



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Transport
and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the provision of municipal services in Canberra

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Submission to the inquiry into the provision of municipal services in the ACT, 12 December 2025

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Please note that due to some formatting problems, page numbers have been unable to be included in a transmissible form. We apologise for this.

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I Introduction and the approach taken in this submission

We are long-term inner north residents and have been even longer term users and recipients of Canberra's municipal services.

The following submission addresses some of the terms of reference and raises a number of ACT government municipal servicing/context issues that we wish to flag. These have implications for, and impacts on, the broader public realm and public amenity, not only for residents but also visitors who spend time outside the central NCA land in the national capital.

Municipal servicing is about far more than maintenance and reacting to issues as they arise.

Far more proactive approaches that aim to address higher level objectives for this city should be explored and delivered, not just to remedy some of the matters that are raised in the submission but to ensure, in a far more coordinated manner across government authorities, that needed servicing municipal responses to new legislation and general remediation can be undertaken in a far more timely and coordinated way, with results that can be easily seen, are long lasting , and are appreciated by the surrounding communities and visitors.

II Impediments to this input

We are limited in what we can offer at this late stage of the year . Major impediments exist to public input to this inquiry and we note that so far only two submissions have been uploaded to the inquiry website (16/10 and 27/11). Of course there may be more in the pipeline being processed but given that only one more has been loaded since early October, we suspect that many others - community organisations and individual residents alike, particularly from the inner north - have just given up on formally notifying their views and suggestions.

Why? The following list shows that residents on both sides of Northbourne Avenue have for two months been bombarded by a very heavy schedule of locally focused, very major public consultation deadlines and associated sets of documentation relating to the inner north and its facilities, public service/servicing. access and use, etc:

- 1.Dickson "Tradies" redevelopment Stage 1 and master plan DA - **deadline 1 October**
2. Dickson student housing DA - **deadline 30 October**
- 3.Downer-Watson western edges redevelopment - draft amendment to the Territory Plan - **deadline 4 November**
- 4.Academy of Interactive Entertainment, Watson Stage 1 and revised master plan DA - **deadline 7 November**

5. Aquatic Centre, Commonwealth Park (process run by ACT government for NCA) - **deadline 14 November**
6. Expanded Racecourse precinct for housing and community use - draft amendment to the Territory Plan - **deadline 1 December**
7. Assembly inquiry into municipal servicing and services, including in relation to public spaces - **deadline 12 December**
8. Acton Waterfront precinct consultation - **deadline 17 December** (CRA)

Views about this have certainly been expressed in submissions and to some MLAs, by both community organisations and residents who feel utterly overwhelmed by this end of year schedule. It appears that consultation processes are just uploaded into the ether without any coordination across ACT government bodies to ascertain what might be fair and feasible from the public's point of view, all of whom would be offering their inputs as volunteers. They should be encouraged and supported, not put off from participating.

Making inputs on the matters listed above is not helped by the lack of opportunities to consider, learn more and ask questions of experts about issues matters raised in thousands of pages of documentation either, especially when poor data is provided, when data is inaccurate or is very out of date. Too much appears to be 'slapped down' these days in DAs and DPAs and consultation surveys often avoid even raising matters that are of considerable concern to public and their needs as active users of facilities.

In addition basic information about such consultations is difficult to access for many people. Poor communications about notifications and information provision in general has become the norm and so many we know have given up on contributing and participating.

We have contributed to the first six consultations above ; this one is the seventh in a relatively short time. We have to ignore the CRA's Acton waterfront precinct consultation which closes on 17 December. We honestly feel that CRA as a public body was really 'pushing the envelope' on this one - such a deadline at the end of such a concentrated end of year burst of reaching out and engagement with the public might 'tick the box' in a pre-Christmas rush to close certain books at the CRA end but it does not go down well with the broader public the week before Christmas.

We raise these concerns here because this bombarding approach does not work well for any government consultation. Unfortunately, though, this has been a strong and emerging trend towards the end of every calendar year particularly for the last seven or eight years, and it is generally agreed among community organisation members that this year has been far worse than others.

We also suggest that deadlines for Assembly inquiry inputs be made 9 am on a Monday or 11:59 pm on a Monday – we do not believe that anyone in the ACTPS is going to be 'on deck' after 5 pm on a Friday or over the weekend to sort through inputs and start processing them for uploading on Monday in the next week. Many busy people can only address such consultations after hours, during the week, and on weekends, and an extra two days, especially at this time of the year, may well have been helpful and encouraging.

Given the comments above the Committee may wish to organise public meetings so that collectives of local community associations, specific interest groups (eg older residents) across Canberra , plus their memberships and other members of the public can offer feedback, raise concerns and offer constructive views and suggestions on specific issues relating to the Terms of Reference.

