

Chief Minister and Territory Directorate
Have Your Say
2018-19 Detailed Budget Consultation Survey
budgetconsultation@act.gov.au

Kingston and Barton Residents Group
Rebecca Scouller
President
PO Box 4138
Kingston ACT 2604
kingstonandbarton@gmail.com

To whom it may concern

2017-18 Detailed Budget Consultation Survey

The Kingston and Barton Residents Group (KBRG) covers Kingston and Barton residents and residents in Griffith and Forrest north of Canberra Avenue. This encompasses more than 6,500 mail boxes, with 89% of our residents living in apartments. The aim of the KBRG is to ensure the Kingston and Barton area is a great place to live, and we do this by promoting:

- High quality planning, urban design & construction,
- Preservation & recognition of the area's unique heritage character,
- Provision of adequate green public open spaces,
- Effective transport planning including access for pedestrians & cyclists,
- A strong community spirit, and
- Other quality of life matters such as public safety and noise management.

The KBRG would like the following items considered for the 2018-19 ACT Budget and/or in the forward estimates. We appreciate that we have not been able to cost the below items however ask they be considered in the broader context of improving amenity, activation of public spaces, heritage preservation, and public health. These proposed improvements also have flow on affects with tourism and attracting local businesses to the area.

We were invited to address particular questions with our submission. The next section focuses on *what can the Government do to make Canberra even more liveable and what services do you believe are most important for the Territory*. This part of our submission focuses specifically on the Kingston and Barton areas.

Telopea Park:

Telopea Park is one of Canberra's oldest parks and is used extensively all throughout the week by workers enjoying a lunch break, families, people exercising and many others enjoying a picnic, walking dogs and using the park in multiple ways. The Park also has a long and rich social history. Below are some ways we believe the community may benefit from some additional investment in Telopea Park.

Short Term Requirements

- The development of a Conservation Management Plan for Telopea Park (as required by the Heritage Act) – from similar projects we believe this may cost around \$20k. This Plan should include development of a long-term tree management plan noting several trees are coming to the end of their natural life. A multi-year replanting program is necessary to conserve the shading and biodiversity within the park.
- Repair the existing damage to the concrete drain, noting there are slumps and breakages along the concrete storm water drain that are a safety and water conservation risk.

- Installation of timed parking signage for all of the ‘temporary’ car parks on Telopea Park East to ensure parking is primarily available for Park users as intended when installed. This parking was not intended for commuters and requires Parking Operations support to reinforce compliance.
- Useable drinking water fountains, especially near the children’s playground and nature park. This encourages healthy living and reuse of drink bottles. There is one heritage water fountain that doesn’t work and no potable water available within the park.
- Better connectivity between Telopea Park and Bowen Park, the footpaths crossing Wentworth Avenue are poorly maintained and the verge also requires attention – especially from Telopea Park West. This is just a track on the median and crossing is dangerous as cars turn across in front of pedestrians if heading for Brisbane Avenue from north lanes of Wentworth Avenue.

Medium Term Requirements

- Update signage, including correct orientation of signage for the site of the original homestead and new signage reflecting our indigenous heritage. Much of the existing signage is sun damaged and showing general signs of wear and tear.
- Tidying up of ‘desire lines’ (unofficial short cut paths) to ensure they are safe for pedestrian and cycling traffic, including the ‘running track’ that circles the park. Also fix the ‘cart tracks’ made by service vehicles accessing the public toilets.
- Review of lighting in the park, noting safety concerns, shared pathways (cyclists and pedestrians) and the balance with residential amenity in relation to light spill. We suggest something similar to the Haig Park lighting upgrade.

Long Term Requirements

- Renaturalisation of Black Creek (we’d like to see at least some funding in the 2018-19 budget for plans to be developed).
- Mitigation of flash flooding danger due to the concrete channel and large catchment flowing from Red Hill.
- Use of water ponding and water recycling in the park similar to urban ponds in areas such as Lyneham and Gungahlin. This might be best place in Bowen Park directly across from Telopea Park.

Manuka Pool:

Manuka pool is an ageing facility and requires a continued budget commitment. The longevity of the pool depends on appropriate maintenance of its unique heritage infrastructure. While money is allocated each year for the running of the pool and general maintenance, and there have been one-off investments, the pool still requires a significant funding injection. The KBRG would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the significant investment the ACT Government has made prior to this pool season.

We have liaised with the Friends of Manuka Pool and have outlined some of the key issues below.

Short and Medium Term Requirements

- Painting of the building and associated infrastructure. There are currently two shades of green (a heritage and lighter green) used on site, and the main colour also needs repainting – especially noting there are two notes of beige on the south east wall (due to painting to cover graffiti). The bike racks and water fountain also require painting (and security from theft).
- The current water fountain outside the pool is no longer usable due to prohibitive costs to maintain after a leak was detected.
- Many of the windows are displaying signs of rotting wood that need attention or replacement.
- There are issues with rising damp that need to be addressed to ensure the longevity of the buildings.

