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Standing Committee on Transport
and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the effectiveness of Fix My Street

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Submitter: Braddon Collective

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ACT Legislative Assembly - Standing Committee on Transport and City Services

Inquiry into the effectiveness of Fix My Street

Submission from the

Braddon Collective

The Braddon Collective is pleased to present the following submission to the Standing Committee on Transport and City Services's *Inquiry into the effectiveness of Fix My Street*.

Who are we?

The Braddon Collective is a community group working collaboratively with residents, businesses, landowners, and the ACT Government to maintain the diverse and vibrant character of Braddon and enhance the environment for those who live, work and play in Braddon.

Members of the Braddon Collective regularly use the Fix My Street (FMS) service, provided by the ACT Government through Access Canberra, and have done so for many years. Our group is interested in many topics that are typically addressed through this service - including footpath accessibility, damaged or broken infrastructure, hanging branches, malfunctioning streetlights, road safety issues, and more.

Braddon has a high level of foot traffic compared to other Canberra suburbs, and so we are very interested in making sure our neighbourhood is a safe and pleasant place to walk around. Additionally, we are eager to ensure that it's easy and pleasant to get to and from Braddon via public transport. We also want to ensure that riding a bike to, from, and through Braddon is safe and comfortable for people at all levels of proficiency and confidence. We regularly seek to address these issues by using FMS to report things that impede these modes of travel in Braddon.

Our collective experiences with FMS have been mixed. Sometimes our members have received timely and justified actions in response to a request, but at other times our members have received no response at all to their request, have had their request closed with no communication, or have had their case actioned with no communication about reasoning for the chosen action and outcome.

Braddon Collective members are frustrated by the lack of consistency and reliability that we experience when using the FMS service. We recognise that the ACT Government receives a large volume of communication from the community about issues in the built environment, and we support the use of a system that can manage these issues efficiently and enable prioritisation of the most urgent problems. We broadly support the FMS system - but would like to see improvements in various areas. Below we have addressed the Inquiry's Terms of Reference where we have input to provide, and we have also included two case studies looking at our experiences using FMS. We hope that our contributions will be of use to the Committee in considering a productive path forward for FMS and management of community reporting.

- **Whether the online tool is fulfilling its intended purpose**

We agree that the online FMS reporting tool fulfills its intended purpose - when it functions correctly. FMS enables community members to bring matters to the attention of the relevant parts of the ACT Government. It is a mechanism through which the community can be the government's "eyes and ears" for maintenance issues, in particular for matters that pose an immediate risk to pedestrians, people using micro-mobility devices, and motorists. We acknowledge that the ACT is a physically vast area and that it is not possible to have City Services staff proactively looking for issues at all times in every location. A tool for the community to report issues as they appear is very welcome.

Community members may feel that reporting an issue means that their concerns will be actioned immediately. We suggest that some education may be needed to let the community know how many FMS requests are received in a given time frame and how they are triaged. Access Canberra may need to work to set expectations on how long it may take to action FMS requests.

- **The extent to which it provides a user-friendly experience**

The two-factor authentication login is not a user-friendly feature - it is a barrier to timely "on the spot" reporting. One of our members said "I often take a photo of a maintenance issue whilst I am out with the intention of generating a FMS report when I return home. This does not happen and I lodge a report days after the incident" and adds "I am concerned that members of the community that are not familiar with two-factor authentication may find the process very difficult."

The categories that community members can choose from to report their problem in FMS don't always fit real-world experiences, and it can be hard to find or know the right category for a given problem. Categories are not always friendly to laypeople - the way that City Services categorises things may not necessarily fit well with common or colloquial ways of thinking.

- **The responsiveness of the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate from the receipt of requests to finalisation**

Our members' experiences of having requests responded to and resolved are varied. Some requests made months and even years ago have not been actioned at all and remain "unallocated" within FMS, while others have received prompt attention. Some examples:

- No response received to FMS request:
 - Issue: 40km/hr sign in Mort Street was covered up with a piece of corflute (since resolved through other means).
 - Issue: Bike racks outside Peacemaker Saloon on Mort Street are unusable due to location of new outdoor dining area (still an unresolved issue).
- Quick response to FMS request:
 - Issue: One of the newly-installed bollards outside the Midnight Hotel had been removed, and was replaced in less than a week after a FMS request was lodged.
 - Issue: Several streetlights in Ijong Street were out - after a FMS request was lodged, an email was received the next day explaining the reason for the outage and the issue was fixed within a week.

Technical issues in the FMS system have an impact on community perception of responsiveness. ACT Government staff may respond to a request but this information sometimes does not make its way to the person who has made the request – this appears to be due to a technical issue or lack of good functionality. If a staff member responds to a given issue, a notification email should be sent to the person who has made the request.

Clear reasoning for a decision is not always provided. Sometimes cases are closed with no reason given as to why that issue was deemed to not require a response, or a decision is made to pursue something other than what the request maker has asked and the reason for that is not provided.

Community members have no means to follow up if a job has been marked as actioned but has not actually been completed. We received an example from a local community member who lodged a request regarding a tree removal task: branches had been removed from a dangerous tree, but the trunk was still in place weeks later and the cut branches were left on the ground. The case is 'closed' in FMS and there were no contact details provided to follow-up on job completion.