Please note that any formatting inconsistencies that may appear in this submission arise from sections being drafted on different devices . There has been insufficient time at our end to make the whole document consistent.

Also, local examples are focused on to illustrate issues linked to this inquiry's Terms of Reference. Photos are included to convey the broad messaging that we are offering.

III ToR (a) - the maintenance and upkeep of public spaces – playgrounds

1.The maintenance of such spaces should focus on regular grass mowing, and weed removal from an early stage of use, keeping facilities clean and tidy etc and therefore welcoming to a broad range of users.

2.The value/pay back of such effort would be much more worthwhile if the design of these places encouraged better all year round use of the spaces provided, including

- inclusion of high-quality lighting to enable such spaces to be used into the cooler parts of hot summer evenings – for many people this would provide respite from hot homes and urban environments generally and enable getting to fresh air as it cools past sunset
- inclusion of far more deciduous trees along northern and western facing edges of pathways and areas that provide seating and picnic support facilities. Small awnings over an electric barbecue and a bit of seating for example are not adequate. On hot days visitation does not occur to the inner north destination play park (Windeyer Street, Watson- see photos at Att 1) . Yes, the trees planted are relatively small at the moment, but there are far too few of them and many are in places that will not provide shade to seating or to people watching children using some of the more open hard surface play areas.

3.The new neighbourhood park in east Watson (Aspinall Street- see photos at Att 2) seems generally bereft of trees and other forms of shade. Hard heat trapping surfacing abounds.

4.Municipal services for such exposed park settings should include erection of more sturdy shade cloth protection for the benefit of young and old alike. They can be taken down over winter to encourage daytime use of such parks, in much lower UV sunny conditions.

5.We appreciate that resources for municipal services are stretched for various reasons - it is important then that sign off on the finalisation of such community

infrastructure is also more carefully checked and remedied prior to opening and use so that future work is not made harder or impossible

- it is clear that parts of the Windeyer St, Watson destination park are low lying , have not been levelled adequately and subsequently are not well drained , and have already appeared very boggy after rain . Which of course makes them either hard or impossible to maintain and mow let alone use and when they are used in such conditions eg by active children or straying bike/scooter riders, damage is done to the ground cover and soil beneath. This then requires more rectification and/or long term maintenance, if swathes of park area are not to become given over to weed infestation and loss of public use.

IV ToR (a) - the maintenance and upkeep of public spaces- verges (general) and active travel

1. Like public parks - new and old - the upkeep of verge and related areas links directly to the ability to do this efficiently or at all given the way verges are allowed to be abused by many members of the public

- it is clear that lack of widespread public education and awareness raising and reminders about this, let alone enforcement/compliance, are all leading to worsening degradation of public space areas generally (eg via illegal parking , especially near public verge trees) across the city. It is not a pretty picture for locals or visitors alike
- allowing these areas to be often badly designed and then badly degraded leads to 'eyesores' that persist for years and years despite public concern and even legislative changes that should see such treatment minimised instead of proliferating
- the ACT Urban Forest Strategy, its legislation and its website's clear statement of shared responsibilities - public and private - with regard to urban forest objectives, aren't being implemented and monitored adequately by various areas of government as far as the health and appearance of verges are concerned.

2. In turn the generally degraded appearance of verges and related public spaces leads to a loss of pride in our city and local environment and no doubt engenders worsening treatment of public spaces since it becomes clear that no one with the power to curb it is doing so

- **V** below documents the saga of efforts to protect mature tree cover on a large public verge area in Dickson and failure by the public and authorities to achieve verge protection and conservation
- hopefully this example might guide the inquiry in identifying and recommending more substantive responses and solutions, that if done properly from the outset, would save much time and effort by all involved in addressing such matters.

3. Also often the way in which footpaths and verges are designed (often badly) only leads to degradation and mistreatment of surrounding public spaces, including by the creation of unsightly dusty /muddy shortcut 'goat track' ruts that persist for decades. These enlarged dirt patches are common where narrow pathing meets at sharp right angles at street and road crossing areas

- none of this produces a 'good look' even after any maintenance of what grass might struggle to remain.

4. Too many verges in the inner north actively discourage active travel, especially at night

- Downer and Downer/Watson are particularly poorly supported when it comes to travelling the sign posted 800 m or more to a rail stop (and on the pathways leading to this signage)
- the clear interconnections of municipal and public transport servicing, for example, are well illustrated by the continuing failure to fulfil an election promise of an upgrade made some years ago to the 800 metre uneven narrow poorly lit Swinden Street pathway to the rail stop on the Federal Highway. In the past year much private overhanging hedge growth that prevented part use of the narrow 1960s pathway somehow got cut back though it is encroaching yet again. This in turn has led to considerable degradation of the verge area by the creation of pathway 'goat tracks' since people can't pass each other without someone getting off the path to start with. The long grass and weeds and unevenness of the pathway and the dirt tracking is not encouraging active travel for many further afield, especially at night when the lighting is so poor that personal lights are needed to walk home safely or to a car park further into the suburb
- Downer/Watson Phillip Avenue pathing to the Phillip Ave rail stop has not been improved to support active travel use either. Yet the Elouera, Macarthur and Dickson rail stops received considerable adjacent new pathing and significant public realm upgrades very early on after the start of the 2019 public transport system
- the ongoing creation of these uneven, spreading dusty and muddy dirt patches in turn does not encourage, let alone safely support ,active travel comfort and use by all ages , and at all times of the day.

