



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT, AND CITY SERVICES  
Ms Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Mr Mark Parton MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into electric vehicle (EV) Adoption in the ACT

**Submission Number: 70**

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**Weston Creek Community Council Comments for the:**

**INQUIRY INTO**  
**ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) ADOPTION**  
**IN THE ACT**

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Your local voice



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## **ABOUT WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (WCCC)**

As a Community Council we are committed to advocating and supporting the Weston Creek residents in pursuing the expectations and values that enhance and ensure their safety, well-being, and quality lifestyles. The community of Weston Creek value their unique village atmosphere, garden landscapes, and open green spaces as vital links to physical and mental well-being. Environmental issues and climate change, planning and development, and Government distribution of amenities and resources are topics of high interest in Weston Creek. With the increasing population growth of Canberra and what appears to be a history of ill-considered planning and development, Council is of the opinion that there have been missed opportunities to embrace the Territory as a leader in renewables. Additionally, there is genuine fear for the potential loss of the unique character so appreciated by residents.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

As stated in the *Parliamentary and Governing Agreement 10<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly Australian Capital Territory*, the world is facing a climate change emergency. WCCC notes the Government and parties, commitment to zero emissions for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) with science-based action.

Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Inquiry into Electric Vehicle (EV) Adoption in the ACT. Particularly to the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services with members Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair), and Mark Parton MLA.

Please find below our comments against the Terms of Reference.

## **WCCC COMMENTS AGAINST THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **a. Skills development needs to support an expanding EV uptake**

With the rise in uptake of EVs, there may be an increase in unplanned consequences such as lithium burns from accidents. Medical and emergency personnel will need training in these areas. Careful and proactive planning will need to be organised so that the stress of an untimely (or worse still unavailable) professional development is not placed on the workers.

Resources and equipment to manage the accident scene will need to be sourced and readily available. Careful planning will also be required to ensure the appropriate expertise, training and monitoring is mandated for the disposal of any damaged vehicles and batteries.

Council acknowledges within the Strategy page 31:

*On the training front, the Canberra Institute of Technology is collaborating with Tesla to design tailored training for ZEVs auto mechanics. This will ensure that as the number of ZEVs on Canberra's roads increases, the auto service industry is skilled up to meet the demand.*

However, shouldn't CIT be collaborating with all providers? What is the timeframe for actual on-site training and adjustments to the curriculum for mechanics?

Council agrees with the importance of training as stated in the Strategy page 13: *Skilled to Succeed, the ACT's skills and workforce agenda, explicitly identifies the importance of training and upskilling in ZEV technologies as a key growth opportunity for our local skills sector and economy.*

However, what has been the attention to recruitment and advertising in these trades? Consideration needs to be given to the mentoring of new trainees and the opportunities that may or may not be available to them in the transition stages of the uptake of skills. A focus group or forum to share expertise would be valuable.

Despite the ACT's excellent progress, there is more that can be done to boost the use of renewables not just in the ACT, but across Australia. While the ACT is already a strong purchaser of renewable energy, it can play a greater role in helping the rest of Australia move away from 'dirty' energy by contributing to renewable energy research, investing in renewables technology development and deployment, and by playing a strong advocacy role through the National Cabinet process.

Further, the ACT Government can do more to promote Canberra as a place of opportunity for clean energy research, given the world class educational institutions that operate here in addition to being the home of the CSIRO and Geoscience Australia.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Specific training to manage any accidents and injuries (such as lithium burns) involving EVs for emergency service providers. This could include fire brigade, ambulance, hospital staff and GPs. Council understands this has commenced
- Provision to emergency services of specific equipment to deal with accidents such as lithium fires
- Specific training in apprenticeships to cover EV maintenance
- Encouragement of research partnerships with such organisations as the CSIRO
- CIT to collaborate with other companies as well as TESLA and publish training manuals
- Incentives for business owners to employ apprentice auto mechanics undertaking EV training
- Overview and publishing of CIT apprentice courses
- Establishment of a focus group or forum to share expertise

## **b. Industry development opportunities**

Lithium batteries are not fully recyclable. The dumping and build-up of these batteries could become an unwelcome consequence of the increased uptake of EVs. There is a responsibility here for industry development opportunities such as waste management and vocational training.

Council agrees with the assertion in the Strategy page 7:

*We need industry to invest in bringing more ZEVs to the ACT. And we need to attract ZEV industries to the ACT, as well as strengthening our local capacity to train skilled workers in new ZEV capabilities.*

This point needs elaboration, with the Government's plans transparent to the community.

