



**Ben Blackburn Racing submission  
to help shape priorities on the  
ACT Government's 2023-24 Budget**



Wednesday, 5th April 2023

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To the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and Chief Minister of the ACT Mr Andrew Barr MLA,

### **PUBLIC SUBMISSION**

I am extremely pleased to make this Ben Blackburn Racing public submission to help shape priorities on the ACT Government's 2023-24 Budget.

#### **Budget Consultation: Help shape the priorities for the 2023-24 ACT Budget**

The ACT Budget consultation process encompasses the ACT Government's core areas of responsibility, which includes:

- **Hospitals and healthcare (including the ACT's COVID-19 response).**
- **Local schools and education.**
- **Public transport, roads and active travel.**
- **Suburban and municipal services.**
- **Community services and support for families.**
- **Economic development.**

The Budget consultation process provides an important opportunity for the community to be involved in the budget process. Ben Blackburn Racing acknowledges the ACT Government's commitment to important reforms in many areas and we are very pleased to make a small contribution as part of this process.

#### **Establishing a fresh set of Cross Border and Regional Collaboration priorities**

**Ben Blackburn Racing believes that the ACT Government should:**

- **Reinvigorate the ACT-NSW Cross Border Collaboration Taskforce process in order to:**
- **Sign a new Memorandum of Understanding for Regional Collaboration between the ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr MLA and the NSW Premier Chris Minns MP** which also outlines an updated and fresh set of strategic objectives and policy

priority areas on cross border and regional collaboration issues. With a focus for this to happen in either late 2023 or early 2024. This can also establish an important forum to:

- Provide ***advice on cross-border travel and restrictions during major events***, particularly in response to emergency events and to respond effectively to potential biosecurity issues and threats.
- Consider ***establishing a new position with an official ACT Government appointment of an ACT Cross Border Commissioner legislated by the ACT Parliament and specifically outlined within a new and refreshed MOU in late 2023 or early 2024*** to create a more seamless and integrated forum and a better space for creating strategic partnership linkages for official engagements and future forum meetings on ongoing cross border and regional collaboration dialogue on important matters between both the ACT and NSW Governments.
- Continue to ***work closely in collaboration with the Office of NSW Cross Border Commissioner*** to oversee the new MOU's governance, including the development and implementation of the MOU's priorities and policy initiatives.
- Continue the work of the ***Land and Housing Working Group, the Steering Committee for the Parkwood Urban Release Governance Framework***.
- ***Freight Hub***: Cross border collaboration required between Canberra Airport, the ACT, NSW and Australian Governments to realise the ***freight potential of Canberra Airport as an international transport and freight hub*** and to enable private sector investment in supply chain and logistics infrastructure.
- ***Further collaboration on longer term planning matters*** including the refresh of the NSW South-East and Tablelands Regional Plan.
- To formally recognise that the ACT and surrounding South-East NSW communities and their regional economies are strongly interlinked and for both ACT and NSW Government's to remain firmly committed to pursuing a ***'borderless approach'*** to both services and outcomes.
- Require ***more regular and quarterly forums*** between the ACT Chief Minister and the NSW Premier to allow for improved communication, establish more time and consideration for agenda setting and agreement on major policy goals and joint targets, and better collaboration in implementing the framework as part of the refreshed cross border and regional collaboration policy objectives outlined in the new MOU.
- A suggestion for the new official MOU signing as a positive media announcement for both parties to be hosted by the ACT Chief Minister with the NSW Premier at a high-profile Canberra CBD location at the discretion of the ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in either late 2023 or early 2024.
- Improve access to and the delivery of essential services with a new strategic partnership and a ***refreshed approach under the new MOU which is people-centred, place-based and outcomes-focussed*** and still aligns with the overarching strategic policy principles and policy goals and objectives of both the ACT and NSW Governments.

- Enhance the ***existing level of investment and resources*** into cross-border communities in the ACT and South-East NSW communities which embrace the 'borderless' and 'outcomes-focussed' approach.
- ***Refresh and improve the alignment of current cross border policies*** and regulations in the new MOU in late 2023 or early 2024.
- Enhance both ***economic and social services investment*** into cross-border communities in the ACT and South-East NSW communities to deliver improved outcomes based on more effective cross border and regional collaboration measures, initiatives and policies.
- Recognise the important work of the ACT Government and senior ACT officials who have led the development of the ***Canberra Region Economic Development Strategy (CREDS) for the ACT as a joint initiative of the ACT, NSW and Canberra Region Joint Organisation under the current MOU***. The CREDS aligns with and supports the key strategic priorities of the ACT and NSW Government's and supports surrounding Councils to promote economic development and activity in the Canberra Region to support a successful and sustainable economic future.

