



Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Treasurer
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

2018-19 ACT BUDGET CONSULTATION
Belconnen Community Council submission

Dear Treasurer

The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) thank you for the opportunity to participate in the 2018/19 Budget Consultation Process and provide views on the development of the ACT's revenue and expenditure priorities, including how the ACT's resources are allocated, what services could be enhanced, and where possible efficiencies could be made.

The BCC submission attempts to address the five specific questions posed, with a distinct concentration on the infrastructure priorities the Government should consider implementing and funding in future budgets.

We have also provided some low cost suggestions that could improve the amenity of Belconnen residents at minimal cost to Government. These could best be implemented in the 2018/19 ACT Budget.

While the BCC submission has largely viewed the questions posed through a Belconnen community lens, a number of our suggestions apply across the ACT.

As the Belconnen area straddles the electorates of Ginninderra and Yerrabi, the items suggested by the BCC are of benefit to residents of both electorates, and those who visit for work, education or recreation.

Sincerely

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BELCONNEN COMMUNITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION

1. What services do you believe are most important for the Territory?

The most important services for the Territory include but are not limited to:

- Quality and timely healthcare;
- Quality education;
- Timely, attractive, efficient and safe public transport which caters adequately for the current and future travel needs of the public;
- High-quality, well maintained roads (including footpaths and cycleways) which reflect current and future need;
- A safe and just community;
- Management of the natural environment to ensure its sustainability;
- Emergency management; and
- Ensuring a holistic approach to investment in, promotion and enhancement of all Territory districts.
- Adequate long term infrastructure planning, with flexibility to respond to changing conditions.

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

What underpins efficient and productive services is appropriate consultation: both before services are delivered and during their delivery. The Yoursay website is an innovative and popular way of collecting feedback but it should not be the only way.

The BCC are pleased to see the adoption of alternate community consultation programs including the citizens jury model.

There is still room for improvement. While the ACT Government makes some attempt to consult face to face, in some cases this is insufficient. Many public consultations are more akin to presentations and rarely is the feedback reflected in the Government decisions implemented. Some agencies are more capable than others in this area.

Once a major decision is made or change is rolled out, further community consultation should occur where it is possible. A service or a program should not simply be implemented; ongoing consultation and responses to that feedback is necessary. The BCC are funded to facilitate this consultation, and more use can be made of our abilities and community networks in this area.

To ensure that community consultation is truly representative, thought should be given to enhancing community consultation with reference groups representative of the community including, but not limited to, age demographic and gender representation. Unless a target group is specifically the focus of a consultation process, this model may provide more informed feedback and better outcomes from

the consultation process. The citizens jury model, or deliberative democracy model could incorporate elements of this.

Access Canberra service is designed as a one-stop shop for Canberrans seeking government services. The BCC are pleased that the approach taken by the Access Canberra team is to find ways to make things happen, rather than identify administrative obstacles to innovative community suggestions or business ideas. More publicity of Access Canberra services should be made including advertising in traditional and social media.

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

The Belconnen Town Centre (BTC) Precinct Code must be updated as a matter of priority to prevent inappropriate developments being approved that are compliant with present guidelines, but contrary to community expectations raised through the consultation process for the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan. Development Applications must not be stopped, but it must be made clear to proponents that certain expectations must be met for applications in this interim period.

As mentioned above, community consultation efforts and engagement with stakeholders must be improved. ACT Government Departments communications and stakeholder engagement areas may benefit from a formal meet and greet with community councils that would benefit all parties in disseminating government information and receiving feedback from sectors of the community that they may not normally have access to. The BCC would be happy to facilitate this.

The DA (Development Application) Finder App has received wide adoption, but is still limited in its utility. The BCC recommend that the update to this software, and the planning and approval databases behind it, receive a funding priority.

4. 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)?

The BCC suggests that in areas where there is—or could be more—pay parking, the ACT Government could explore whether the community would be satisfied if the revenue generated was directly invested in that area. The community—and businesses—may be more likely to accept pay parking fees if they know that their money is being directly invested in the area they are frequenting. A sign saying ‘improvements in this area paid for by parking revenue generated in this area’ would ease community concerns that revenue raised by enforcement was equitably shared.

6. What can the Government do to make Canberra even more livable?

The ACT Government has identified a range of infrastructure commitments in the Belconnen area arising from existing planning and recent election commitments.

The BCC has identified the following priorities and where possible has identified which key areas they reflect. While the BCC has identified a large number of

priorities, we have sought to include priorities which require short-term investment for long-term gain, as well as those which require more significant investment.