We suggest that officers who action requests must be required to add comments to the FMS request/send a follow-up email to the person who lodged the request. The FMS system must additionally be improved so that that information is delivered to the person who has made the request. This enhanced communication would reassure community members that their requests are being attended to and increase overall confidence in the system.

- **The effectiveness of the online tool in its current state**

As outlined above, Braddon Collective members generally feel that FMS is effective when all parts are functioning as intended - it serves a clear purpose and is a good way for the ACT

Government to manage and triage community requests. However, as it is currently functioning, we do not feel it is the most efficient or user-friendly way for community members to lodge requests.

- **Potential improvements to the online tool with reference to city service programs in other jurisdictions**

One of our members offered the following example of a good experience with a similar system in Melbourne: “I was living in the catchment for Darebin City Council for 5 weeks earlier this year. Darebin uses the Snap Send Solve (SSS) app for people to report issues. I used SSS to report dumped rubbish in a creek, offensive graffiti on a street sign, and to report a mudslide over a shared cycle/footpath. All 3 issues were resolved in under 2 weeks.”

- **The possibility of transforming Fix My Street into an application**

Having FMS (or an equivalent reporting tool) available as a mobile phone app would make reporting easier for community members. We acknowledge that making reporting ‘easier’ may also lead to an increase in spurious or vexatious reports being made, and recognise that the ACT Government has to make trade-offs in how it manages reporting and duties in the community.

- **Any other related matters**

Braddon Collective members find it confusing that parking issues are reported to the ACT Government via a different form to FMS. It would make much more sense for these two reporting functions to come under one app or one website form.

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→ **Case study #1: Midnight Hotel footpath issue**



Over recent years Braddon residents and visitors have had ongoing concerns about use of the driveway of the Midnight Hotel at 1 Elouera Street, Braddon. Vehicles were frequently driving and parking on the footpath outside the hotel. The risk to pedestrians and others using the footpath was very high - e.g. a taxi reversed down the footpath as a resident was walking from the light rail station to Mort Street one evening and nearly hit this person. At other times the footpath was entirely blocked by parked cars. *See the picture to the left for reference.*

A Fix-My-Street request was lodged in May 2021 to highlight safety concerns and request that bollards be installed to keep cars off the footpath in this area. No response was received.

In **July 2023 the case was closed** with no action taken and no response given.

During 2023 and 2024 the Braddon Collective consistently advocated for bollards to be installed, pursuing this issue regularly through our quarterly meetings with the City Renewal Authority (CRA). In July 2024 the CRA connected the Braddon Collective with a representative from Roads ACT and a meeting was held on-site between the Braddon Collective and Roads ACT. As an outcome of this meeting, and following the relevant procurement processes, the bollards that were first requested in 2021 were **installed in March 2025**. *See picture to the right.*

The FMS process was clearly ineffective in managing this request. No action was taken and no communication was provided through the FMS portal. We still do not understand how or why the initial FMS request regarding this issue received no response. We have asked multiple ACT Government staff members from various areas about it and have never had this resolved.



→ **Case study #2 - Elouera St temporary traffic management**

As part of the construction presently due to occur at Section 19 Block 1 in Braddon, the westbound lane of Elouera St has been closed to traffic between Mort St and Northbourne Avenue. The temporary traffic management erected for this closure presented a safety hazard for pedestrians and cyclists using the zebra crossing to travel north along the western side of Mort St - the fencing placed in the middle of the road is tall and solid, and it extended almost all the way to the crossing itself.

This meant that crossing users could not establish a sightline with motor vehicle drivers coming east along Elouera St. Drivers often proceed along this stretch of road at a speed inappropriate for the road conditions, which added to the hazardous conditions. *See picture to the right.*



A Braddon Collective member lodged a FMS request about this safety issue, explaining the problem and including pictures to illustrate the problem. The request was closed a short time later with no reasoning provided and no communication. This was very frustrating. The member replied by email to ask for more information but received a standard “do not reply” response. Some time later that member was contacted by a staff member from Roads ACT to discuss the matter, and it came out that this staff member had indeed looked into the issue and provided substantial feedback – but that feedback never reached the requester. When they logged in to check the request, they could not locate that feedback.

After an email exchange and phone discussion, a positive outcome was reached. Roads ACT staff and the developer of the nearby block met with community members to discuss the issue and reach a positive solution, with the road barrier altered to provide better line of sight for all road users. *See picture to the left.*

In this instance, a great deal of confusion and ill will could have been avoided if the FMS system had worked properly to pass on feedback to the community member and allow a proper conversation to happen between that person and the Roads ACT staff member who actioned the request.

We are eager to use the right channels to report issues in the built environment and have them addressed. It is hard to have confidence in the FMS system after dealing with the issues described above, in which the efforts of our members to address issues through FMS were ineffectual and we had to achieve results through dedicated advocacy.

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Thank you for your consideration of this submission. We hope that it is useful to the Standing Committee on Transport and City Services in conducting the present inquiry and forming recommendations for improving the FMS system so that Canberrans can continue to assist the ACT Government in identifying and notifying the right people about issues in the community.

If there are any questions regarding this submission please do not hesitate to contact the Braddon Collective at [REDACTED]

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On behalf of the **Braddon Collective**