**And also for the new joint MOU to stipulate and to focus on as key policy outcomes:**

- equitable access and opportunities between border and non-border communities.
- seamless service delivery for people and businesses in cross-border communities.
- for both parties to equally drive and champion future economic development, current and future economic growth opportunities in border and non-border communities in the ACT and NSW.

**Furthermore:**

- The reintroduction from 2024 of an ***annual Senior Officials Dialogue on Regional Collaboration*** with this Dialogue to provide an annual forum for cross border agreement on the strategic priorities for the next twelve-month period ahead, articulate mechanisms to deliver proposals and initiatives, discuss resourcing implications across agencies and jurisdictions and to also identify proposals for joint agreement and joint advocacy at the Commonwealth level.
- The ACT Government to co-chair via the ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and a new ACT Cross Border Commissioner along with the NSW Cross Border Commissioner with the additional participation of representatives from the Australian Government, ACT and NSW Emergency Services officials, Heads of Departments and other government agencies, local government representatives when required and as determined by both the ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, the new ACT Cross Border Commissioner and the NSW Cross Border Commissioner.

## **ACT Health policies, allied health research and innovation capability**

### **The 2022-23 Research and Innovation Fund Fellowship Program**

The ACT Government has made \$1 million available through the 2022-23 Research and Innovation Fund (RIF) Fellowship Program to support early-mid-year career researchers employed in the ACT Health system.

The RIF Fellowship Program, guided by *Better together: A strategic plan for research in the ACT health system*, invests in people to build their research capability, make high-value contributions to improving the health and healthcare of the people served by the ACT health system and to encourage collaboration, leadership and capacity building in the ACT's health and medical research ecosystem.

### **Fostering research and innovation**

The ACT Centre for Health and Medical Research has a vision to enhance the health and wellbeing of the community across the continuum of care through excellence in research and innovation.

To do this it fosters research and innovation capacity and capability across all of ACT Health and health services.

The office provides services designed to help researchers achieve success – advice and approvals for ethics, contractual matters, intellectual property, methods, statistics and various research skills. This Office also leads research governance in areas such as strategy, research priorities, and engaging with stakeholders, especially academic partners.

### **Research Strategy Team**

The Research Strategy Team is responsible for designing, delivering, coordinating and evaluating *Better Together: A strategic plan for research in the ACT Health System*, while supporting the ACT Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board and Research Working Group with its actions under the Plan. The Team also delivers valuable legacy Health and Medical Research Initiatives which create a learning health system, invest in people and build platforms while identifying and leveraging opportunities for building the research ecosystem and the delivery of high-value research.

### **Policy suggestion and proposal**

Building a strong and sustainable allied health workforce in the ACT capable and committed to research, innovation, and evidence-based practice is more important than ever for the Canberra Region.

Globally, the efficiency and effectiveness of health care models continue to be challenged due to economic and social pressures, inciting a driving need for research active health services. Alongside ongoing investment in medical and nursing research, building the capacity of allied health professionals to undertake research has been identified as a priority.

**Ben Blackburn Racing would like to encourage the ACT Government to consider**

**establishing an ‘*Allied Health Research Capability and Development Strategy*’ to help to encourage and facilitate more additional staff development in research, innovation and evidence-based best practice.**

This new Strategy could be designed and developed by the existing staff and personnel from within the Research Strategy Team and to continue and expand upon the important work they are doing to deliver high-value research and innovative approaches in building the research ecosystem in the ACT.

And to also be used similar to the Victorian Government’s framework and model as a great opportunity to highlight and acknowledge the outstanding clinical leaders and allied health care providers across the Canberra Region and services who are excelling in this incredibly vital area of research and innovation.