Improved public transport

Enhancing public transport linkages from West Belconnen to prepare for residential growth pressures

The BCC support the recently announced expansion of rapid bus services to West Belconnen, and the proposed changes to be introduced in 2018 to expand these services even further. Ongoing residential development in West Macgregor and the pending development of the Ginninderry project at the new suburb of Strathnairn, and the former golf course in Holt will increase traffic and impact existing road capacity in the West Belconnen region.

The BCC recommend that as part of its commitment to improving public transport, that a dedicated bus lane be constructed along Southern Cross Drive, terminating in the Kippax area.

This could precede any light rail that may be constructed over the longer term, but could take advantage of the freeing up of and reallocation of ACTION buses from the Gungahlin-Civic route, when light rail Stage One commences service in 2018.

This region of Canberra is expected to increase in population and urban density. It is best that the public transport services are planned for now, before new residents form the habit of using their private car to commute to their place of work or study.

Services reflecting current and future need

The BCC expect that the reallocation of over a million bus kilometers a year realized from the commencement of light rail service between Civic and Gungahlin, be used to extend out of hours bus services, and increase frequency of daytime services on local bus services.

The BCC are pleased with the frequency of the Belconnen to Civic rapid bus services, and support the recent extension of that service to Kippax, and the proposed 2018 service expansion.

The ACT Government should consider reviewing and expanding its Sunday and public holiday timetabling as a priority. Having limited services on these days may encourage the community to use private vehicles. A seven day a week timetable with consistent route numbering would instill confidence in casual weekend bus users.

Park & Ride

Park & Ride could be an increasingly popular option to grow public transport patronage and reduce parking pressure in town centres. Increased park & ride facilities should be explored in areas with high patronage and used to enhance

existing parking, particularly at local centres.

Park & Ride can be made attractive if it is near local centres and has a linkage to local businesses with other vehicle traffic coming and going throughout the day. This passive surveillance and activity will dissuade car theft or vandalism, and increase local business patronage.

As new residential areas of Belconnen are developed, it is essential that new Park & Ride space be built *before* people start moving in. Public transport options must be made available if people are to view it as viable alternative to the private car for daily driving to work. We recommend a park & Ride facility be constructed in the new Strathnairn suburb, before local residents move in.

Light Rail engineering study

With light rail services commencing in 2018 and a second stage already proposed (to Woden), the proposed route from Civic to the BTC and to Kippax needs proper examination.

Funding for community consultation on the alternate ways that light rail could enter Belconnen, transit through the BTC and terminate in Kippax, need to be explored. Holding preliminary community consultation, and performing preliminary engineering studies would best achieve this.

Improving bus stops on arterial roads

William Slim Drive is a major arterial road serving Belconnen and Gungahlin residents yet it has only one bus stop along its entire length, serving Giralang residents. A further bus stop could be installed at McKellar that would enable residents of McKellar and Evatt to utilize the Belconnen-Gungahlin direct buses. This low cost upgrade would increase patronage and alleviate the issues that reduced out of hours bus services have on these suburbs

Increasing the attractiveness of the Belconnen Town Centre (BTC) from business and community perspectives

An ongoing Commonwealth government presence in all the Town Centre's, not least Belconnen, is critical to supporting vibrant residential and business communities throughout Canberra.

We appreciate that large departments like the Department of Immigration and Border Protection want to be in the one location and we think and hope this can be achieved in the BTC. If the proposed BTC Master Plan is implemented and facilities such as a new multi level carparking facility built, there is no reason that other government departments or commercial enterprises cannot be attracted to the BTC.

The BTC is thriving and attracting new and innovative businesses even at a time when other town centres have been struggling. Strong residential construction and associated street level retail have created an increased base of residents and an increased employment pool. These positive effects of urban renewal need to be encouraged and continued.

Some limited investment by the ACT Government in the streetscape and median strip of Benjamin Way could be performed in conjunction with long term plans by Scentre Group (owners of Westfield Belconnen) to encourage more street facing retail and enhance the out of hours amenity of the town centre.

Construction of a multi-level car-park for full-time employees in the Belconnen Town Centre.

In a previous budget submission the BCC proposed new multi-level parking in the BTC. This has been picked up in the Master Plan. It now needs to be funded.

Multi-level car parking for full-time employees in the BTC would free up surface parking for greater economic benefit (commercial or office space) while providing employees unable to access public transport, the option of secure parking within a sensible walking distance of their place of employment.

