



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

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Submitter: Ian Elsum

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

I have lived in suburbs adjacent to Woden Town Centre (Hughes and Curtin) for 4 decades. During this time I have been to Woden Town Centre many, many times for a wide variety of purposes. I mostly drive to the Town Centre and I also occasionally walk there from my home. So, I know the Town Centre well and know how it has changed.

I want to begin by quoting the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry:

Town Centres should be vibrant hubs for retail, commerce and community services, including a range of cultural and recreation facilities that provide a destination for people to come together and have a sense of belonging

Woden Town Centre does not meet this objective. The extent of its failure to meet this objective, that is, the size of the gap, has increased, particularly over the past 10 to 15 years.

The state of the Town Centre is now so poor that I only go there if I have a specific task to perform: particular items to buy, going to Woden Library or an appointment with a medical specialist, for example. I leave as soon as the task is finished; that is, I spend as little time as possible in the Town Centre.

Woden Town Square has been improved a lot in recent years; however I see this as benefitting only those who work in the Town Centre: it is simply not sufficiently attractive for those who are visiting Woden. An increased sense of open space, more sunlight, more greenery and cafes opening into the Square are needed to change this.

So, Woden Town Centre definitely does not provide a destination for people to come together and have a sense of belonging

Why is the Woden Town Centre so unattractive?

A sense of being overwhelmed by the bulk and scale of buildings.

Too little open space.

Too few long sight-lines.

Too few trees.

Too many wind tunnels between buildings.

Unattractive interior spaces in buildings, including in Westfield Mall.

Awkward access both by car and on foot, particularly from the north and north-east.

What needs to be done to change the current situation?

Significantly more open space with trees for shade. There should be greater than 50% tree canopy cover in these open spaces to provide cooling and mitigate the urban heat island effect. This will become critically important as the impact of climate change increases. Allowing sunlight into these spaces will be important to providing a sense of 'openness' and to contribute to peoples' sense of well-being.

Increase the spacing between buildings to enable open pedestrian avenues with trees and landscaping. This would also allow more natural light into the buildings.

Sporting and active recreational facilities, such as indoor courts for basketball, netball, futsal, and volleyball. A public 50 metre swimming pool (those at Stromlo are already overcrowded in summer).

A community meeting and arts centre.

All sporting facilities and a community meeting/arts centre need to have adequate attractive adjacent spaces that encourage those using these facilities to socialise and foster a sense of community.

Ian R Elsum