5. Municipal servicing of park-and-ride facilities is also at an on all time low in the northern part of the inner north. Since September .the Swinden Street park and ride area has been totally given over to storage for Stage 2a rail materials and equipment

- this is also creating yet another major visual eyesore along the Gateway 'boulevard' which is meant to welcome interstate travellers and also provide far more pleasing views to daily local users of the mass transit corridor that is now the Gateway.

6. Far more effective and coordinated municipal responses to disguising the existence of unattractive and ugly visual impacts , including graffiti covered structures, are needed along the entry to the national capital and on main roads

leading off it plus around and in suburban shopping centres, group and town centres. The considerable and major renewal construction that is occurring in these places is contributing considerably to these negative impacts and it will be happening consistently in very visible parts of the inner north for the next 20 years at least

- it is therefore important for municipal services to keep the entry to the city and attractive as possible , including by more regular mowing of verges and median strips leading into the city from the outer parts of the Federal Highway
- faster implementation of the Gateway's planned major renewal landscaping and its maintenance should be delivered as per the City and Gateway Urban Design Framework 2018 ,along all the verges and median strips from outer Watson to Antill/Mouat Sts Downer and Dickson - this is a real municipal servicing objective that should also be implemented sooner rather than later, certainly well before all the very long-term precinct developments on both sides of that highway component of the Gateway are completed. The benefits visually would be significant, and would help deflect from the major construction site impacts that will be evident for many years to come. It would also show that real public interest and long lasting municipal beautification outcomes can be provided and maintained in a timely way.

7. Developers and infrastructure and municipal service authorities should also be required to do a far better job of improving the visual amenity of the changing cityscape - as it changes - and that includes the fencing off of public land including verges and public movement areas . Yes, there is a cost to doing so but there are also lingering and compounding costs of not doing so

- for years visual eyesores have abounded along the Gateway and been much criticised by Canberrans and visitors alike
- developers in particular should be required to do far better job regarding their street frontages and perimeters, including not taking over public pathways for long periods of time
- public municipal servicing does include graffiti removal in public areas but the discouragement, prevention and removal of graffiti in locations blocked off for private construction for long periods of time requires far more attention and application of effective solutions by developers as part of their occupation of the land and the long term yet temporary streetscape changes that they are allowed to make (eg including the long term takeover of paths and road lanes that also totally prevent safe and efficient active travel).

8. Normal municipal servicing of public areas eg streetscapes, verges should not be allowed to be counteracted by far more overwhelming and long lingering negative visual impacts and impressions that are created by developers/lessees who currently are permitted to let prominent blocks of land to become and remain eyesores - for decades. The ACT planning system and other ACT government authorities should be empowered to prevent what the images below reveal

Watson shops: former petrol Station Block



September 2008



December 2017



April 2023



December 2025



December 2025



December 2025

- this long lingering development eyesore site next to the Watson shops, an early childhood centre and public school, has marred the public realm in this area for almost 20 years now, with a series of tatty fencing erections, graffiti, an ancient Portaloos and new rubbish and dirt piles created every few years

- such renewal areas need to be addressed and managed far better and consistently from a public interest/public realm and municipal servicing point of view as well
- perhaps municipal servicing needs to include powers to identify and prod such site management solutions, via inspections and needed rectification responses, in concert with other authorities too.

9. Formal municipal action needs to deter the use of public verges as a dumping ground for junk (particularly unusable or broken items) that people want to get rid of but don't want to take it too far away tip or cannot take it away to such a place because they don't have suitable transport (eg active only travellers don't) or the funds to make disposal arrangements with private companies. (Getting rid of a major white good item can easily cost \$150). Too much rubbish is allowed to accumulate and remain for too long on public verges



An inner north home, November 2025 – the items were not left here for a ‘one off’ rubbish pick up

- more hard rubbish days should be provided and well-advertised; No one should have to wonder about whether they exist and try and find relevant information on a website somewhere; the hardcopy and online version of Our CBR should be used to notify upcoming dates and registration requirements

(and not just via a QR code either), also the local free media could be used to advertise relevant information

