local leadership and provide a clear point of accountability.



 [02 6251 1131](tel:0262511131)  
 [chair@belconnen.org.au](mailto:chair@belconnen.org.au)  
 [belconnen.org.au](http://belconnen.org.au)  
 PO Box 1131  
Belconnen ACT 2617

Each model has different strengths, but they share a critical feature: they give someone clear authority to coordinate across government and be held responsible for outcomes. At present, no such body exists for the town centres. Responsibilities are scattered across directorates and portfolios, making it difficult to deliver cohesive strategies or track progress. Without a single entity leading planning and delivery, even well-intentioned plans often fail to translate into tangible improvements on the ground.

We therefore encourage the committee to examine these models and identify how a similar mechanism could be applied to the town centres. What matters most is not the specific structure chosen, but that there is an empowered body tasked with overseeing renewal and ensuring accountability at the precinct or district scale.

**2. Apply the ACT Wellbeing Framework to track town centre liveability, accessibility, amenity, and public investment**

Closing governance and delivery gaps will also require better tools to measure how town centres are performing. The ACT Government already has a Wellbeing Framework that brings together data on social, economic, environmental, and cultural outcomes. However, this framework is not currently applied at the district or town centre scale, which limits its usefulness for place-based decision making.

Applying the Wellbeing Framework to each district would allow government to track how growth and investment are affecting liveability, accessibility, amenity, and public services over time.

This would give decision-makers a clearer view of where support is most needed, and reassure communities that renewal is being guided by consistent, measurable outcomes rather than ad hoc decisions.

**3. Set baseline standards for community infrastructure and public space improvements tied to population growth**

Alongside stronger governance, town centres need clear commitments to the basic infrastructure and public spaces that make them work. Population growth is frequently outpacing investment, leaving centres under strain and residents frustrated. In Belconnen, for example, the 2016 Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan forecast 8,450 residents by 2031. By 2021, that figure had already been exceeded,



 [02 6207 1131](tel:0262071131)  
 [chair@belconnen.org.au](mailto:chair@belconnen.org.au)  
 [belconnen.org.au](http://belconnen.org.au)  
 PO Box 1131  
Belconnen ACT 2617

yet there has been no equivalent uplift in public realm improvements or community infrastructure.


This pattern reflects a broader delivery gap across town centres. Establishing baseline standards for infrastructure and public space tied to population growth would help ensure that future development is matched by timely, visible improvements to the places people rely on every day. It would also build public confidence that growing populations will not be left behind.

These actions would support a more coordinated, accountable approach to town centre planning and delivery. They would also give residents and businesses greater confidence that their centres will remain functional, attractive, and inclusive as the city grows.

Getting governance and delivery right will shape the future of all our town centres. Woden and Belconnen are both at the forefront of Canberra's growth, and both need government to plan proactively and invest wisely. The BCC would welcome the opportunity to share lessons from Belconnen and to support the committee in shaping recommendations with city-wide relevance.





 [chair@belconnen.org.au](mailto:chair@belconnen.org.au)  
 [belconnen.org.au](http://belconnen.org.au)  
 PO Box 1131  
Belconnen ACT 2617

## About the BCC

- The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) is a non-partisan, volunteer-driven organisation that aims to be at the forefront of advocating for our region, making it an even more attractive place to live, work, and enjoy life.
- The BCC represents the interests of its members and the community to the ACT Government and other stakeholders on various matters affecting the people who live, work, and play in the Belconnen District.
- The Belconnen Community Council receives support and funding from the ACT Government.