**This new Strategy could align with existing ACT Government programs and strategies such as *Better together: A strategic plan for research in the ACT health system* and aim to:**

- 1. Facilitate reflection by allied health directors, line managers, and staff about research, innovation and evidence-based practice approaches in their department/area;**
- 2. Coordinate and integrate current research structures and systems to identify and promote continued steps to research capacity building and governance;**
- 3. Identify and facilitate research synergies across health services including cross-department, cross-facility and cross-disciplinary projects; and**
- 4. Promote research excellence and innovation as drivers of better health, better health care outcomes and best practice.**

The overarching policy goal here would be to increase capability and confidence in pursuing research and embedding innovation in clinical practice in the Canberra Region.

Larger hospital departments may also wish to use a reflection and planning tool within their clinical sub-streams or work areas, if deemed appropriate by the head of department.

Canberra Hospital – Heads of Departments, for example, may also wish to keep a running log of the research activities and provide a quarterly update to maximise the benefits as a continuous improvement tool and reduce the data gathering requirements for the annual reflection.

The reflection and planning tool isn’t a punitive measure, nor for benchmarking or comparison across departments. It is designed to encourage self-reflection by allied health departments, to identify areas of relative strength in their departments research capability and facilitate constructive and strategic planning.

It could also be used to identify emerging areas of departmental research interest and allow staff experienced in research to mentor and develop less experienced staff in key areas.

It could also be a good opportunity to highlight outstanding professional and clinical care excellence by health care services and/or departments who are achieving great health care outcomes in research and innovation.

By 2025-2026, all allied health practitioners in the ACT and health and hospital departments will embrace research in practice as core business, providing a future-ready and sustainable allied health workforce to transform and continually improve health care and deliver better health care outcomes for all Canberrans.

### **The future of Education reforms in the ACT**

*Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* was launched in 2020. It is a nation-leading ten-year plan for early childhood education and care in the ACT. *Set up for Success* is based on overwhelming national and international evidence about the importance of quality early childhood education and aligns with the Future of Education Strategy which was released in 2018.

### **A greater focus on STEM**

**In 2020, the ACT Government provided girls and young women with more opportunities to participate in, and develop science, technology, engineering and mathematics capability through a \$200,000 Girls in STEM grant program.**

WINGS events which focus on encouraging female students to take an interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) are highly important. Students from across several ACT public high schools attended these events and practical experiments across all areas of STEM.

STEM skills are increasingly important for workplace innovation and productivity. Many growing and emerging industries will require people with STEM skills, so it is important that students develop these skills through their schooling.

The ACT Government's commitment to STEM education includes establishment of the Centre for Innovation and Learning, a purpose-built STEM facility for ACT public school students in Tuggeranong, and the north side hub of the Future Skills Academy at University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra.

The Future Skills Academy is a \$5.7 million election commitment to establish a STEM hub in the north of Canberra and scale successful programs, such as Science Mentors ACT, that connect students with industry and tertiary institutions, and promote STEM pathways for all students.

The ACT Government's commitment to STEM education also includes the establishment of the Centre for Innovation and Learning, a purpose-built STEM facility for ACT public school students in Tuggeranong.

## **Education policy suggestions and proposals**

Ben Blackburn Racing would encourage the ACT Government in its 2023-24 Budget formulation process take steps to establish a:

- **Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for all ACT Schools to reinforce that literacy and numeracy development are essential foundations for every ACT school student.**

Literacy and numeracy are foundational skills for lifelong learning for every school student in the ACT. They underpin the acquisition of more complex skills, particularly critical and creative thinking.

The skills that our children and young people will require to be flourishing lifelong participants in education, employment and the Canberra community are changing.

Today's students need a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy to be innovative, adaptable and responsive, and to develop the knowledge and skills the future will require of them.

There is very robust and a growing body of evidence that strongly indicates that the benefits of literacy and numeracy stretch well beyond schooling.

Literacy and numeracy proficiency supports student engagement and achievement, completion of Year 12 and tertiary and further education, and employment and higher income—all of which are associated with better health and success.

ACT students who have developed strong literacy, numeracy and critical and creative thinking skills on their education journey are extremely well-positioned to succeed in all areas of the curriculum and will have the capabilities and knowledge needed to flourish in their careers and the jobs of our future thriving industries, including innovative and agile hi-tech roles, remote jobs and other high-productivity workplaces.

### **Numeracy**

Numerate students have the ability to interpret, apply and communicate mathematical information in common encounters to enable participation in everyday life.

Students become numerate as they develop the capacity to recognise and understand the role of mathematics in the world around them and the confidence, willingness and ability to apply mathematics to their lives in constructive and meaningful ways.

