

Budget submission for the 2024-25 Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the 2024-25 Budget. We have identified three priorities for Braddon which require urgent consideration for funding in the next budget cycle:

1. Upgrade and expansion of public toilet facilities in Haig Park.
2. Playground equipment in the Lowanna Street neighbourhood park.
3. Investment in active travel infrastructure in Braddon.

Braddon is notable among Canberra's suburbs for its combination of medium and high density housing, mixed-use development, high levels of foot traffic, nightlife economy, and history as an automotive-focused area which is reflected to this day. Braddon also hosts the weekly Haig Park markets, and festivals and events in the park throughout the year. Braddon is a home, a place of business, and a beloved leisure destination for many Canberrans and visitors to our city. We therefore ask for the above items to be favourably considered for inclusion in the 2024-25 ACT Budget in this context.

We acknowledge recent ACT Government projects focussed on improving pedestrian infrastructure in Braddon: the Lonsdale Street upgrades; the Mort/Elouera Streets intersection upgrade and consultation on Cooyong Street accessibility upgrades. Braddon is a place where all infrastructure is serving significant numbers of people in various ways; investment in Braddon means investment in thousands of residents, in local visitors and tourists, and in a diverse range of businesses.

Who are we?

The Braddon Collective is a community group working collaboratively with residents, businesses, landowners, and the ACT Government to maintain the diverse and vibrant character of Braddon and enhance the environment for those who live, work and play in Braddon.

Contact

If there are any questions regarding this submission please contact the Braddon Collective at contact@braddoncollective.com.

1. Upgrade and expansion of public toilet facilities in Haig Park

Braddon has the second-highest population density in Canberra (2021 ABS statistics), yet as at February 2024 it has just one public toilet. This is grossly inadequate. An investment in an upgraded and expanded public toilet block in Haig Park would meet the growing needs of visitors and residents alike.

For residents and visitors to Braddon **there is only one public toilet facility in the neighbourhood, which is located in Haig Park** (near the northern end of Mort Street).

This toilet facility has only two stalls and feels old, unclean and unwelcoming. This facility is in desperate need of an upgrade and expansion. Availability of toilets is particularly important in encouraging activities in Haig Park - especially for children, pregnant women and older people who need easy and ready access to these facilities.

The Haig Park markets are welcomed and add a positive dimension to the community and those visiting Braddon on the weekends. It is clear, however, that there are not enough public toilet facilities in the area to support market day on Sundays, with long queues often forming for the one toilet facility. The increased visitation to Braddon due to people visiting the markets then places undue stress on toilet facilities that are provided by nearby traders (e.g. the Ampol fuel station and the Ori building).

In addition to the Sunday markets, the monthly Paws Party and other pop up activations in Haig Park all need to be supported by adequate infrastructure, including toilets. We note the new Salthouse community centre in Haig Park has three toilets included in the design - but these are not open to the public and are only available to people who have hired the community centre rooms.

The lack of public toilets in Braddon is an immediate and ongoing issue that the Braddon Collective has raised in a number of forums over the past 4 years. We submit that the ACT Government urgently considers an **upgrade and expansion of the public toilets in Haig Park**. We consider the lack of toilets in the park to be a major issue for Braddon and we propose a toilet block with multiple stalls, similar to the one near the Carillion in Kings Park, or facilities in parks in Belconnen.



Kings Park, near the Carillion



John Knight Memorial Park, Belconnen



Skate Park, Belconnen

We further urge the ACT Government to consider the quality of public amenities provided in Canberra. We note that the City of Sydney is investing in toilet facilities that are

architecturally designed, attractive and welcoming - we feel that this is the level of public amenity that should be pursued in the nation's capital, and especially so in a park that is listed in the ACT Heritage Register. Some key examples and ideas are presented in this news article: *Dark and grim no more: The architects designing Sydney's Instagrammable public toilets* accessible at <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/dark-and-grim-no-more-the-architects-designing-sydney-s-instagrammable-public-toilets-20230324-p5cv06.html>.

2. Playground equipment in the Lowanna Street neighbourhood park

In December 2021 members of the Braddon Collective initiated a petition that was presented to the ACT Legislative Assembly calling for the **upgrade of 'Braddon Park', a neighbourhood pocket park on Lowanna Street** in Braddon. At the time, Minister Chris Steel responded to the petition to say that no funding for such works was provided in the 2022-23 Budget. We therefore urge the ACT Government to make funding available for a park upgrade in the 2024-25 Budget.

During the ACT COVID lockdowns, local residents noticed that the Lowanna Street park was poorly appointed in terms of infrastructure for community use. In particular, the park includes only two pieces of play equipment. Usage of the park increased during the lockdown period which highlighted the paucity of facilities.



Playground in Lowanna Street Park, Braddon

Friends of Braddon Parks survey

In late 2021 a community survey focused on the Lowanna Street park was run by the founders of an online group, Friends of Braddon Parks. 100% of respondents agreed the park is in poor condition. The top five priorities identified by the community in the survey were:

1. Upgrade playground to be more engaging and inclusive, including considerations for disabled people (61%)
2. Install better lighting (55%)
3. Improve safety and accessibility of footpaths (55%)
4. Provide more seating options, such as picnic tables (52%)
5. Increase biodiversity, such as micro-forest (49%)

We note that there have been some upgrades to the footpaths in the park in the past 12-18 months but no other work.