Council notes on page 18 of the Strategy:

*Deliver more than 70 publicly accessible electric vehicle charging stations across Canberra in 2022-23*

*Expand the public EV charging network to ensure there are at least 180 publicly available charging stations in the ACT by 2025*

This is commendable and will be necessary to mitigate customer anxiety around this issue. Council would also suggest that this goal be part of the industry involvement plan. Partnerships with industry would reduce costs for the Government and reduce the flow on costs to consumers.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Development of lithium battery re-use/waste management plan
- Expressions of interest sought from industry to fund and manage that disposal process
- Open transparency on the Governments' plans and processes to bring industry on board and to the ACT
- Industry funding of EV stations

## **c. Planning laws and regulations and education and promotions in relation to charging infrastructure requirements in a variety of residential, public, and commercial configurations and precincts**

The Territory should be planned and designed and developed to:

- be well-connected in ways that facilitate the safe, secure, and effective movement of people within and through them
- to support active and healthy lifestyles and to cater for a diverse range of cultural and social activities
- to be sustainable with focus on achieving energy efficient urban environments that address the implications of climate change.

The recent rapid sprawl of the ACT has been ill managed and lacking in any foresight in adequately providing services and amenities for the community. Added to this, the Planning Review has not instilled any confidence that this will improve.

The Planning Act needs to mandate that Precinct Plans are developed in consultation with the community and the unique character of each preserved. The Weston Creek community has repeatedly asked for the human condition to be considered in developments. Council has asked for easily accessible EV charging stations at local shops and developments. These utilities should be mandated in Government policy.

Council notes the goal as stated in the Strategy page 25:

*By 2023 at the latest, enact regulation in the Territory Plan to require EV charging infrastructure for new multi-unit residential and commercial buildings.*

Council agrees that EV charging infrastructure should be in regulation. However, in light of the recent Planning Review, Council is of the opinion that 2023 is highly ambitious. Council again suggests that the best approach would be to advance two (2) Bills for Assembly consideration: A Planning Policy Bill and a Planning Administration Bill, with the over reliance on subordinate legislation thus being abandoned.

An ongoing concern is the availability of charging stations and parking. Council welcomes the commitment to update policies as stated in the Strategy on page 19:

*Updating policies to support the transition and  
Reform parking regulations to enable enforcement of parking in EV only parking spaces 2022*

Unfortunately, the Government's poor record on enforcement, including complaint follow up (for example the problems with Fix My Street), does not give any confidence without structural and systemic changes to processes, delivery, and customer service. Council has heard from residents that charging stations are often not well maintained and time limits are not in place, resulting in cars parked for extended periods of time even though fully charged.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Precinct Plans be developed and activated
- Advance two (2) Bills; a Planning Policy Bill and a Planning Administrative Bill
- Estate development plans must identify what and when community services and amenities (such as shops with EV stations) are to be constructed, and be binding
- Estate management plans are mandated to include EV charging stations
- Estate management plans must include environment and human impact studies
- Review Fix my Street
- Develop and enforce installation and management plans for public charging stations

#### **d. ACT Government's role in providing charging infrastructure**

WCCC supports the development of the Big Canberra Battery, to reduce pressure off the grid. There are challenges to establish the ACT as a national hub for renewable energy.

1. First, WCCC notes that a lack of charging infrastructure can be a significant disincentive to consumers purchasing electric vehicles. WCCC supports the ACT Government investing in publicly available charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. By providing more electric vehicles charging stations across the Territory, consumers will have more confidence to purchase electric vehicles.
2. Second, WCCC notes that modern apartment buildings are not built with adequate charging infrastructure as standard. WCCC encourages the ACT Government to change relevant planning and building codes to ensure that medium and high-density apartments are provided with adequate electrical infrastructure in their basement and outdoor car parks to allow electric vehicle users to charge their cars at home.

WCCC has witnessed missed opportunities from the ACT Government in recent consultations. For example, the Duffy Shops proposal did not appear to have any reference to renewable energy technologies. Simple steps could easily be undertaken in this and other upgrades. Suggestions include:

- Battery charging stations at high community use sites (including Duffy shops, Arawang netball courts, Fisher shops, Rivett oval, and Cooleman Court).
- Local shop owners and homeowners could be given grants to invest in charging stations.

