



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

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Fiona Carrick MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development

Reference: CED

Hearing: 11 December 2025

In relation to: Planning Woden Town Square

Question received: 19 December 2025

Answer Due: 5 January 2026

I refer to QoN 216 from the Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2025-26.

Zoning

The Woden Town Centre is zoned for 28 storeys around the Woden Town Square, particularly the north side, which will significantly overshadow the town square. The Master Plan for the Woden Town Centre was undertaken 10 years ago and at the time these height limits were already considered excessive with many in the community expressing the same views today.

The impact of building heights and zoning is different in Woden compared to Belconnen. To overshadow Belconnen's public space, Emu Bank and the Margaret Timpson Park, residential towers would have to be built in Lake Ginninderra and on Emu Bank.

- Please provide an assessment of how the current zoning around the Town Square and the West Plaza provide good outcomes for the people, given the issues around overshadowing and wind tunnelling?
- Will you re-assess the zoning around the Town Square and the West Plaza, to ensure human scale and that overshadowing is minimised to enable activation and great outcomes for the people and local economy?
- Why wasn't this zoning reconsidered when the Territory Plan was updated in 2023?

- When will you re-assess the zoning given it was last done in 2015? The zoning doesn't need to be consistent with other town centres, it just needs to provide good outcomes and be consistent with the ACT Wellbeing Framework.

West Plaza

The new west Plaza is a terrific space with potential however there has not been thinking about how it will become a destination as it has many blank walls and there has not been thinking about how markets and events can operate in the area.

- What activation have you planned for West Plaza?
- Will you deliver a playground for young families?
- Will you provide necessary infrastructure and supports for markets and events including storage, power and shelter is located where necessary?
- Will you talk to building owners about opportunities to open their buildings on to the space for activation?
- What supports are there available to building owners to activate their street frontages?

Place Plans

QoN 216 states that place planning and place making was last undertaken in the recent CIT Woden development and the Town Square through the #WodenExperiment and has been undertaken by Westfield in its Bradley Street developments.

- Please provide the documents for the place planning and place making for the CIT.
- Please provide the July to September 2019 project evaluation for the Woden Experiment.
- Please provide an assessment of the outcomes (for the first 6 months of the operation of the CIT) of this place planning and place making and the activity generated in the West Plaza with recommendations for next steps for activation.

Recreation amenity

Woden has lost its indoor sports stadium, pitch n putt, bowling greens, bowling alley, YMCA, tennis courts and is now losing its 50m pool and ice rink. The government says it will provide an indoor sports stadium as part of a future school on the old Woden Vally High School site.

- Would you please provide the options analysis that finds that this is the best site to attract young people and the broader community to community sport?

The latest ACT population forecasts for the region that uses the Woden town centre now exceeds 150,000 people by 2060. The population forecasts used in the ACT Government response to the Assembly resolution are now out of date and obsolete. Stage 1 of the Geocon proposal to develop the Phillip Pool and ice rink into 5 residential towers has been approved, based on old data.

- Will you commit to an aquatic centre with a 50m pool in the Woden Town Centre?

Arts Facilities

The Woden Town Centre does not have a cultural facility.

- Will you investigate the opportunity to deliver a street theatre, possibly in the context of the Scentre Group development proposal?

Governance

The community wants to see a considered and coordinated approach to planning in the Woden Town Centre for both development and activities and events.

- Will you create a Woden Renewal Authority to provide holistic planning and collaboration of key stakeholders in the town centre?

Private Sector proposal

- Will you determine the needs of the community for social, economic and environmental issues and then negotiate with the private sector to partner with the government to deliver the facilities and activities that the community needs over the coming decades?

Thank you

Mr Chris Steel MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

Zoning

The Woden Town Centre is primarily zoned CZ1 (Core) and CZ2 (Business), with smaller areas of CFZ (Community Facilities) and PRZ1 (Open Space). The blocks immediately adjacent to the Town Square and West Plaza are zoned CZ1, which is consistent with the Woden District Strategy and the role of the area as a key commercial and civic hub.

