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ACT Government

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ACT 2024-25 Budget Consultation

Thank you for inviting the Griffith Narrabundah Community Association (GNCA) to comment on the 2024-25 budget. Our submission can be made public. The elephant in the room for the 2024-25 Budget is Stage 2B of the Light Rail from the City to Woden.

The proposal to install this transport facility was first launched in 2016. Since then, Canberra has changed (primarily due to de-centralisation and more flexible working arrangements) and the technologies to build and use electric buses that do not need fixed power sources have advanced as never imagined in 2016.

The GNCA recommends that a cost benefit analysis is undertaken for Stage 2B (City to Woden) to assess whether this proposal provides value for money.

In all large expensive projects, it is standard practice to undertake reviews from time to time. The light rail project should be reviewed now because it is so expensive.

We have five proposals to recommend to the ACT government that require additional funds. They all relate to maintaining and improving our amenities, locally and city-wide. These are listed below.

1. Installation of CCTV Cameras at the Griffith Shops

In March 2022 we wrote to Minister Gentleman about the burglaries at Macka's Newsagent and the Sonamu Korean Restaurant in Griffith, with a request for the installation of a CCTV network to deter further break-ins.

We understand that the nearby Manuka and Kingston shops are monitored by the public safety CCTV network, but there is no such protection at the Griffith shops.

In June 2022, the Minister stated, "*that currently the ACT Government has no plans to CCTV units at the Griffith shops*", However, he did ask officers in the Security and Emergency Management Division (SEMD) to reconsider the situation.

Since then, in the early hours of the 4 January 2024, intruders smashed a window in the pharmacy and the business was closed for the entire day.

In earlier discussions with owners of the businesses at the Griffith shops, several expressed concern about the security arrangements in and around the shops.

We are now urging the government to rectify the current situation as soon as possible and install CCTV cameras, along with appropriate deterrent signage.

The shopkeepers are naturally very nervous that the criminals might return. At present the shops are easy targets. It is not equitable when some shopping areas in the ACT are protected by CCTV cameras, while others are not.

2. Improve air quality monitoring network in Canberra

Clean air is critical for a healthy living environment. The main threats to clean air in the ACT are bush fires, pollen counts, diesel fumes and wood smoke. It is therefore disappointing that no new monitoring stations have been added to the ACT network in the last four years. At present we rely on the stations at *Florey*, *Civic* and *Monash* as well as a single pollen station at the ANU.

We have been advised that, ACT Health has just completed an 18-month trial of low-cost air quality sensors. And that the trial found these could provide “some usable scientific data for studying air quality but not able to produce data that are sufficiently reliable and useable in a public health context.”

Unfortunately, no information has been released on where the trial stations were situated, how many stations were involved and why the results were not satisfactory. In other words, the eighteen month trial was a waste of time and money.

It is disappointing, that it took so long to decide that the low-cost sensors were unsatisfactory, and that little or no progress has subsequently been made, particularly as the issue of wood-burning fires, is of general concern throughout the ACT.

It is time for the government to use the observations from the trial network to develop a plan for more monitoring stations. We should aim to monitor an area of ~800 km², particularly the ~400 km² where people live.

We estimate that, as a priority, new stations should be installed at *Gungahlin*, *Fyshwick*, and *Weston Creek* and we encourage the ACT Government to build on the evidence from the trial and improve our air quality monitoring system.

Funding should be provided for the ongoing and regular monitoring of properly spaced air quality stations. Such equipment exists and it is readily available globally. It is time we moved forward.

3. 30 Percent Canopy Cover

The GNCA applauds the commitment to 30% canopy cover and welcomes the opportunity to work with our government to achieve this. It recommends ongoing funding for a program of:

1. Consulting on opportunities for tree planting;
2. Setting realistic targets for planting in each area;
3. Planting trees, preferably with the involvement of the local community;
4. Continuing maintenance of established trees and
5. Evaluating the tree planting, including consulting with the local community.

4. Improving tree cover and pavements in shopping areas

The GNCA is aware of the release of the tender issued by the ACT Government “seeking to engage an experienced Contractor for the repair of tree surrounds in public areas throughout Canberra.

The Contractor will be required to supply and install porous pavement material within tree surround/ tree wells (area surrounded by pavement). This work will include lifting and relaying of segmented pavement and concrete surfaces adjacent to tree wells to address trip hazards.”

The pavement in front of the Griffith shops needs attention and two of the trees providing shade have lost their main branches this summer.

We would welcome the successful contractor using the Griffith shops as an area needing this treatment. We are also concerned about the maintenance of the street trees in Manuka and recommend allocation of funding to protect these trees that are so important to our community’s well-being.

5. More funding to address homelessness

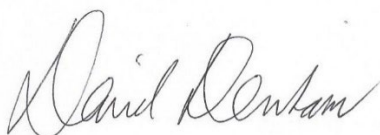
Our assessment is that there are enough funds for the construction of public housing, but that the management of that program could be improved.

However, a recent report by the St Vincent de Paul Society indicated that the homelessness situation in Canberra is getting worse with over one thousand people experiencing persistent homelessness.

The government should investigate the current situation and explore what needs to be done to improve the situation and, if necessary, provide extra funding.

For your consideration

Yours sincerely



Dr David Denham
President Griffith Narrabundah Community Association

25 January 2024