Considering the ACT developed the ACT Transition to Zero Emissions Vehicles Action Plan 2018-21, it is disappointing to note on page 19 of the Strategy:

*Develop a strategic plan for long term (post 2030) charging needs for the ACT fleet (excluding buses) 2022- 2024*

Council questions why buses are excluded, especially considering the lead up time.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Government invests in publicly available charging infrastructure for electric vehicles
- The ACT Government to change relevant planning and building codes to ensure that all developments provide adequate electrical infrastructure
- Further explanation is required from Government concerning their long-term strategic plan

**e. Regional charging infrastructure and whether this is a barrier to local uptake, end-of-life battery disposal, and impact of EVs on ACT power supply requirements and vehicle-to-grid issues**

Please also see comments made at point b. Industry development opportunities and point f. application of Territory taxes.

Long distance travel and availability of charging infrastructure are barriers to local uptake and are well known. Careful consideration needs to be made for interstate work travel as well as holiday travel. It would be unreasonable for NSW residents working in ACT, to pay less fees yet have free use of ACT infrastructure and services.

The ongoing functionality of EV batteries after they are removed from vehicles, needs to be carefully examined to avoid unnecessarily contributing to the E-waste stockpile.

Individual mental health and well-being could be negatively impacted if travel becomes limited because of the family's ability to afford an EV, charge the vehicle, and pay per kilometre. Consideration also needs to be given to travel incurred due to distances travelled for medical treatments. An unintended consequence could be undue stress and financial burden on individuals and/or families already experiencing difficult circumstances. The present arguments about road user charges need to be more convincing and if implemented at all, there needs to be a nationally consistent approach that is fair and equitable. This needs careful attention.

Council understands that there is significant work going on within the Directorates about potential impacts on the electricity grid caused by the large-scale introduction of electric vehicles. Council expects that this work will ensure no additional disruptions to grid stability and expects the Big Canberra Battery will play a significant role in smoothing demand. The capacity for vehicle to grid charging will need careful management to ensure user confidence otherwise insurmountable barriers will arise.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A national approach for forward planning infrastructure and implementation
- If implemented, a nationally agreed upon and equitable road user charge
- Rebates for households who install batteries
- A targeted community engagement strategy to maximise consumer confidence

**f. Application of Territory taxes and charges for EV purchases including registration charges**

The ACT Government currently offers EV drivers free registration until mid-2024. After this date, EV drivers will be required to pay a discounted registration, noting that the registration fees for petrol and diesel cars will increase. Council understands that registration fees will no longer be determined about the car's weight but rather the estimated emissions level of the vehicle will determine the fee. Chief Minister Barr has advised that all governments are investigating ways to recoup the monies lost with the uptake of EVs. Road user charges will be introduced.



Council cautions that significant equity issues may arise during the transition period. Including serious concerns for those owners to whom this may be an additional burden including those who rely on their vehicle for work, people who have longer distances to travel to work, low-income earners, and the flow on costs to families. Has thought also been given to interstate travel costs, large kilometre journeys and interstate agreements?

There appears to be very little innovative thought on the transition to an EV dominated fleet. There could be significant benefits through group ownership schemes. For example, could such schemes be incentivised through reduced registration charges?

With the massive increase in Government charges over recent years, Council's view is that it is the Territory Government's responsibility to cover these charges.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The Government provide clarity over future taxes and charges to enable the community early planning of EV uptake
- Protections to be put in place for the change-over period and individual choice, Particularly, those in the second-hand market and low socio-economic groups
- Government balances their Budget appropriately and assists the transition to EV adoption

**g. Federal taxes and charges for EV purchases, including import taxes**

It has been reported that global car manufacturers will be inclined to focus ZEV efforts and models on the markets with the most stringent vehicle emissions standards, sales mandates, and other supportive ZEV policies.

The ACT Government through its membership of National Ministerial groups represents the ACT's view. Council's view is that there needs to be extensive additional consultation with the community to ensure an accurate and representative view is presented at national meetings.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Australian industry to either assemble vehicles or critical components to both reduce costs and develop local industry
- The ACT Government ministerial representatives to National Council need to present a view that represents the best interests of the ACT community in all aspects of electric vehicle adoption and operation, including safety, security, and whole life costs

**h. Other Federal barriers to EV uptake, cost, and availability of EVs, including fuel efficiency standards, impact of EV uptake on existing motor and service industry sectors including possible transition assistance, equity, and just transition issues for people on lower incomes**

See also comments made at point g.