- community swap/recycling days eg for a collection of adjoining suburbs , should be held for items that could be used by others and arrangements made for leftover items to be picked up promptly . They would need to be well organised, advertised and guidance provided about suitable 'content'
- municipal services/communications should also make it clear to businesses that piling up unwanted junk (even for formal collection at some future time) on public pathways should not occur eg as shown below in Poppyfield St , Dickson earlier this year. It certainly did not help counteract the normal negative impressions of existing and still poorly maintained business fencing, gateways and views into rear yards along much of this main thoroughfare in Dickson which is trying to regain lost business and deal with anti-social and crime issues (see also comment at **V points 7 and 8** below) . Allowing the public realm there to degrade even more is not helpful (and the 2026 CRA Dickson shops public area upgrade works will not be covering this street ...)





Poppyfield St (formerly Dickson Pl), Dickson, July 2025 - exterior and interior views on and from the street

- more intervention in such areas by municipal and other government bodies may be needed to help lift the appearance and utility of such areas, otherwise they're likely to simply worsen and have even more deleterious impacts on public visitation, spending and social interaction and other behaviours. Engendering pride in local shopping and group and town centres should also be a function of our municipal services and service providers, in close and

well coordinated ways with other bodies and key parts of the City and Environment Directorate .

10. Given media reporting this year of various difficulties faced by the public when using existing pathways and negotiating around blocked off areas of suburban streets, it would be helpful if municipal authorities could undertake regular monitoring of streetscape issues eg when staff are passing by or via in depth audits of suburbs, to identify and rectify clear people-movement hazards and non-joined up pathing. The following example at the entry to the Downer shops (corner of Frencham Pl and Frencham St) refers



- the raised trip hazard disc has been in place for a very long time (decades probably given its discolouration) and may have had some connection to a long gone petrol station or laboratory that existed on the block nearby from the 1960s - 80s . Either way it's an example of municipal 'service scans' that are needed whenever landscapes are changed and renewed – a lot of townhouses were built next to it many years ago and it should have disappeared then, at the latest
- it should not be left up to an ad hoc approach for removal to happen eg by individual trying to get it removed and the area and pathway remediated and 'joined up', via Fix My Street
- municipal service scans and action commitments should be incorporated into all renewal planning processes.

11. Illegal parking and street parking space hogging by construction site vehicles

- this is addressed separately at **IX** below, given that prevention of this growing impact on suburban amenity needs to be far more proactively addressed by municipal servicing and monitoring authorities in conjunction with police and planning authorities
- clarity and up front requirements to support clearly articulated government and community expectations, and deterrence /penalty capabilities, are needed in any DA approval process, combined with follow up monitoring
- again it should not be left up to individuals or community organisations to start writing to relevant bodies or ministers to point out ongoing problems arising from construction vehicle congestion on suburban streets and in other public spaces . (Contacting developers has not been successful around where we live.)
- developers and the construction companies they engage need to shoulder more responsibility and make more parking arrangements workable on site .

V ToR (a) - the maintenance and upkeep of public spaces - example of impacts of inadequate protection and upkeep and broader impacts - Dickson

1. Throughout 2024 and into early 2025, considerable community effort was made to prevent further illegal parking, and associated vandalism and loss of ACT government prohibited parking signage in the large treed public space area south of the Dickson pool, off Cowper St.

2. Requests for replacement/remediation of signage to prevent parking on this large area were raised in meetings and in writing with CRA over 2024 as part of CRA's ongoing Dickson precinct community engagement meetings. Details of the concerns and documentation with photographic evidence were provided, and focused on

- the high incidence of illegal parking and damage being done to valued, mature and stately trees, the tree root area, the soil and water catchment and absorption across that increasingly compacted area that is also a significant and very visible patch of natural habitat next to the Dickson shops area
- at an earlier time, TCCS had erected a couple of quite small and flimsy signs in this public verge area following local community group requests to prevent further soil damage being done to this tree root and water catchment area, particularly by many large and heavy vehicles parking right next to tree trunks. It was made clear in 2024 to CRA that these signs disappeared very quickly and were not replaced, and that a more substantial and long lasting solution was required
- being adjacent to the Dickson pool brings these matters to head over each summertime when large numbers of vehicles mount the Cowper St kerb, cross the footpath and park under and right next up to many mature trees, further adding to the creation of a dustbowl in the dry weather and a mud patch when it rains
- yet none of this verge parking is permissible, especially in view of the expectations and requirements laid out about verge protection from parked vehicles in the 2021-2045 ACT Urban Forest Strategy and legislation.

3. Following much abuse of this area by many 'tradie' vehicles linked to a nearby construction site in 2023 and also 'overflow' pool visitor vehicles at the end of 2023 and into 2024, representations were made to CRA about this at a meeting in February 2024. In April (ie after months of heavy parking use), TCCS erected three parking prohibition signs along the space's frontage

- these were very flimsy ones again, and the thin tomato stake type uprights could not be well inserted into the hard compacted ground
- within two weeks, two of the three signs had disappeared completely.

