



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Transport
and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the effectiveness of Fix My Street

Submission number: 048

Submitter: Name withheld

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Submitter details [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Committee,
please consider the following comments regarding the Fix My Street system (FMS).

1. Although I have not kept detailed individual records, my experience like so many other Canberrans is that all too frequently, FMS is where reports of graffiti, infrastructure maintenance issues etc, disappear into a black hole; no action is ever taken to rectify the problem, and no contact is ever made with me to explain why the problem has not been addressed. Even when the problem is fixed, I have usually not received a notification to that effect- in fact it is more common to receive a notification advising a problem has been resolved when it has NOT been, requiring me to resubmit the issue all over again.
2. Due to the regular problem of issues being 'closed' when in fact nothing has been done, or the issue only partially rectified, the system should be reconfigured so that the report originator is sent a 'pending closure' notification, and given a week to respond if they are unsatisfied with the outcome (or nothing has happened at all) before the final 'closed' status is applied. This is not proposed as a means for a person to keep an issue indefinitely alive if they disagree with a decision, it is just to avoid people having to fight to get an issue reopened or submit it all over again.
3. Under no circumstances should an issue be permitted to be 'closed' in the system merely because it has been notified for action under another process, such as added to a Directorate's 'pending works' list. It MUST stay in the system until the issue is actually fully resolved.
4. The reporting system should have a process by which graffiti or damage in areas frequented by visitors to Canberra (e.g. Northbourne Avenue and other main entries to Canberra, the City Centre) are identified and triaged to the top of the list for action (only behind safety hazards). These issues cause real damage to the reputation of our city among visitors and need urgent action ahead of issues in areas where tourists rarely visit.
5. The system currently does nothing to support private property owners who suffer graffiti on their premises where it is in full public view. Many such owners 'give up' and leave it in place as a permanent eyesore, just as damaging to our city as if it were on a public asset. It is unacceptable that the ACT Government just accepts this as a 'private issue' as if it had no effect on citizens other than the property owner.

The ACT Government should have processes in place whereby it removes or paints over

graffiti on private property (if it is in public view) the same as if it were on ACT Government property, perhaps keeping about a dozen specific colours in stock that property owners could be aware of and use when first painting their assets so that easy colour matching can occur when the graffiti is painted over. Most property owners would welcome this support, but there should be specific provisions to mandate removal when the graffiti is particularly visible and the property owner is uncooperative.

Even if the above suggestion cannot be implemented in full, it should at very least be applied to main utility providers and their equipment, primarily steel equipment cabinets located on public land.

6. Problems should not be measured by the incidence of related FMS reports. A few years ago, I was stunned to see ACT Government officers reported as saying that, based on FMS reports, that the incidence of graffiti in Canberra was dropping, when in fact anyone with eyes could see it had never been worse. What was *actually* happening was that citizens who previously reported graffiti had become so discouraged by nothing ever happening with their reports, and so exhausted by the constant follow up needed to make anything happen, that they had simply given up reporting it. It was this drop in reporting, rather than any actual improvement in the problem, that made the FMS figures improve.

This same problem applies to many other issues, such as potholes, path maintenance reports and other matters. Any future estimations of the incidence of graffiti and other issues should be compiled by getting out in the streets, parklands etc and actually *looking at those areas*, not by looking at FMS statistics.

7. Consideration should be given to a shared system with the National Capital Authority. It is very difficult sometimes even for well informed Canberrans to know which assets or areas are controlled by ACT Government or NCA- it would be enormously helpful for citizens to be able to submit reports without having to worry about whose responsibility it is.

8. All equipment located on public land should be required to carry an asset number that can be quoted in FMS reports, allowing easy reporting, identification and location.

9. As a regular user of Canberra's shared walking and cycling paths, I am familiar with seeing white paint markings applied to path problems that outlast the paint and are still there long after the paint has faded away. I propose that officers responsible for making these markings should be required to include the month and year in the paint markings, as an easy and public transparency measure of how long it takes to fix (or all too frequently, never fix) the issue identified.

10. The change a few years ago to require submitters to have an account and login etc was a backwards and unnecessary step. The ability to make a one off report, anonymously if necessary, was a valuable feature of the previous system. Some might suspect that the change was made to create a barrier to deter submissions and make statistics look better. The committee should consider what unnecessary barriers to participation exist in the system and make recommendations to remove them.

11. Enough resources need to be applied to graffiti removal to get it removed **within 24 hours** of reporting. Graffitiists love to see their 'work' on public display, and the longer it is left, the more incentive they have to create more graffiti. Conversely, knowing that it will be removed before hardly anyone sees it is a disincentive for them to create graffiti. It is simply **false economy** to keep removal under-resourced or allow build-ups to manage workflow, because the longer it takes to remove graffiti, the more there is.