A further benefit of this would be to alleviate illegal parking from suburbs surrounding the BTC. The BCC recommend that if constructed, that the ground level of any structure facing a major street contain retail premises at ground level. This will avoid the dead zone created by the multi-level car parks surrounding Westfield's core buildings, and encourage further economic development in the BTC.

Smart parking technology in the Belconnen Town Centre

In 2015 the BCC met with the ACT Government project team working on the Smart parking program. This was in response to our smart parking submission. We are fully appreciative of the approach taken by the smart parking team, and support the trial in Manuka. We would ask that if it is extended, that Belconnen be considered. We recommend it be trialled along Emu Bank as a priority.

Parking is at a premium in Belconnen, and a study conducted as part of the BTC Master Plan process showed that capacity approaches 90 to 100% at times. Many of the residential buildings constructed in the BTC over the last five years have empty parking space during office hours. Smart parking technology could marry this empty space with demand and resolve existing parking pressure.

Ensuring ongoing and greater private investment and public service presence in Belconnen Town Centre – and beyond

The ACT Government's rationale for establishing a Government office block in Gungahlin was to provide greater opportunities for residents to work closer to

where they live and further develop the growing centre. The BCC requests that this approach is adopted in all Town Centres, not least Belconnen. This includes not only ensuring an ACT Government presence but also encouraging a continuing, if not increased, Commonwealth Government presence so that the liveability and opportunity for residents and businesses alike is assured.

In addition, the BCC suggests the ACT Government consider studying how to further attract private investment to the BTC (and broader region), particularly given the location of the University of Canberra and sporting amenities. Although private investment may be viewed as investing in residential apartment construction, the BCC would prefer that this investment be focused on commercial or business space, and light industry in the services and trades area.

Appropriate consideration of land release timing

At present the BTC has a significant risk of a housing oversupply with more apartment blocks already approved for the BTC and further land releases proposed in the Lathlain Street precinct. Oversupply of housing is detrimental socially and economically. The BCC strongly suggests that an ACT Government priority be to actively monitor housing supply in the BTC before approving any further release of land for residential development.

We particularly recommend that development of the BTC between Benjamin Way and the University of Canberra be allowed to proceed for several years before the proposed rezoning of the service and trades area between Lathlain Street and the ACTION Bus Depot occur. Several stalled residential developments in this area have only just recommenced and it is vital that the residential market not be flooded.

The demolition of the old Water Police building on Lake Ginninderra, and the remediation of the site was followed by an EOI that was unsuccessful. This site is now likely to be sold in the near future. The BCC request that this sale be delayed until the precinct code for the BTC is introduced.

Temporary use of the Remand Centre and Emergency Services sites on Lathlain Street

The former remand centre and emergency services sites on Lathlain Street are expected to be sold by the ACT Government for conversion to mixed use with a strong residential component. Until that time, the sites will remain vacant following demolition and remediation.

The BCC are aware that the sites lacks service provision and have other challenges, but would recommend that an EOI be released seeking ideas from business and the community. An example could be locating of food trucks similar to the Hamlet in Braddon, or the former popup site in Civic. This low cost exercise could have significant benefits in generating revenue for the ACT Government and creating business and employment in the BTC.

Increasing amenity in Margaret Timpson Park and around Lake Ginninderra

Margaret Timpson Park is a key 'green space' in the middle of the BTC. However, despite being surrounded by businesses/office buildings and residents, it remains underutilised. Increased chairs and tables with appropriate shade within Margaret Timpson Park would encourage better and more frequent use of this area.

As the park is increasingly used after hours, especially in summer months, fairy lights could be placed throughout Margaret Timpson Park, and along Benjamin Way, to enhance visibility and provide visual distinction.

A public toilet facility in the Margaret Timpson Park area would also be of benefit to residents, shoppers, park users and taxi drivers.

As the residential population of the BTC has grown significantly, Westfield has recently extended the hours of access to their premises from Benjamin Way until 9.30 in the evening. This increased amenity needs to be matched with enhanced lighting in Margaret Timpson Park.

In addition, more and improved seating around Lake Ginninderra—particularly along Emu Bank—would only enhance this asset. New Big Belly waste bins could also be placed along Emu Bank in areas where there are no waste facilities.

The existing BBQ facilities around Lake Ginninderra are of high quality, well maintained and extremely popular with the public. The BCC propose that another public BBQ be located in the area between the Belconnen Arts Centre and Beissel Street. This would increase the amenity of this area and alleviate the demand on other public BBQ's.