4. In late April 2024 CRA was advised about this vandalism and the need for more robust and better entrenched, immovable signage, also the desirability of bollards or other immovable and vandal-proof barriers being placed along the Cowper St and footpath frontage. Evidence of examples erected elsewhere were provided. The matter was to be raised by CRA with TCCS

- further engagement and follow-up on this matter occurred with CRA in the second half of the year but no replacement signs or barriers were installed
- by early November 2024 the last remaining sign had also disappeared, and congested parking was occurring in the whole space on weekdays and weekends, again
- the last sign was found further away, badly damaged and flung under the big trees with a broken off post. Although reported in November 2024, it was still there in January 2025
- more evidence of this loss of signage and of continuous illegal parking was passed on to CRA in November 2024
- on 11 December 2024 CRA provided the community with advice from TCCS which advised it had monitored the site consistently on weekdays without identifying any unauthorised vehicles during those visits (the community's evidence, via additional photos, of weekday parking were provided later on). But TCCS accepted that images provided earlier did highlight 'an issue around weekends'. And it mentioned that an 'enforcement blitz' by parking rangers would occur (this sounded like a fairly 'one off' approach unfortunately)
- concerned community members were encouraged to contact Access Canberra/Fix My Street, and to pass on concerns to Access Canberra, to parking operations, to TCCS Park Rangers, and to the police (latter was in response to reported dangerous driving as vehicles in traffic approaching the Cowper/Poppyfield Sts intersection and traffic lights had been witnessed suddenly swerving left out of the moving queue to mount the kerb and cross the footpath to park)
- the list of independent suggested actions were not encouraging as an efficient way to obtain a coordinated and permanent solution to this verge problem.

5. In January 2025 we undertook to undertake the task of reporting this problem via Fix My Street (ie under the parks in public places/signs category)

- in early February 2025 two more flimsy replacement signs had been erected in this degraded public space. They were seen and were working to effect on 11 February but by the afternoon of 15 February one had been pushed over

and vandalised since it would've been in the way of many entering vehicles that were already parking there on 15 February . The second sign disappeared not long after. Illegal parking resumed

- although CRA withdrew, for resource/other priority reasons, from further considerations about the need for more substantive preventive action in this verge space, the Dickson Residents Group continued to advocate in meetings for the placement of effective and visually attractive bollards across the whole verge frontage , with explanatory signage
- the new inner north play destination space on Windeyer St , Watson (see Att.1 photos) hosts attractive external perimeter fencing and dozens of large attractive rectangular sandstone blocks that are used also as perimeter bollards in non fenced frontages and as feature treatments throughout the site. Even a few of such blocks spread across the front of the degraded and damaged public Dickson site would vastly benefit long-term health of the tree copse there and enable action to be taken to rectify soil and water absorption damage, and eventually, beautification, via additional landscaping, of what is a highly visible public space.

6. Illegal parking was still occurring in this space in November 2025 and in early December tall wire frame fencing of the sort associated with construction sites or protection of street trees , was erected in the large open area under the verge's trees

- there has been no communication with the community about the purpose of this fencing - ie whether it is to prevent illegal parking and protect the trees (which is doing very effectively) , or whether it is cordoning off a large part of this already compacted and degraded area for some specific parking purposes linked to nearby government activity or for construction material storage purposes
- hopefully this fencing has been put in place for tree protection purposes and if so it will be welcomed until a far more aesthetically pleasing and permanent solution approach can be adopted. If it is not a preventive measure then perhaps the responsible minister can advise on the purpose of the fencing and the rationale for any further damage being done to this area.

7. The above 'storyboard' should not have unfolded as it did and should not have to be told in this way. The ACT government has publicly stated its expectation that shared responsibility between government and the public will occur to ensure effective implementation of the intent and the outcomes under the new Urban Forest Act particularly in relation to public treed land, and in built up and increasingly hotter suburban areas. This should be shown as being met in more timely and effective ways for this Dickson location

- more coordinated municipal servicing in response to major verge misuse is required. None of the practical preventive suggestions raised in meetings and in Fix My Street inputs, as mentioned above, is expensive if done well from the outset
- unfortunately the feeling is that a lot of valuable community volunteer time, effort and energy has been wasted trying to help conserve and preserve the

valuable mature tree canopy across this public tree and natural habitat asset area

- it is clear that the time and effort expended by TCCS over the years to erect signage has been wasteful of public municipal funding given the continued total reliance on but flimsy signs that just disappear quickly
- more needs to be done to prevent further significant damage by vehicle or any other heavy objects. Allowing any illegal and damaging activity to occur in this space also sends a poor message to the public generally, but particularly to those who think they too can just 'get away with' unlawful behaviour wherever they wish
- public asset degradation, public eyesore creation and associated costs of future major rehabilitation would be greatly reduced if verge protection in this Dickson area was addressed once and for all.