- Rust reinforcement mesh in the concrete concourse and the buildings is required.
- Roof maintenance.
- Investigation of replacement fencing that respects the heritage of the pool, provides the same access (views) to the pool and provides appropriate security.

Kingston Shops:

The Kingston Group Centre is one of Canberra's oldest shopping villages and there is strong community support for its continuing strong and vibrant future. This year has seen some significant changes at the shops; the introduction of the share-way, significant work being progressed at Green Square and there was a noticeable impact with the temporary closure of the local supermarket. A new retail development on Giles Street and a Master Plan that looks at the activation of the precinct's laneways will provide endless opportunities for the activation of this precinct. However the Kingston Group Centre will need continued investment to ensure that it supported on this journey.

Both the Kingston Traders Group and the KBRG would like to see the heritage nomination of the Kingston shops progressed. This nomination is caught in back-log of more than 130 outstanding unassessed ACT Heritage nominations. The listing would provide certainty to building owners and the local community that one of the oldest shops in Canberra will remain, be celebrated, and form part of Kingston's village feel. This is needed as the Master Plan allows for substantial development in parts of the shops such as along Highgate Lane.

For this to progress we ask that the ACT Government increase funding to the Heritage Unit so they can address the large backlog of heritage nominations. This will have broader benefits across Canberra too.

Kingston Foreshore

As the Foreshore continues to develop we ask that the ACT Government invests enough resources to manage/monitor the development of the Arts Precinct to ensure the development meets the requirements outlined for the precinct including viable spaces for the arts community and connectivity in the Foreshore for residents and visitors. There will only be one opportunity to get this significant precinct right and it has broader impacts for the arts community, tourism and local amenity.

The KBRG has continually received requests for a toilet at Norgrove Park. While we have received advice that this is not supported by the ACT Government it is a simple amenity that would support the increased activation and enjoyment of the park. We request that the ACT Government re-visit their decision and invest in a toilet for the park. Businesses are not keen to provide toilet facilities for park users as they have to pay for cleaning.

Kingston Oval

The KBRG and East Lake Football Club have spoken over the years about installing a picket fence around Kingston Oval, similar to the oval near the Malcolm Fraser Bridge. Funding for this would be appreciated. The current fencing is old and in need of attention. A picket fence would be appropriate for this heritage listed, and well used oval.

Manuka Oval

The KBRG surveyed people about what they would like to see around Manuka Oval. There were several excellent suggestions. In general the majority of respondents (more than 63%) wanted to see better landscaping around the oval, for example between the Manuka Arts Centre and the cricket practice nets and the area on the eastern side (from the pool boundary to Canberra Avenue) of the Oval. Better landscaping invites people in to use the area, and also is more aesthetically appealing.

This is important, particularly with more interstate and international attention on the Oval. Other suggestions for the site included the expansion of the pool and its lawns, the introduction of community gardens and exercise stations.

We have also received queries about the bollards surrounding the cricket practice nets and been asked if these are to remain permanently, and if they are required whether a more aesthetic solution can be incorporated.

The shared pathway that passes in front of the western entrance needs to be kept open and parking on it prevented. The temporary current signage is often ignored and not enforced. Need to encourage active transport such as walking and cycling.

General Heritage:

The KBRG would like to see heritage listings within the area updated to reflect current standards, for example more specific guidance on allowable construction and to include our important social history. Some of the key areas of concern are Telopea Park, Manuka Circle (a draft CMP has not been finalised for some years), the Forrest Fire Station Precinct, and the Kingston Shops. Embracing our heritage and maintaining it shows that we are a modern city proud of our history while creating our future. Heritage is increasingly a drawcard for visitors who spend money in local businesses.

Some specific issues we would like to see included as part of the budget are funding for;

- The finalisation of a conservation management plan for Manuka Circle and the development of one for the Forrest Fire Station Precinct. We know this can be expensive but we have collected a lot of material already that could assist with the development of these plans.
- Investment into building maintenance for the Forrest Fire Station Museum and Emergency Services building (No 8 Fitzroy Street). The Emergency Services building requires significant work including painting and maintenance of the heritage listed downpipes and attention paid to the concrete verandas and balconies.
- The conservation of street furniture such as the fire hydrants, brick swales and street lights. The KBRG has already catalogued these items and almost finalised work on the conservation of the concrete pillar street posts. This is being funded through a 2016 ACT Government Heritage grant. However an easier alternative to the grant process would facilitate the preservation of the street furniture which should be the responsibility of TCCS.
- The long unresolved heritage nomination of the Kingston shops to be finalised (details above).