Extending Margaret Timpson Park

The former ACT Health building next to Margaret Timpson Park on Benjamin Way is likely to be sold for conversion of the site to residential and commercial use. An alternate use could be to extend Margaret Timpson Park and improve the amenity and green space of residents in the BTC.

Beautification of Benjamin Way

Benjamin Way is essentially the main entrance to the BTC, yet despite the fame of the Belconnen Owl this is not obvious. The results of both the BCC survey on the BTC and consultation for the BTC Master Plan, revealed that respondents found the BTC was disconnected, with some noting that there are distinct areas of activity—most notably at either end of Benjamin Way.

Providing greater connectivity within the BTC will over time change Benjamin Way from a long green barrier between one half of the BTC and the other, to a welcoming connecting boulevard. Linkages between the Belconnen Fresh Food Markets,

restaurants and entertainment in Weedon Close, and the businesses catering to new urban dwellers in the residential towers near Benjamin Way will all benefit from a greater sense of connectivity. A walk from Emu Bank to Belconnen Way, past thriving businesses, should be a feature of the BTC.

A simple low cost way to achieve this could be with strings of LED fairy lights in the trees and on light poles along Benjamin Way.

Investment in the beautification of Benjamin Way will help further community identity and pride in the area, as well as better connect it. Increased lighting, public artwork where/if appropriate and landscaping of the median strip from Chan Street to Lake Ginninderra would be welcomed.

Treatment of beetle affected elm trees on Benjamin Way

While the entire length of Benjamin Way needs attention to create a unifying boulevard, a more immediate matter is the treatment of the elm trees at the Belconnen Way end. They are infested with beetles that will over time, if untreated, lead to the wastage and stunting of an existing green space.

Advice the BCC has received from government indicates that treatment of the affected trees could be performed at a cost of approximately \$50 per tree, every three years. We urge that this be made a funding priority.

At the recent announcement of the BTC Master Plan, details of extra tree planting along Benjamin Way were made public. The BCC support this and recommend that this planting be funded in the 2018/19 budget in addition to treatment of the existing elm trees.

Maintenance of historic trees in the town centre

A historic tree outside the Belconnen Library is in a terrible state of neglect and lack of maintenance, placing its continued existence in peril. This tree dates from the original Emu Bank homestead that the area around Lake Ginninderra draws its name from. Its condition has been reported to the ACT Government, without action being taken.

Lake Ginninderra weed management and removal

The BCC have made regular representations on the control of invasive weeds around Lake Ginninderra, and are pleased that attention has been paid to our requests. We would encourage ongoing attention in this area, including an education program for the community about weed identification and reporting, to assist in the control and removal of invasive weeds.

Dog waste bag dispenser at Lake Ginninderra

Left undisposed, dog waste presents health and environmental risks. While many owners carry dog waste disposal bags on them and take the necessary responsibility for their dog's waste, a bag dispenser greatly assists if an owner has forgotten or run out—while also ensuring there is no excuse for failing to pick up the waste. Dog waste disposal bag dispensers have been successfully implemented throughout Australia. (See BCC letter to Director, City Services, 28 August 2014.)

The BCC suggests that a dog waste disposal bag dispenser be implemented at Lake Ginninderra dog park, and:

- be of quality and sturdiness to protect the bags from the weather elements;
- be stocked with biodegradable bags; and
- have a locking mechanism to ensure bags cannot be pulled continuously.

The BCC do not have a view on whether these bags are provided free of charge or on a cost recovery basis.

Improved public and private waste disposal

Appropriate public waste receptacles throughout Belconnen

The environmental effects of litter are obvious—namely the threat that discarded litter poses to waterways, flora and fauna. So, too, are the social effects. It seems unsurprising that people may be less likely to carry litter if a receptacle is not placed in convenient, obvious and easily accessible locations. Further, discarded litter is unattractive and creates negative impressions of an area.

The BCC has previously requested (see letter to Director-General, TAMS, dated August 2014) that consideration be given to increasing the number of convenient, obvious and easily accessible public waste receptacles (general and recyclable) in areas of high use in the Belconnen district, including:

- Belconnen Town Centre (urban area);
- around Lake Ginninderra, Belconnen (particularly near the foreshore where there are fast food restaurants); and
- near dog parks or other dog exercise areas, and Canberra Nature Parks, including but not limited to:
 - Lake Ginninderra enclosed dog park
 - Mt Rogers
 - Mt Painter
 - The Pinnacle
 - Aranda Bushland

Introducing smart technology to public waste receptacles

The ACT Government has rolled out a territory wide Wi-Fi network to enable people to communicate freely. This technology has also been used for provision of government services, for example, the smart parking technology trial. It can also be used in conjunction with new technology in the public bin field.