Highly numerate students interpret, apply and critically evaluate mathematical strategies, and communicate mathematical reasoning in a range of practical situations.

**Ben Blackburn Racing believes that policy objectives aimed at improving numeracy outcomes in ACT schools need to:**

- establish a common language and basis for discussion of numeracy within the school.



- improve teacher knowledge of mathematics and how students learn and transfer mathematical knowledge and skills.
- improve teacher knowledge of numeracy across the curriculum to enhance student knowledge.
- develop students critical thinking and foster behaviours that enable students to make sense of the numerical information in their world.
- identify the numeracy demands and opportunities in all learning areas across the curriculum.
- build positive cultures and high expectations within the school so that all students can succeed in mathematics and be numerate.
- raise students own expectations of achievement thus raising standards.
- recognise that numeracy is essential in all aspects of everyday life.
- establish a new literacy and numeracy baseline assessment for all Year 7 students in the ACT to identify and enable the necessary learning supports to be provided in these critical areas.
- promote knowledge and understanding of the key numeracy indicators that describe the concepts, procedures and skills used to meet the numeracy demands of everyday situations.

To help to improve student outcomes in mathematics and numeracy capabilities, four key elements need to be considered.

**These include:**

- 1. Understanding numeracy;**
- 2. Teacher knowledge and pedagogy;**
- 3. Numeracy across the curriculum; and**
- 4. Numeracy leadership.**

### **Literacy**

Literate individuals are better prepared to effectively participate in a technologically advanced and modern society.

The established functions of speaking and listening, reading and writing, and viewing and representing remain central to being literate.

**Ben Blackburn Racing believes that policy objectives aimed at improving literacy outcomes in ACT schools need to:**

- build excellence in classroom practice in literacy.
- differentiate teaching methods to meet the different literacy learning needs of students.
- build instructional leadership in literacy.
- empower students in their literacy learning.
- embed a whole-school focus on literacy.
- engage parents, caregivers and grandparents as partners in literacy at home and encourage them to read books with their children.

**Specifically, Ben Blackburn Racing believes that all ACT school children need to learn how to effectively:**

- use and understand writing as an enjoyable thinking, investigating, organising and learning skill.
- use grammar, punctuation and the main conventions of written English correctly.
- plan, draft and edit their own written work.
- sustain their fiction and non-fiction writing.
- use different spelling strategies in their written work.
- develop their knowledge, skills and understanding through addressing and analysing a range of purposes, readers and forms of writing.
- code-break by understanding the relationship of spoken sounds to symbols.
- make meaning by understanding the meanings conveyed by both written and spoken texts.

### **Homelessness programs in the ACT**

Just in addition to the ACT Government's new Commissioning approach to homelessness, to consider as an additional support measure:

### **Homelessness funding in the ACT**

Ben Blackburn Racing acknowledges that the ACT Government has invested a further \$18 million funding over the next four years to expand the capacity of specialised homelessness services in the Canberra Region.

### **Assertive outreach programs to combat street homelessness in the ACT**

Assertive outreach is an evidence-based practice to combat street homelessness. Housing staff, specialist caseworkers and health professionals conduct patrols to proactively engage with people experiencing street homelessness and provide a pathway to stable long-term housing.

Since March 2017, the NSW Government has been working in partnership with the NGO sector to conduct ***Assertive Outreach Street Patrols*** in inner-Sydney. These teams have helped many people experiencing street homelessness to find pathways to long-term housing.

The ACT Government with the Community Services Directorate now developing the new Homelessness Plan could consider adopting a similar assertive outreach program which is individually tailored to the particular social needs of the greater Canberra Region for people who may be experiencing street homelessness and to provide them with the appropriate wrap around and integrated support services needed and then towards adopting a pathway into social housing or other suitable housing which is tailored to their needs in a caring, inclusive and compassionate homelessness policy approach.

A distinguishing feature of ***assertive outreach*** is its intent to work towards resolving homelessness by government and non-government sector organisations working together and collaborating to achieve positive outcomes. Such an arrangement delivers an integrated services response and increases the potential for people who are sleeping

rough to access both specialist health professionals and safe, stable and secure housing which is permanent and tailored to the person's individual needs.