While these zones allow for higher-density development, several planning provisions within the Territory Plan and the Urban Design Guide are in place to ensure built form outcomes support high-quality public spaces and minimise negative impacts such as overshadowing and wind effects. These include:

- Commercial Zones Policy (Territory Plan) which contains assessment outcomes requiring development to mitigate or minimise adverse impacts on public spaces. These assessment outcomes are supported by the Commercial Zones Technical Specifications.
- Assessment Requirement 50 of the Woden District Policy (Territory Plan) mandates no additional overshadowing of Woden Town Square between 10am and 2pm on 21 June.
- The Urban Design Guide supports high-quality design outcomes for public spaces, streetscapes and built-form interfaces.

Together, these controls are designed to ensure development within the existing zoning framework delivers well-designed public spaces and protects key amenity outcomes including sunlight access.

At present, the Territory Planning Authority (the Authority) is not undertaking a review of zoning around the Town Square and the West Plaza within the Woden Town Centre. A comprehensive review of planning provisions for the Woden Town Centre was previously undertaken as part of the Woden Town Centre Master Plan (November 2015). Following this, Territory Plan Variation 344 was prepared to implement the Master Plan's recommendations and included zoning changes. TPV344 was approved on 8 August 2018 and commenced on 31 August 2018.

Based on the above comprehensive review, a zoning review was not undertaken for the Woden Town Centre as part of the Planning System Review and Reform Project which informed the Territory Plan 2023.

Under Section 90 of the *Planning Act 2023* (the Act), at least once every 5 years the Minister must decide whether the Territory Plan should be reviewed and, if so, direct the Authority to review the Territory Plan. In making this decision the Minister must consider, among other things, whether the Territory Plan gives effect to the to the principles of good planning and promotes the planning strategy. This statutory requirement provides a framework for ongoing review of the planning provisions and zoning of the Territory Plan.

In addition, the Act establishes a major plan amendment process, which allows zoning and planning provisions to be updated over time in response to community needs and government policy directions. This provides a mechanism for making changes to the Territory Plan as required and may include changes to zoning and policies.

Documentation was recently received from Scentre Group for a proponent-initiated major plan amendment for the southern portion of the Town Centre. The Authority is reviewing the documentation for completeness and following this process and payment of relevant fees, the application will be lodged (anticipated for early 2026). From lodgement of the application the Authority will consider the merits of the application and whether to accept it. If the application is accepted and further fees paid a draft major plan amendment would be drafted for public consultation.

West Plaza

The ACT Government understands the importance of activating place and will continue to work with, and support event organisers to facilitate community events, markets and other activities in our public places. West Plaza could be available for markets and events. This would require event organisers to apply for land use permits and for appropriate temporary traffic management arrangements to be put into place.

Access Canberra's Event Coordination and Business Assist (ECBA) is meeting with a representative of the CIT in February 2026 to discuss what would be required for holding events in the area.

Any interested food vendors or event organisers can get in touch directly with the ECBA Team, who can outline the required approvals to trade at the location. The Team can be contacted on (02) 6205 4400.

Typically to trade on public land the vendor will need:

- a public land use permit (possible a hawkers, depending on the duration and frequency)

- temporary traffic management plan (to facilitate vehicle movement to and from the location)
- appropriate food business registration.

The vendor would be expected to consult with the surrounding businesses and residents of their intent to trade.

A new additional playground is not planned for Woden Town Centre. Eddison Park is located near the Woden Town Centre and is intended to service the Woden District by being a District Park. Planned playground upgrades are published on the City Services website at:
<https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/Infrastructure-Projects/programs/playspace-upgrades>

As part of the 2024 election campaign, ACT Labor committed to *“upgrade and improve availability of power and water at sites the ACT Government prioritises for activation, standardising gate and other access, and enhance spaces to expressly support temporary activation, such as busking corners with shade and acoustics, and dedicated spaces for food and coffee vans in our public areas.”*

The City and Environment Directorate is in the process of identifying sites and their relative priority to support activation at select sites across the ACT.