8. The ACT government in 2025 certainly recognised the increasing need to engender public pride in and visitation to the immediately adjacent Dickson Group Centre and its surrounds for good reasons, including addressing and reducing antisocial and criminal behaviour in the Dickson shops area

- the government's interim report to the Assembly on this, concerning actions and investigations being undertaken by relevant ACT authorities, was tabled in October (Assembly Resolution 6 March 2025 refers)
- however, the 'bigger picture' issues and impacts of how allowing highly visible public land and vegetation degradation to occur right next to the shops area was not addressed
- we believe that if government shows, in more obvious and permanent ways, that it does care about the visual and physical environment, the area's public assets and their future potential for central Dickson (ie not just via infrastructure upgrades in the shops area for example, then anti-social and illegal visitation and behaviour and abuse of public property in central Dickson would be deterred and more locals would be attracted back to the area. It would also help provide a far more attractive stop off area for those entering the city to visit. Currently we doubt that many interstate visitors would stop off and spend time and money in the Dickson Group Centre, particularly the shops area, or be impressed by what they see right next to the entry to the national capital.

9. We raise the state of this Section 72 Dickson verge dirt patch and eyesore to help support our views about municipal servicing being part of a well-coordinated effort to address and prevent verge and other public space abuse, deterioration and the higher future cost implications of accumulated remediation work and likely loss of mature tree cover. These places are public assets with much potential public value and should be better protected and made more visually pleasing for locals and visitors alike.

10. Attachment 3 contains photos to support the claims and suggestions made above.

VI ToR (c) - the effectiveness of policies relating to street art and graffiti removal

1. Street art - reliance on street art eg murals , should not be overdone

- it should be minimised as a cover-up or distraction from worse visual impacts that may be endemic nearby and require additional long lasting solutions (eg the Dickson shops refer ; also **see V point 5** above about reducing group centre street 'junk' dumping)
- ideally mural specifications should require the work to be relevant to the region eg not include imagery that belongs to tropical parts of Australia
- maintenance of these public works should be planned for. Those exposed a lot to the elements can fade and look sad and unkempt after a number of years
- more use of high-quality mosaic work in public spaces perhaps could be encouraged - it is far more durable, requires little or no maintenance if well done , and often is far more attractive than some mural works that are commissioned - eg see the mosaic work at the Watson shops which has stood the test of time.

2. Graffiti - see comment at **IV points 6, 7 and 8** above.

VII ToR (e) - benchmarking ACT performance against similar jurisdictions for each of the items listed above

1. Care would need to be taken with this given there is no other jurisdiction like the ACT in country (ie council and state government combined)

- but useful insights from other jurisdictions could prove helpful in identifying what aspects of a municipal service is given priority and how it is delivered and evaluated.

VIII ToR (f) - any other related matter - bushfire and other emergency education and prevention

1. It is a long time since the ACT endured the scariness, death and destruction resulting from major bushfire intrusion into the suburbs

- not only has a new generation grown-up since 2003 but many new arrivals in Canberra – permanent and temporary- come from areas that have no experience of bushfire risk or knowledge of how to prepare for what will be more regular seasonal or possibly non-seasonal bush fire flareups around and in the ACT
- in 2003 people in our street who arrived from overseas 30 years before had no idea about the benefits of filling a bath and buckets with water or watching out for and dousing smoking leaves which did blow in from kilometres away

on the Sunday and land on their driveway and in semi dry bushes in their parched front garden

- this house now hosts a group of students, most of whom have no private transport or spare money to spend on hoses, buckets, dry garden rubbish removal etc. The landlord has shown no interest in doing so either (even though he lives nearby). Given his background he may not be aware of the dangers of fire in Australia, though he has been here long enough to be aware of fire induced devastation that has been happening along the eastern seaboard with regularity over the past few years
- probably majority of the population here now would not have experienced Black Mountain and Mount Ainslie becoming alight either eg back in the early '80s.

2. Given the increasing population of the ACT and significant increases planned for the inner north over the next 5- 20 years, municipal servicing in the ACT should, prior to every summer and during every summer, include

- distribution of advice and reminders to every letterbox about individual house block/dwelling fire plan preparation and prevention
- advice about the broader background governmental preparation and assistance that would be available during such outbreaks, what to look out for, what to listen for and how to find out more information etc
- also ways to improve understanding of the seriousness of these matters and some sense of overarching government leadership and management of such situations. These would aim to improve residents' sense of security and reduce stress and anxiety; including by provision of information about how safe places to go to would be identified, and how residents would get to these places particularly if they have no private vehicle available (large numbers of inner north residents would fall into this category - students and many older homeowners and renters, people with disabilities)
- prevention on a broader community scale requires increasing people's sense of personal management, their sense of security and reduction of stress, particularly if they wish or need to escape to a safe suburban space or to outside the ACT.