***A similar assertive outreach program approach adopted by the ACT Government could align with other existing key strategic policy objectives*** including the ACT Government's current work with the ACT homelessness sector and strategic partnership to plan for future homelessness service delivery and contract arrangements post 30 June 2023 along with the recent Homelessness Commissioning Final Insights report.

A 12-month trial could be introduced by the ACT Government to monitor the initial effectiveness of the assertive outreach program in the Canberra Region and then the data and an outcomes report reviewed and analysed by the ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and the Community Services Directorate to make a final determination in relation to future policy directions.

### **Establishing more Green Spaces and Public Open Spaces in the ACT**

#### **Preserving and protecting the ACT's Public Open Green Spaces for current and future generations of Canberrans to enjoy.**

Ben Blackburn Racing acknowledges the considerable policy initiatives which the ACT Government is currently implementing to bolster environment and nature conservation in the bush capital, and this must also be a key policy priority in the formulation of the ACT 2023-24 Budget.

Canberrans have always had a strong connection with nature and Ben Blackburn Racing supports the ACT Government ***renewing its commitment to a green, sustainable, and inclusive city for both current and future generations of Canberrans to enjoy.***

***We understand and appreciate the fact that Canberra is one of the world's most liveable and beautiful cities.***

Ben Blackburn Racing fully supports these major eco-friendly projects that will maintain the Canberra Region's strong connection with nature, while protecting its environment and resilience to climate events such as bushfires and floods.

We also support establishing ***more public open green spaces, more green parklands, more green playgrounds for diverse populations of ACT families and their children to enjoy, and more green eco-tourism initiatives*** with improved and better opportunities for even more recreation, social activities, and exercise to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of all Canberrans.

These projects will also help to grow and protect jobs and strengthen the ACT's position as a leading nature-based tourist destination which is another vitally important step.

**Ben Blackburn Racing would also like to encourage the ACT Government to include additional measures in the ACT 2023-24 Budget which:**

- Enhances the ***integration of Ngunnawal knowledge into land planning and management***, with a focus on restoring urban open spaces and enhancing capacity to adapt to climate change.
- Establishes an ***ACT Green Corridor Strategy*** in close consultation and collaboration with all relevant ACT environmental protection authorities, agencies and departments.
- The role of the ***ACT Green Corridor Strategy*** would be to highlight the strategic plans and measures towards protecting strategic environmental and biodiversity assets of high conservation value vegetation areas in the ACT, and also to help to ensure that more green spaces and ‘green corridors’ are embedded and established across the Canberra Region. This will also help to make Canberra a greener and more eco-friendly city.
- Establishes and appoints an ***ACT Green Spaces Commissioner*** to examine more measures and additional proposals to help to preserve and protect existing public open spaces, green spaces, green parklands, national parks and native forests across the ACT including walking trails and this new ***ACT Green Spaces Commissioner*** to provide a detailed report to the ACT Government and the ACT Minister for the Environment in order to establish an ‘***ACT Green Spaces Strategy for the next decade 2024-2034***’ and to allocate more resources along with a holistic and whole-of-government policy approach on protecting and preserving public open green spaces for both current and future generations of Canberrans to enjoy.
- Examines how to introduce brand new green spaces and biodiversity havens in the ACT with a new ***ACT Green Spaces Commissioner*** to examine potential current and future locations and sites and is adequately resourced and staffed to provide a detailed report with expert and technical analysis to the ACT Government which includes a short-list of recommended sites and locations.
- Establishes the ***plantation of more trees and plants, particularly in the urban areas of Canberra*** to make it a greener, more eco-friendly and a more resilient city.

The ACT Government has also produced some excellent habitat and connectivity maps, and incorporated them into key decision-making tools such as the ***planning District Strategies***. It will also enhance the ***Canberra Nature Map platform*** to help to strengthen and support citizen science contributions to identifying important species and habitat.

### **Forests, logging and illegal logging in the ACT**

**The ACT has a substantial estate of forest land that includes native forest, plantation forests and other land which is managed as part of the forest estate.**

The estate is managed for the purposes of environmental conservation, recreation and timber production. Furthermore, illegal logging activities have detrimental implications for forest ecosystems, protected and endangered species of animals, and also negatively impact upon local ACT communities and regional economies.

