



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: 106

Submitter: Woden Community Service

Date authorised for publication: 15 January 2026

Opening Statement – Woden Community Service

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee. I am Rebecca McMillan, Chief of Staff at Woden Community Service. Our organisation has served the Woden community for over 50 years, providing essential services including community programs, mental health support, children's services and aged care.

Woden Community Service plays a critical role in supporting social inclusion and wellbeing in the local community. As Woden evolves under the ACT Government's compact city strategy, we see both opportunities and risks for the people we serve.

Our submission to this Inquiry reflects the voices of local residents that we support and our deep experience delivering community services. In our submission we highlighted three priority areas, which were:

1. Spaces that bring people together

When we talk about high-density living, it's not enough to just build apartments and offices. We need places where people can meet, feel they belong and feel safe - especially those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. These spaces should be free or affordable, easy to access, and designed for everyday use. If we don't create them, isolation and inequity will only grow.

2. Design for access and flexibility

Urban design must make life easier. That means transport options that work for everyone and spaces that are universally accessible. It also means co-locating services - health, housing, mental health, social support - so people can get the help they need in one place.

3. Spaces that support physical and mental health, as well as sustainability

Green spaces, shade, and smart water design aren't extras - they're essentials. They keep people healthy, make outdoor areas inviting, and help us cope with heat and climate risks. These features encourage walking and cycling, and they turn Woden into a place people want to spend time, not just pass through.

Finally, I'd also like to highlight a critical infrastructure gap. Woden Community Service is currently operating from multiple dispersed locations while we await construction of the Woden Community Centre - a facility the ACT Government has committed to fund. However, the status and timeline of this project remain unclear. This fragmentation impacts collaboration, reduces operational efficiency, and denies the community a central hub for integrated services and wrap-around support. We strongly urge that this project be prioritised. A centralised community centre is not just about improving our ability to deliver services; it is about giving the people of Woden a place where support is accessible, connected, and responsive to their needs.