Council notes with concern the following points from the Strategy:

- *Despite recent new sales growth of ZEVs, the decarbonisation of the total fleet will take decades as older vehicles remain on the roads*
- *The average price of a ZEV is higher than the average price of fuel vehicles, which discourages higher uptake*
- *High ZEV purchase prices remain a barrier for many households, particularly where this cost represents a large portion of their annual income*
- *58% of ACT residents report high purchase prices as a barrier to buying a ZEV*
- *The ZEV market is still emerging, and does not yet provide ACT residents with the same range of vehicles and services as the fuel vehicle industry*
- *The range of associated services available in the ACT is still growing, and training for vehicle services and maintenance options are limited compared with those for petrol vehicles*
- *People who are considering buying an EV are often concerned they won't be able to find places to easily recharge their vehicle*

Timeframes are of concern throughout the strategy. Early adopters who are in a better financial position to purchase EVs are given a much greater advantage.

For example, page 18: *Provide two years free registration for battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles and investigate potential for future reforms 2021- 2024*

This need to be extended, particularly with the financial impacts felt by people due to COVID, interest rates and increased costs of living.

Also, there is limited financial assistance given to free-standing households.

*Offer \$15,000 zero-interest loans for zero emissions vehicles and charging equipment and installation*

*Page 24. The ACT offers zero-interest loans of up to \$15,000 through the Sustainable Household Scheme to help eligible buyers purchase a new or second-hand ZEV, charging infrastructure and installation*

Although this is interest free and buyers have up to 10 years to repay, it could be seen as a disincentive as it could disadvantage any further purchases or loan eligibility.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Consideration of tax rebates rather than mileage fees
- Development of a transition plan
- Increase the timeframe for free registration of ZEV
- Amend the interest free loans program
- Government considers the large-scale implementation of neighbourhood of EV charging points taking advantage of the existing public street lighting infrastructure

### **Any other matters relevant to this issue:**

According to the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, of the ACT Government, transport is expected to account for over 60 per cent of the ACT's emissions from 2020. Therefore, efficiencies in all modes of transport must be investigated.

In response to the *Moving Canberra: Integrated Transport Strategy*, WCCC makes the following suggestions:

1. First, there needs to be greater attention given to a successful integrated transport network with more active travel. For the Weston Creek area, this could include improving the park and ride facilities so that public transport confidence and usage could be increased to at least pre-COVID 19 levels. In particular, Council recommends that the Weston Creek/Duffy terminus at Hindmarsh Drive be designed to include a battery storage station as part of the Canberra battery plan.
2. Second, WCCC recommends the ACT Government continue to consult with bicycle riders to decrease dependence on cars. To reach the Government goals of Australia's Cycling Capital and Most Walkable City, we require well maintained and safe infrastructure.
3. Third, WCCC supports electrifying the ACT's bus fleet and thinking more creatively in the design of bus routes and other transport infrastructure. This must include modernising entrenched work practices, such as in-service driver changes.
4. Fourth, WCCC also recommends the ACT Government consider the installation of charging hubs for personal mobility devices such as electric bikes and scooters at various locations around the city.

### **CONCLUSION**

Council acknowledges and supports the Government's inquiry into EV adoption. Council notes that supporting the wellbeing of residents and providing a liveable city are vital and agreed upon goals.

Weston Creek Community Council has engaged with the community, through its various channels, for the purpose of providing this feedback. Our comments can be summarised as:

- ❖ Protections need to be put in place for the change-over period and individual choice, particularly those in the second-hand market and low socio-economic groups
- ❖ A targeted and extensive community engagement strategy to maximise consumer confidence including rebates for households who install batteries
- ❖ Planning and development to have an environmental and human impact focus
- ❖ Open transparency on the Government's plans and processes
- ❖ Development of a lithium battery waste/recycling management plan
- ❖ Collaboration with all stakeholders including CIT, businesses/companies, apprentices and trainers, emergency services, community groups and Government to ensure the best possible outcomes
- ❖ Industry funding of EV publicly and easily accessible charging stations with increased access points and maintenance programs
- ❖ A nationally consistent and socially equitable approach of implementation and forward planning for the adoption of EVs
- ❖ Government balances their Budget appropriately and assists the transition to EV adoption

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input on the Inquiry into EV Adoption. As an active community group, we look forward to participating in any future discussions.

As a priority, Weston Creek Community Council has broadened the areas and fields of its community consultation to best express the views of a wide range of groups. We believe that our consistent and ongoing consultation with the community through our surveys, public meetings (which are also available digitally), social media presence, newsletters and projects have proven to be valuable avenues of people being able to have their say, be listened to and be involved in decision making. We reiterate our open invitation to Government Ministers to address the Weston Creek Community Council at public meetings.

Yours sincerely

Bill Gemmell

Chair, Weston Creek Community Council