3. Municipal services, including basic municipal communications, have a big ongoing role to in delivering what is needed

- but unfortunately, in the past couple of years in particular, the level of advice, information and assistance avenues (including those related to the reduction and removal of dry matter on and around house blocks) seems to have diminished
- more proactive responses are required and incentives also, to help preparation by all residents - homeowners, body corporates and landlords - particularly where much dry flammable material has built up
- particular actions may need to be taken to ensure that landlords show much more responsibility than what seems evident now in many suburban places - their lack of action is not only potentially endangering their tenants but also other residents and their adjacent or nearby properties.

IX ToR (f) - any other related matter - construction vehicle parking on suburban streets in parks, on verges

1. **IV point 11** above touched on illegal construction vehicle parking on public verges and in parks, and 'tradie' vehicles 'hogging' limited numbers of 2 hour free parking spots in adjacent shopping areas (as has occurred near here this year, with loss of business to one entity; it also has kept occurring early in the mornings along Challis St Dickson, which has lost public parking on one side anyway due to a major residential project). Municipal services should help ensure, along with developers and other government authorities, that for any major precinct project

- 'tradie' and larger construction project related vehicles should not be allowed to park in public parking spots or on verges, or in public parks
- there is a public plan available, and made known about, concerning when and where very large double loader other oversize vehicles and pieces of equipment can wait and park temporarily on suburban streets , particularly ones that are thoroughfares and support bus routes (that need to keep to timetables) ; convoys of such large, noisy and slow moving vehicles can easily queue up in a suburban street before 7 o'clock where major construction sites are concerned
- it would be helpful for the public to know from municipal authorities when this is likely to happen and for how long, particularly when Saturdays are used for such activity(eg for removal of above ground and underground material by convoys of loaders at five minute intervals over several hours per day)
- vehicle parking congestion is not allowed on streets and roads not designed for large or heavy vehicles let alone oversize ones, including on narrow side streets (as seen along Fenner St, Downer)
- municipal parking bays well away from residential areas are provided for overnight and weekend parking of large and heavy vehicles and equipment - this will help prevent damage that is already been done around here to kerbs, footpaths and other street infrastructure on public land, as well as compacting earth around large mature trees which such vehicle vehicles seem to be attracted to when parking overnight
- a hotline is provided for surrounding residents to use to report such illegal and 'hogging' parking to the appropriate municipal authority- to also help monitoring , to expedite action and also to , hopefully, deter such parking in the first place.

2. Given how many major renewal projects very near to where we live are taking 2-3 years to complete and others in the pipeline for nearby locations will take 10 to 25 years to complete, improved municipal servicing in relation to the parking needs of construction companies and their workers requires far more satisfactory and workable solutions- regulatory solutions , plus off site amenity /parking provision and high expectations and enforcement of such areas' use .

3. Please see Attachment 4 for photos that illustrate the points made above.

X ToR (f) - any other related matter- how municipal servicing and oversight might help measure mitigate urban heat and worsening climate change impacts on the public at ground level, including active travellers

1. Current public realm design and planning that is signed off on by the ACT planning authorities unfortunately contribute to poor and discouraging environments for active travellers, especially in extreme weather.

2. In built up renewal areas and on smaller house blocks, new buildings' heat sink creation, and the recognition of the health impacts of rising temperatures, suggest that it would be helpful also for municipal services to consider and act more to cool the city environment and the human activities necessarily undertaken outside ie both for play and work . The ACT Urban Forest Strategy and legislation, and Cooling the City Plan could initially guide this? The following articles bring home the benefits of action in these areas in very real ways, including for Dickson:

<https://the-riotact.com/how-dickson-shops-looks-under-a-geothermal-camera-and-what-it-means-for-the-future-of-canberra/777594>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/how-heatwaves-can-wreak-havoc-on-your-mental-health/qxdc8zevw>

- the second article makes the dangers clear:
“ *...Heat's debilitating effects on mental wellbeing are well-documented in scientific studies.
Heat is associated with an increase in a range of mental health issues and social problems... “*
- as does this one from [The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/14/us/heat-wave-pavement-burns.html) on particular ground level impacts <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/14/us/heat-wave-pavement-burns.html> :
Burns From Scorching-Hot Sidewalks and Roads Are Rising, and Can Be Fatal

3. Suggestions have been mentioned already in this submission about improving public spaces' cooling, public comfort, amenity and protection . Municipal servicing and design outcomes in general should be giving far more priority in the quantitative analysis of additional heat retention impacts arising from the increase in large vertical forms and increased hard surfacing in and around, for example the Dickson Group Centre and along the Gateway boulevard, and how these can be mitigated successfully

- perhaps municipal services could help to identify where wider setbacks and spare spaces exist to enable the planting of more wide canopied shade trees, including in copses, and lush and more attractive supplementary greenery.