**Ben Blackburn Racing would also like to encourage the ACT Government to include additional measures in the ACT 2023-24 Budget which:**

- Establishes an ***ACT Branching Out Independent Advisory Committee Panel*** which is empowered to explore and examine alternate land use options for the native forests and all current logging operations and the recent rise of illegal logging activities in some parts of the ACT, and to look at potential and alternative policy solutions and ideas on how the ACT Government over the next decade can generate better revenue from conserving its native forest areas rather than logging them for additional timber production revenue.
- Establishes an ***Expert and Independent Advisory Committee Panel*** to conduct a period of community consultation with environment groups, industry groups and other relevant community stakeholders across the ACT to examine the issues and to then provide a final report to the ACT Government outgoing its detailed policy recommendations for implementation by the ACT Government and the ACT Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction, legislators in the ACT Parliament and other key policy decision-making bodies and authorities.

### **Expanding the Invasive Species Rapid Response Ranger Team in the ACT**

Ben Blackburn Racing also welcomes that the ACT Government has also announced separate suite of measures and plans in the 2022-23 ACT Budget to help to protect and enhance native habitats and species as they adapt to climate change and additionally to bolster their biosecurity capacity to respond to new incursions of invasive plants, animals, and diseases, and by ***expanding the Invasive Species Rapid Response Ranger Team in the ACT***, which is a very sensible and measured public policy approach to help ensure a sustainable and green environment for all current and future generations of Canberrans to enjoy.

### **The ACT's 2023-24 Budget priorities and future directions**

This important reform agenda and policy work on ***improving Canberra's unique natural environment and the policy actions and initiatives to help to mitigate the impacts of climate change*** must continue as part of formulating the ACT 2023-24 Budget.

### **Economic Development in the ACT**

**Ben Blackburn Racing believes that following on from the successful release of the 'Canberra switched on: ACT's Economic Development Priorities 2022-25' the ACT Government in its 2023-24 Budget should:**

- **Establish a new *ACT Office of Economic and Workforce Development* within the existing ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.**

Ben Blackburn Racing believes this new ***ACT Office of Economic and Workforce Development*** could be focussed on and adequately resourced by the ACT Government

to create a thriving and resilient Canberra economy, where barriers to economic and workforce opportunities are removed and all economic prosperity is shared equitably by all Canberrans.

- **Establish and appoint an *ACT Small Business Commissioner***

Ben Blackburn Racing believes this would be created by way of legislation through the ACT Parliament as an independent voice, an ***ACT Small Business Commissioner*** to be a passionate supporter and a full-time position as an advocate of ACT small businesses while striving to resolve and report regularly to the ACT Government and legislators in the ACT Parliament on regulatory matters impacting ACT small businesses and on any issues impacting on the day-to-day operations of small businesses right across the ACT.

The new ***ACT Small Business Commissioner*** could also work in an ***integrated strategic partnership with the new ACT Office of Economic and Workforce Development*** to be a champion for small businesses in the ACT by improving the economic and regulatory environment which they operate in and be empowered by new legislation to collaborate with other key small business and industry stakeholders and to develop and publish detailed and regular policy and regulatory reform recommendations to the ACT Government on future small business policy directions.

Following a period of consultation with industry, businesses and Canberra community stakeholders, empower the ***new ACT Office of Economic and Workforce Development*** to develop and release a new ***ACT Economic and Workforce Development Strategy 2024-2034*** for the next decade of economic growth and opportunities in the Canberra Region, which offers a new and transformative perspective to economic development with a people-centred, place-led and outcomes-focused strategic policy approach.

A Strategy which seeks to reinforce Canberra's strong reputation as an inclusive, highly-skilled and innovative city supported by key roads and infrastructure and enhanced by a vibrant Canberra lifestyle which has a range of economic opportunities on offer.

This new ***ACT Office of Economic and Workforce Development*** could also develop and release a new ***Backing Canberra's Small Businesses Strategy*** in 2024-2025 to highlight the ACT Government's ongoing small business assistant grants, initiatives and programs which are focussed on entrepreneurial leadership and innovation, economic development and supporting the diverse growth and productivity of small businesses across the Canberra Region and their important contribution to the ACT's thriving and vibrant economy.

### **Sport and Major Events in the ACT**

The ACT Government submitted an outstanding bid in order for Canberra to host the ***Australian Masters Games (AMG) in 2025*** with an extremely high quality of sporting venues, social and entertainment options and great tourism attractions. AMG is Australia's largest premier multi-sport festivals.