A company called 'Big Belly' has designed solar powered waste bins that compact waste as it is received, and then send an alert using Wi-Fi, when the bin is full. This technology allows waste to be compacted, reducing its size and saving landfill space and transportation costs. It also reduces costs to the waste collection company by not requiring waste bins to be emptied, until they are actually full.

A new lower cost model of this bin without the compaction technology, but retaining the ability to notify the operator when it is full, is now available for use in areas that are not heavily trafficked.

These bins have been trialed in several locations in Canberra by the ACT Government. The BCC request that the trial be extended to the Belconnen area, and propose Lake Ginninderra and Emu Bank as a natural and highly visible location.

Appropriate roads and road maintenance

William Slim Drive duplication

The ACT Government announced duplication of William Slim Drive during the 2016 election campaign. The BCC encourage this duplication, and propose that funding be made available for it to occur as the duplication of Gundaroo Drive finishes.

Kuringa Drive intersections

During the 2016 election campaign the ACT Government announced upgrades to the Kuringa Drive intersection at Owen Dixon Drive. The BCC support this and recommend that the funding for this occur in the 2018/19 Budget. The ACT Government recently concluded a survey of traffic around Tilyard Drive in the Charnwood, Dunlop and Fraser areas. We have no view on whether these upgrades consist of signalization or a roundabout.

We also recommend that the Southern Cross Drive intersection be upgraded. These Kuringa Drive intersections are accident black spots and subjected to increasing road congestion from the upgraded Barton Highway intersection, with more traffic coming in from Gungahlin.

It is essential that these intersections be upgraded ahead of any work undertaken at the CSIRO Field Site, which is unlikely to occur until 2021 at the earliest.

Well maintained and vibrant local centres and suburbs

Footpaths and cycleway maintenance

Active transport is government policy, and walking is the primary mode of active transport. The existing footpath and cycleway network in Belconnen suburbs and around Lake Ginninderra is ageing and in need of urgent attention. Footpaths are essential to connect the community and encourage outdoor activity; their disrepair is increasingly dangerous, particularly with an ageing population. Many footpaths and cycleways could benefit from widening, particularly in areas of high activity such as around Lake Ginninderra.

As a priority, footpaths near schools and bus stops must be repaired and maintained.

The BCC also suggests there should be greater publicity to inform the public that parking on footpaths is illegal, and that penalties should be enforced. Parking on footpaths blocks foot traffic and cracks pavements, resulting in increased maintenance, which may otherwise be unnecessary.

New cycleway linking Lawson to the Town Centre

Significant residential building activity in Lawson in the last three years has seen this area transformed with new residents moving in. The only way in and out of Lawson at present is by new roads connecting to Ginninderra Drive and Baldwin Drive. While there is an existing cycleway around Lake Ginninderra, it does not continue along the lakeshore on the Lawson side of Lake Ginninderra.

A new cycleway along the lakeshore connecting to the existing cycleway near Ginninderra Drive could easily and quickly be constructed. Although it may not be able to continue along Ginninderra Creek, it could be connected to the McKellar side of the lake by construction of a small footbridge. This would lead to walking and cycling by Lawson residents, greater activation of the entire lakeshore area, and complete a cycle loop of the lake. This could be promoted for tourism purposes.

Improved amenity and events at local shopping centres

The BCC is aware that some local centres within the Belconnen region are struggling, but many are vibrant hubs of community activity. The success of the 'Parties at the Shops' events in 2013 - 2015 demonstrate that these areas—struggling or not—are seen as community hubs, and should have the appropriate amenity to reflect this, including lighting and access.

The BCC have been encouraged by the ACT Governments local center upgrade funding program that has seen some local centers upgraded, and encourage this to continue in a planned manner independent of the electoral cycle.

We also encourage private landlords and business owners to contribute to the

amenity of the local centres. We do not believe the entire cost of improvements to local centres be borne by the community when business benefits significantly from the community investment.

A cooperative arrangement between government and business can bring about tremendous community amenity. The Aranda Shops have benefitted from private investment and community support, and are a model for other local shops that are struggling.

The ACT Government should also explore ways to encourage 'pop-up' or 'exhibition' spaces in local centres, which are ailing (and thus have significant free space).

We would also request that regulatory or legislative changes be made which would allow empty retail space at small local centres to be used for office space. Although this is not an optimal use, it would prevent these centres from being totally empty and preserve the utility of spaces by dissuading vandalism.