At minimum we urge the ACT Government to **fund an upgrade of the very basic and poorly maintained playground equipment** in the Lowanna Street park. There is no playground in the suburb of Braddon and no playground in adjacent suburbs that do not require crossing a major road (e.g. crossing Limestone Avenue to Corroboree Park). The residents of Braddon with young children urgently require a playground within walking distance.

The high-density growth model of apartment living that has been seen in Braddon over recent years needs to be supported by adequate community facilities. There are currently only two pieces of play equipment for the entire Braddon neighbourhood. Why would families be willing to live in the inner-city area without these facilities? An investment in an upgraded playground in Lowanna Street would meet the growing needs of Braddon and support a high-density growth model.

3. Investment in road safety and active travel infrastructure in Braddon

The Braddon Collective has been calling for improved pedestrian infrastructure and safer streets in our suburb for many years, and we warmly welcome the recent Braddon Streetscape Upgrades project which has brought four raised pedestrian crossings to Lonsdale Street. Prior to this project, Braddon had zero pedestrian crossings - a disappointing situation in such a dense and well-visited suburb.

We still have a long way to go before Braddon's road designs and infrastructure matches its character as a high foot traffic area. We call on the ACT Government to continue to provide funding to assess and improve road safety and encourage non-car travel in Braddon. The Braddon Collective strongly supports the implementation of any measures that will increase the uptake of walking, cycling and the use of micro-mobility devices in

Canberra.¹ We especially note the need to reduce the likelihood of crashes involving pedestrians, cyclists, and people using other forms of micro-mobility in Braddon.

We regularly hear from residents about the lack of road safety and overwhelming car dominance in Braddon:

Braddon Collective survey

In 2021 the BC undertook a survey of Braddon residents and visitors (182 responses) that showed:

- 64% of respondents said that Braddon could be safer and more welcoming for pedestrians
- 75% said that pedestrians should be given priority in Braddon - e.g. more pedestrian zones, more safe crossings and more pedestrian friendly spaces
 - Key concerns for pedestrian safety were:
 - too many cars
 - pedestrian paths that are cracked and uneven
 - not enough or no pedestrian crossings
- 29% said that Braddon was not safe for micro-mobility (including cycling); 44% said it could be better
- 53% said that lack of infrastructure in Braddon meant that it is not safe for those with mobility issues.

All survey results are available here: <https://braddoncollective.com/braddon-survey/>

Concerns of Braddon residents and visitors

The current infrastructure in Braddon for women, lesser-abled, elderly and children is sub-standard and, in many cases, functionally exclusionary. The Braddon Collective has received feedback from both residents and visitors attesting to this. The following features contribute to Braddon being unwelcoming for these groups:

- an absence of *any* pedestrian crossings prior to Braddon Streetscape Upgrades project (first crossing opened in December 2023)
- uneven cracked footpaths
- footpaths unusable in wet weather due to flooding and puddles
- potholes around tree plantings
- unprotected bike lanes
- lack of appropriate street lighting
- median strip traffic islands that are too thin and unprotected
- very thin ramps between road and footpath level.

Many Braddon streets are very busy during the morning and afternoon/evening peak hours, and for children there are two significant barriers to walking, cycling and using forms of micro-mobility:

¹ Examples of micro-mobility vehicles and devices include bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters, skateboards, roller skates, segways, unicycles, tricycles, mobility scooters and wheelchairs.

- the lack of pedestrian crossings, and
- pedestrian safety islands located at roundabouts, where children have difficulty looking in multiple directions for cars and assessing whether they are turning or going straight ahead.

We note that the iconic and beloved Rainbow Roundabout is a very unwelcoming and unsafe place for pedestrians and cyclists - with cars using the roundabout at high speeds, often high volumes of traffic, uneven road surface, and inconvenient/inaccurate kerb cuts.

We call on the ACT Government and relevant bodies including the City Renewal Authority and Transport Canberra and City Services to:

1. **create and action a holistic plan for improved integrated urban design and road design in Braddon** that will:
 - encourage more walking, cycling, and use of other micro-mobility travel options in Braddon
 - create a safe environment for all road users
 - improve pedestrian links between Braddon and Civic to create better connectivity between Braddon and major hubs including the City Interchange, the Canberra Centre, and the Australian National University
 - improve the pedestrian link between the Eloura Street light rail station and the commercial heart of Braddon
 - improve road safety and pedestrian amenities around key non-commercial locations including Ainslie School, Merici College, and Haig Park to ensure the entire neighbourhood is friendly for all.
2. provide **funding for minor maintenance and accessibility upgrades to existing footpaths** to address common problems (for example, flooding of footpaths in Haig Park and outside Grease Monkey in wet weather, and addressing pedestrian bottlenecks on Lonsdale Street at the Telstra building and Ampol). This investment will provide a safe and welcoming environment for pedestrians in Braddon, and both visitors and residents will benefit.

Questions?

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