

Estimates hearing for the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services – 15-10-2021

2021-22 Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Estimates hearing for the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services – I acknowledge the privilege statement.

COVID has changed the way we work, and we now have an opportunity to think about how working remotely can improve our quality of life – both our productivity at work and our physical and mental health.

To minimise commuting time by providing flexibility around where we work provides us with more time for physical activity and social connections.

The Commonwealth's National Capital Plan provides for the City to have a dominant role for employment, retail, entertainment and tourism, but it also provides for town centres to be locations for office-based employment and provide retail, culture, entertainment and facilities to meet the needs of the local community.

The city and the town centres work together in a decentralised model for employment which is designed to distribute traffic and reduce congestion in the city centre.

The Budget, however, provides \$7.7 million over four years to support further consolidation of ACT Public Service accommodation, as existing leases for office space end. It builds on the government's policy to centralise the ACT Public Service into new office buildings in Dickson and the City.

This doesn't align with the National Capital Plan which provides for growing employment in the Town Centres.

There are many benefits to the decentralised model and working locally in flexi-hubs, including:

- Productivity benefits
 - from better utilising our time, reducing the commute and being closer to the services we need to manage our daily commitments
 - providing opportunities to network across government directorates
- Physical benefits from the opportunity to walk and ride to work and access local recreation facilities
- Social benefits by supporting a work/life balance and providing more time to socially connect in our local hubs and build social capital
- Economic benefits by supporting local small business – cafes, restaurants, and community facilities
- Environmental benefits - reducing car movements

The Woden Town Centre is centrally located and accessible by public transport from across Canberra's south, It is a great location to provide these benefits to residents.

The ACT Government's policy to refurbish existing office space to create flexi hubs in Belconnen and Tuggeranong to support a new way of working is a good idea. The policy states that it will allow ACT Public Service employees to commute to a flexi hub located in their nearest town centre – but what if you live in Woden, Weston Creek or Gungahlin – there is no flexi hub in their town centre.

The point is to improve our quality of life, it starts with focusing on our communities' needs and discovering how technology can help us make a positive change in our work and personal lives. We want to create a future where we feel good about our community and flexi hubs can facilitate productive working conditions and participation in our local community.

- The Woden Valley Community Council recommends that flexi-hubs are also created in Woden and Gungahlin to bring their benefits to these communities.

Fiona Carrick
President, Woden Valley Community Council