4. Helping to create more of an 'oasis' feel across the city, especially in built up areas, could also become drawcard for the city and enable it to earn its 'bush capital' moniker again. Creating well vegetated and well landscaped areas and respite parks and parklets at frequent and clearly visible intervals would certainly appeal to

foot traffic, would be more pleasant spaces to be in and move through and would encourage more people to visit and linger . Efforts made elsewhere outside the ACT that make public spaces and walkways more welcoming, cooling and visually attractive also leave a positive lasting memory and interest in returning

- such improvements are also likely to engender more civic and business pride in city locations and centres and are more likely to encourage locals to take visitors to such places too. More cooling of north facing public areas exposed to harsh summer heat also makes those areas more functional and flexible eg for comfortable and popular outdoor dining on wider footpaths. These are interrelated public planning and municipal servicing issues that can provide improved public realm experiences.

5.All pathways are active travel routes. Sensible siting and idensity of canopy trees into in relation to all of these is needed to ensure adequate shade in hot summer months and encouragement of active travel at all times of the day, and by active travellers of all ages

- an example of poor municipal design and therefore long-term deficient servicing of active travellers is apparent along the long east west running swathe of new foot pathing on the southern, north facing side of half of Bradfield Street, Downer. Trees are desperately needed between the pathing and the kerb - yet none has been planted despite requests made in DAs for major residential renewal projects to the south of the pathing
- likewise significant new tree planting is needed between the kerb and the north south running footpath along the eastern side of Melba St which abuts Bradfield St. These active travel routes lead to the Dickson shops, schools and also ,for the more active, to the light rail stop off the western end of Swinden St



- another example of poor active travel servicing is the high quality yet totally exposed Batman Street parking and pathway area (between Currong St north and Cooyong St, Braddon) , running north south: design there is focused on indented parking bays which has not then allowed planting of trees on the public space pathway on the eastern side at close intervals . Where a few are planted it appears they have a little positive impact on active travellers using the long and very wide pathway there - there is little or no protection from harsh western summer sun along most of that active travel route
- in such examples and elsewhere, municipal planning and servicing interventions should allow for the planting and nurturing of one but preferably two rows of wide canopied trees in close proximity to each other , to better support active travel , to improve the comfort and safety of active travellers under extreme weather conditions especially the heat, and to also help counteract the heat trapping effects of the surrounding vertical and horizontal hard surfaced environment.

6. Municipal tree planning and planting should also provide shelter at bus stops, particularly where only a seat is provided (eg as is the case on the Bradfield St frontage described at 1.above)

- also many of the bus stops provided with the more minimalist modern shelters would, given their location/orientation, also benefit from judicious tree placement on the public land there since they currently provide very little shade or escape from very hot western sun on summer afternoons and early evenings.
- unfortunately too many Stage 1 rail stops also suffer from extreme exposure to western sun and heat in summer and there is nowhere else to go given the tracks and an inability to even stand behind some platform structures , plus trees can't be planted on these ' island' platform locations- the only solution is to provide far wider infrastructure canopy cover ?
- Stage 2a and Stage 2b platform infrastructure needs to be far better designed to support the comfort and safety of active travellers ; and Stage 1 platforms require dual upgrades too.

XI ToR (b) and (f) - any other related matter- active travel and toilets; signage

1.The government's consultation on its draft active travel plan in 2022 hardly made any mention of toilets, but they are at least as important and needed as is the planting of more trees along active travel pathways and providing water bottle refill stations

- equality of access to public spaces and public travel use, all of which are supported in some ways by municipal services too, requires basic hygiene provision including in the Dickson Interchange, which still has no public toilets

- highlighting the need for and describing extensive end of trip facilities for active travel workers etc.in an adjacent ACTPS Dickson workplace and the encouragement generally of active travel across the city, becomes disingenuous when public toilets are surely an essential and inclusive component of municipal servicing/active travel/health/public transport strategies and their delivery for the broader public in any civilised national capital
- formal and individual requests for public toilets at the Dickson Interchange and in some inner north centres have fallen on deaf ears for years. They should be an essential component of active travel infrastructure provision and also visitation/tourism support and provision, especially in areas that are close to the Gateway entry to the national capital.

2.Likewise, improved street name signage and large and well maintained directional signs would assist and make active travel and also private vehicle travel more efficient across the city

- in particular many street signs are missing at key intersections in the centre of the city and in older suburbs.

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12 December 2025