We would also like to see easier access to, and management of, funding streams for community groups to run events such as having a party at the shops or to host a community festival in local parks. Currently there is no easy way for a community group to host such an event without having to access multiple parts of the ACT Government to cover traffic management, first aid, general permissions, liquor licences, insurance etc. An easier system such as having a single point of contact in government to facilitate community based events will encourage local groups to host more events and increase the attractiveness and of local areas and community cohesion

Our final request is for ongoing funding to manage footpaths and easy curb access. There appears to be a rolling program of new access to curbs, we ask this work continues. As the number of offices and apartments in the area increases significantly the use of footpaths by pedestrians, people with prams, bicycles and mobility scooters has increased considerably. In many cases the old footpaths installed in the 1920s are simply not wide enough for traffic and have no lip to the road. Old bitumen and concrete paths are often broken or subsided creating safety hazards.

Illegal parking on verges is also becoming increasingly common as parking is restricted, such as around schools. Residents are responsible to maintain their nature strips but these, including valuable mature trees, face damage by illegal parkers. More enforcement is needed

We appreciate this is a long list of items and would happily work with an ACT Government official to discuss priorities for the area. We understand that there is a limited budget but wanted to highlight some of the outstanding issues that will be more expensive if not addressed in the near future and which will have long term and ongoing adverse impacts on Kingston and Barton.

Many of the benefits of the above items are hard to cost or are intangible: increasing activity of Canberrans through exercise and better parks will potentially save money in the health sector, better recognition of our heritage will assist in attracting tourism, higher housing prices, better visitation of heritage precincts. Activation of the Kingston Group Centre provides benefits to businesses that will have access to over 6500 addresses in the area, better services within walking distance also takes pressure of our roads and parking.

In reviewing the broader questions asked in your request for a submission please see our comments below:

How can the Government deliver current services more efficiently, productively or to better meet the needs of Canberrans?

Certification of new buildings: An issue that is increasing in the ACT is one of building quality for new developments. There are many examples across Canberra of new apartment blocks with significant structural and maintenance problems. The KBRG believe that returning the Certification process back to the control of the ACT Government rather than having this managed directly by developers will go some way to ensure improved building quality and standards and consequently better liveability. With thousands of apartments in the pipeline for Canberra the ACT Government needs to take action now to prevent this ongoing issue from getting worse. Many of these buildings may lose their appeal 15 years from now with the current rate of issues being identified. With 20% of Canberra's apartments selling at a loss the ACT Government should be ensuring the quality of this new building stock now before it is too late.

Non-compliant development and building applications: The current approach of 'building first and seeking forgiveness later' for development in both single dwelling and multi-dwelling apartments is clearly not a sustainable model. The ACT Government has informed us that their preference is for 'education rather than enforcement' but there are many clear examples in the Inner South where this has impacted the amenity of neighbours (potentially impacting resale value), facilitated the loss of listed trees and heritage and compromised workers' safety on building sites. There are many examples of developers taking advantage of the ACT Government approach

We therefore believe the current approach by the ACT Government needs to be reviewed and imposing/enforcing the Planning Act would self fund this approach. Compliance needs to be enforced and maintained to ensure that the system is fair to all.

Access Canberra: Access Canberra wait times create frustrations for Canberrans trying to access appropriate information and guidance. More funding needs to be invested in Access Canberra, including better weekend services to support concerns with illegal parking on weekends (parking operations are not contactable on weekends), the tree unit (again unavailable for weekend inspections) and staff to investigate illegal work being conducted on weekends. These loop holes are taken advantage of by some and feeds into non-compliant building works listed above.

Green waste collection: The KBRG would like to see the expansion of green waste collection across Canberra. This has several significant environmental and financial benefits and many Canberrans are keen to see this introduced to their area sooner rather than later.

Rates: The significant increase in rates, particularly for apartment owners is having a financial impact on many Canberrans. With 89% of properties in our area being apartments we note this is impacting potential first home buyers, new first home buyers and those downsizing and choosing to remain in the area. The current rates structure should be reviewed to ensure it is fair and equitable, particularly for those who purchased recently and paid high stamp duty along with an increase in rates almost simultaneously.

Are there particular services that you consider the Government should stop delivering or should deliver in a different way?

DA App finder and minor variations: The KBRG has noticed significant glitches with the DA App Finder. It is currently not listing all open Development Applications and minor DA approvals are not listed on the web site. The App should also be expanded to include Technical amendments to reduce the number of websites that need to be monitored for information of proposed developments. The App needs to be fit for purpose and we ask that this be reviewed and addressed.

Are there any new ways to generate revenue and/or services you consider that the community should make a direct contribution to (a fee for service)?

We believe better enforcement of building compliance – listed above - would see an improvement in building quality and compliance to the ACT Planning Act and see an improvement in overall liveability in Canberra.

What can the Government do to make Canberra even more liveable?

Canberra is a great city in which to live. We believe many of the items listed above address some services that can be improved to make it an even better place to live.

Yours sincerely

SIGNED

Rebecca Scouller

President
Kingston and Barton Residents Group

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