Place Plans

The place planning and place making aspects of the design for the new CIT Building at Woden are incorporated within a series of design documents submitted with the Development Application. These can be accessed here: <https://www.act.gov.au/citcampuswoden/design-and-construction/planning-approvals>.

As at the date of this question, an assessment of the place planning and place making outcomes of the project has not been undertaken.

Recreation amenity

In 2024, to help inform potential site options for the provision of a future indoor sport court facility in Woden, the ACT Government commissioned a Site Investigation Report (SIR). As part of the SIR, 4 sites in/near the Woden Town Centre were considered, including:

- Part Block 27, Section 47 Mawson (part of Mawson District Playing Fields not utilised for sporting activities).
- Part Block 8, Section 131 Phillip (part of Eddison Park).
- Part of Athllon Drive Road Reserve (near the Woden Town Centre).
- Part Block 4, Section 65 Deakin (part of the Deakin District Playing Fields not utilised for sporting activities).

Each of the nominated sites were found to have a number of challenges (such as not being appropriately zoned) and/or had a range of identified site constraints. Following completion of the SIR, it was determined a further SIR should be undertaken to assess the suitability of the former Woden Valley High School site in Phillip (Section 1, Block 17). This work was commissioned, and the

SIR detailed the site could potentially accommodate the proposed use, subject to further detailed investigations. Importantly, the site is appropriately zoned (CFZ Community Facilities) to accommodate the provision of an indoor sport court facility, defined as an indoor recreation facility under the Territory Plan.

Subject to further considerations by the Territory, the proposed indoor sports facility could potentially be located on a dedicated block on the former Woden High School site, which could support any future indoor sports facility to be independently operated/managed, while also servicing the proposed adjacent future high school (during school hours). Unlike other potential sites detailed in the original SIR (refer above), the nominated colocation option with a future high school would not require a major plan amendment to support the delivery of a new indoors sport court facility. This proposed location would also likely support a shared car parking arrangement with the future school and would be located in close proximity to other sporting facilities (such as Phillip District Enclosed Oval, Woden Park), further reinforcing this area as a sporting precinct.

The ACT Government has committed to the development of a new ACT Aquatic Strategy, which will commence in 2026. While the scope of this project is yet to be finalised, it is anticipated detailed analysis will be undertaken during the development of the strategy to determine any gaps in aquatic facility provision across the ACT, including Woden.

Arts Facilities

The ACT Government is undertaking an Arts Assets Needs Analysis, a strategic review of arts infrastructure across the city. This work will provide government with important information about current and future community demand for creative spaces and inform future planning.

Stage One of the Arts Assets Needs Analysis is a Creative Spaces Mapping exercise which includes:

- An audit of ACT Government and other arts facilities used by the sector including location, services and artform focus.
- Targeted consultation with stakeholders to understand current use and future needs.
- A demand and gap analysis informed by population growth and visitation trends.

The Creative Spaces Mapping will capture the need for arts facilities in the Woden Town Centre. Findings will be reported to artsACT in the first quarter of 2026.

Governance

No. Work is underway to facilitate cross-government coordination to support the integrated delivery of works and initiatives within and impacting on the Woden Town Centre. This includes formation of a Woden Town Centre Working Group.

Private Sector proposal

Yes. As set out in the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development's [Statement of Planning Priorities 2025-28](#), the ACT Government will continue to undertake needs assessments and community consultation to inform planning to meet the needs of the community and will continue to work with the private sector to explore options to realise benefits for the Canberra community.

OFFICIAL

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning

Signature: 

Date: 16/1/25

By the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Chris Steel MLA