**In terms of continuing this great momentum, Ben Blackburn Racing encourages the ACT 2023-24 Budget to:**

- Establish an ***ACT Sport and Major Events Advisory Committee*** within the ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate to provide expert and independent advice to the ACT Government on potential new sporting bids between 2024 and 2030 to bring economic development, tourism and economic investment into the Canberra Region including:
- Support the expansion of the A-League Men’s competition into Canberra and the Capital Region Football Collective bid to join the A-League Men’s competition in 2024-2025 which can be a major driver of economic development and new investment into the Canberra Region;
- Bid for Canberra to be a host city for the 2027 and 2029 Rugby Union World Cups;
- Bid for a new round of the V8 Supercars Championship in the Canberra CBD which previously many years ago hosted a street circuit race in the Canberra CBD not far from where Federal Parliament House is located;
- Bid to attract major professional golf tournaments such as the Australian Open to be played at Royal Canberra Golf Club which offers world class facilities or the Federal Golf Club in Red Hill which is one of Canberra’s premier golf courses and one of the best inland layouts in the country;
- Bid for Canberra to host WNBL finals, Super Netball, netball internationals, National Basketball League and basketball internationals, and volleyball internationals;
- Bid for major international rugby league test matches between Australia and New Zealand and/or Australia versus Fiji to be played at Canberra Stadium;
- Bid for Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) matches and World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) matches to be hosted in Canberra to attract a younger and more diverse group of interstate and international visitors into the Canberra Region; and
- Empower the new ***ACT Sport and Major Events Advisory Committee*** to undertake a period of consultation and a detailed outcomes-focussed analysis with relevant agencies and departments prior to submitting a final short list of preferred sport and major events bids to the ACT Government and ACT Chief Minister for final determination.

### **The Master Builders Association of the ACT**

The ***Master Builders Association of the ACT*** noted in its submission to the ACT 2023-24 Budget consultation process that:

*“The 2023-24 ACT Budget is being formulated against a difficult economic backdrop and after the local economy is still recovering from the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns. Since the COVID-19 restrictions have eased, new pressures are emerging which have a significant impact on the local building and construction industry, including:*

- *The highest levels of inflation in over thirty years.*
- *Labour shortages.*
- *Cost pressures in the markets for raw materials, which has resulted in the toughest phase of interest rate increases since the early 1990s.*
- *Persistent supply chain disruptions”.*

While these pressures represent a challenge, they also provide a real opportunity for bold budgetary reform to be advanced and for businesses to be unshackled.

Its submission addresses measures to address current industry issues, namely:

- **Industry cost pressures.**
- **Declining pipeline of construction work.**
- **Lack of supply of build-ready land for housing.**
- **Workforce capacity and capability.**
- **Navigating the ineffective and inefficient development approval system.**

It has also made comments on longer-term issues including infrastructure planning, housing needs, and workforce planning issues.

In making these proposals, its focus is on improving productivity in the industry and allowing for more favourable outcomes when it comes to the cost and quantity of building and construction output. In the past, the supply of new homes has failed to fully keep up with demand with housing affordability deteriorating steadily in response.

We thank you for the consultation on budget preparation held to date and welcome the opportunity to provide the ACT Government with further details about any of our proposals.

Building and construction is one of the largest sectors of the ACT economy. The latest available ABS figures indicate that the total value of building and construction work done over the year to December 2022 totalled \$4.02 billion in value, comprising:

- **\$2.08 billion of residential building.**
- **\$1.20 billion of non-residential building.**
- **\$0.74 billion of engineering construction work.**

According to ABS January 2023 data, this level of building activity supports a workforce of 19,580 people employed in construction in the ACT. This level of employment comprises 7.6% of all jobs in the ACT.

**A brief summary of Master Builders ACT Budget policy proposals in response to the immediate pressures confronting the building and construction sector across the Canberra Region including:**

- **Industry cost pressures.**
- **Declining pipeline of construction work and lack of long-term infrastructure plan.**
- **Lack of supply of build-ready land for housing and failure to meet our future housing needs.**



- **Workforce capacity and capability.**
- **Navigating the ineffective and inefficient development approval system.**

**Master Builders ACT proposals on industry cost pressures:**

- ACT Government to offer flexibility in contractual dealings with building and construction companies whose operations have been hampered by cost spikes, labour shortages and other supply chain complications when procuring ACT funded capital works.
- ACT Government to offer new building and construction contracts which fairly and appropriately share risk between key stakeholders. Page 8 of *'Delivering a Sustainable and Reliable Pipeline of ACT Government construction projects'*.
- Deliver on last year's ACT Budget announcement to build \$6.4 billion of infrastructure over the five years to 2025-26, with an appropriate mix of small and medium sized projects for all sectors of the building and construction industry which can be released for tender in the short term.
- Ensure a rolling \$5 billion, 5-year, pipeline of infrastructure and capital works projects is always in place.
- Invest in appropriate design and documentation of capital projects to both improve the quality of tender documents, and to increase the bank of build-ready projects available for tender to local construction companies.
- Develop a long-term infrastructure plan for the ACT which incorporates infrastructure funded by the ACT Government, infrastructure funded by the Commonwealth Government, infrastructure procured by Icon Water and Evoenergy, and any other relevant infrastructure to support the Australian Capital Territory's long-term growth. Supply of build-ready land for housing and addressing long-term housing needs in the Canberra Region.
- Accelerate the investment in the planning, construction, and sales of land through the Suburban Land Agency to meet current demand and address our historical undersupply of build-ready land for housing.
- Review the design and lot mix of future suburbs delivered by the Suburban Land Agency to ensure there is appropriate supply of affordable land to meet the needs of first home buyers.
- Commence the planning studies, site investigation, design and approval of future new suburbs to ensure there is a long-term supply of land for new housing.
- Investigate models to partner with the private sector to increase the supply of 'build ready' land for housing.
- Addressing cost of living, housing affordability and availability measures which encourage population growth and attraction of key workers to the ACT to support our future economy.
- Increasing the supply of public and social housing to meet the needs of the ACT community.
- Set annual housing targets for the ACT based on the new National Housing Accord and provide regular reports against the delivery of these targets. As part of this reporting, set out how estimated future demand for land is determined, and report on the number and location of zoned and development-ready lots, disaggregated by infill/greenfield and permitted density.
- Amend planning and zoning rules that currently allow only single detached houses, to

allow more dense development 'as of right' along key transport corridors, with height limits set up front; relax regulations limiting the use of secondary dwellings and dual occupancies, and relax minimum carpark requirements for developments where there is good access to public transport. Page 9 Workforce capacity and capability.

- Increase apprenticeship subsidies for all trade apprenticeships, including carpentry and plumbing apprentices which are currently provided the lowest subsidy in the ACT compared with any other State or Territory.
- Develop a workforce transition plan, with appropriate funding for re-skilling and new trade apprenticeships, to meet the needs of the ACT's electrification transition.
- Continue funding for Women in Civil, Women in Trades and other pre-apprenticeship programs to help attract a diverse workforce to the building and construction industry.
- Tackle lower trade apprenticeship completion rates by offering incentives for successful completions and continued funding to employers for apprenticeship commencements.
- Provide resourcing to promote vocational education and training pathways, and trade apprenticeship opportunities, for school leavers.
- Funding the development of a digital apprentice sign-up and onboarding platform.
- Work with the Commonwealth Government to prioritise skilled migration into the ACT.
- Leverage the NCVET data to develop and publish VET quality indicators at the RTO level to enable prospective students, apprentices and employers to make informed decisions about their training pathway and training provider, to incentive RTOs to strive for excellence, and to inform decision making on funding for training delivery. Navigating the ineffective and inefficient development approval system
- Invest in additional resources, including new landscape design, urban design and architecture positions, to support the outcomes-based planning system.
- Adequately resource the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate to implement the recommendations of the 2018 Building Confidence Report.
- Provide funding for industry training to support the upcoming amendments to the National Construction Code amendments.
- Adequately fund the National Capital Design Review Panel so that proponents can book review meetings in a timely fashion and so the Panel can appropriately support the new outcomes-focused planning regime.

### **In conclusion**

Ben Blackburn Racing appreciates and understands the reality that the ACT Government will require sufficient time and staffing resources to adequately review and consider all submissions in accordance with the 2023-24 ACT Budget delivery schedule.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to make a contribution through this public submission to help shape priorities on the ACT Government's 2023-24 Budget.

**Mr Ben Blackburn**  
**Managing Director**  
**Ben Blackburn Racing**