

Your local voice

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Submission on the 2020/21 Budget

Thank you for the opportunity for the Weston Creek Community Council to respond to the 2020/21 Budget consultation process for the ACT Government.

Our major concern is the needs of both the Weston Creek and Molonglo Communities. Some of the services the Weston Creek Community requires have been requested numerous times over a number of years while much of Molonglo has basically nothing.

There is a sense of “still being forgotten” in Weston Creek while the Molonglo Community, particularly those in Wright and Coombs, just feel that they have been let down by the ACT Government with poor decision making by planners and those implementing development. This has resulted in a lack of shops and facilities. Council notes that the ACT Legislative Assembly has decided to hold an Independent Review of the Planning and Development of Molonglo. We applaud this decision and hope that it will produce positive outcomes for the people of Molonglo.

Our first question though is, “will Molonglo be another Gungahlin?”

Council has real concerns that Molonglo is facing the same issues that Gungahlin has faced over the past twenty years—those of a dormitory district. In the future, as no Government employment is planned in Molonglo, it will become a similar dormitory district, with people travelling

out each day for work. Without adequate employment within the area, the increasing population of Molonglo will create considerable pressures on transport infrastructure, with congestion similar to that facing Gungahlin residents today. Many of the following issues are related to these concerns.

1. The Priorities

A. Weston Creek.

a. Refurbished Community Centre

The Master plan for the Weston Group Centre shows a site allocated for a new Community Centre to be developed at a later date. However, the current Community Centre is ageing, being 40+ years old, the facilities are outdated and do not cater well for the current population.

It is in the right place but is really not fit for purpose for modern day requirements. A refurbishment is badly needed as well as some expansion and Council would regard it as essential for the new Centre to have an area for Seniors to interact and utilise plus a new form of space where cyberspace connects with the Community and we can have electronic knowledge transfer as well as face to face connections.

Services in Weston Creek have been needed for years now. Council has documents going back well over ten years asking the ACT Government for improved services and stating that a new centre for the Community was needed.

The Outcome: a place to “meet” for many in our Community. This will increase the “wellness” of our community something that Council has concerns about as we both age and regenerate.

b. Action on the Draft Master Plan for Weston Group Centre.

Council asks “where is the Town Clock and Square for Weston Creek”?? Nowhere to be seen is the answer which is a shame.

We acknowledge that the Government has completed the 1st Stage of the upgrade of Brierley Street and Trenerry Square. However, the design and materials used in the Square are not to the Communities liking and don’t really provide what was asked for.

There is a need now for further progress on the remainder of the plan and this needs to be expedited. This would complement the work currently being undertaken by Mirvac. It would also be positive if the

“dead square” outside the community centre could be activated and linked to the children’s play area.

The Outcome: The forming of an outdoor relaxing environment that encourages more of the community to utilise what is being provided

c. **Fetherston Gardens.**

These gardens are open to the public and much work has been accomplished between the staff of Parks, Conservation and Lands (PCL) and the Friends of Fetherston Gardens. However, to make the Gardens fully functional there is a need for Public Toilets and a small building to house the equipment that the Friends of Fetherston Gardens use to maintain the Gardens. This building should include an area for displays and for giving talks to groups who visit the Gardens, to complete this Canberra community asset.

Outcome: The good use of a Public Asset by all sections of the community and another place to include for Visitors to the National Capital. All this at little ongoing cost to the Government.

B. Molonglo – Coombs and Wright

a. **Shops in Coombs and Wright**

There needs to be immediate reaction to provide some form of shops in Coombs even as an interim measure until the proposed shops in Wright are open. This could be at least two years away

b. **Community Centre in Coombs and Wright**

Just like Weston Creek, there needs to be a place for the community to come together. The outcome from Government action to date in letting the private sector nominally provide a facility just hasn’t worked with the one development said to be asking \$90,000 rental a year.

Compare this to Denman Prospect where the developer is providing a new Community Centre with a Child Care Centre and to be managed by Communities at Work.

There is another block to be released in Wright with a clause said to provide 30 hours per week to the Community at a reduced rental. Will this work? The lease needs to be very carefully worded to ensure that there is reasonably costed option for community groups.

Outcome: That the community will have a suitable facility to fulfil community needs.

c. Bridge over the Molonglo River

With the recent population and facility growth in Weston Creek and the Molonglo Valley (including the development of the new suburb of Whitlam) the provision of high standard transport (both private car and bus) connections is becoming unavoidable. We note that the Infrastructure Plan you recently released discusses construction of the long-foreshadowed Molonglo River Bridge Crossing commencing in 2020-21 and expected to be completed in 2024. We welcome the inclusion of this vital project on the Infrastructure Plan and strongly encourage the Government to fund it at the earliest opportunity and expedite construction.

Outcome: A much safer crossing and a better strategic transport link for the community [including Whitlam].

d. Town Centre

The start of the Town Centre needs to be brought forward so that the Molonglo community can start to have a central focus and the facilities that come with a higher level of complex.

Outcome: A positive feeling of Community and improved services for the Molonglo Valley.

2. Other Matters

a. Permanent Police Presence

The rapid growth in population in Weston Creek and Molonglo has also resulted in increased demand for policing services, both emergency and community engagement. We encourage you to make provision in the 2020-21 Budget for ACT policing to create a permanent 24 hour presence in the area, including a convenient shop front facility as soon as possible.

b. Upgrade of the Fisher and Duffy Shops.

We have seen upgrades occur in recent years at the Waramanga and Chapman shopping centres and the promise of Rivett Shops being upgraded this year. These upgrades have been very well done and have given these shopping centres a real lift, and have been welcomed by the Community.

The shopping centre at Fisher, with many Seniors living nearby, should be included on the list of needed upgrades in this year's Budget.

In a similar way the Duffy shops, close to Duffy Primary School, could become a greater focal point with an upgrade and consequently be a better and fit with the changing community profile.

c. Changes to the Cotter Road

Council believes that Government should

i]. Consider placing a bus only lane from the John Gorton Drive/Streeton Drive intersection to the lights at Kirkpatrick Street. Not a long distance but this would alleviate congestion during the morning peak and would speed up considerably the Rapid Bus Services from both Molonglo and Weston Creek.

ii]. Complete the bike lane from Molonglo [Coombs adjacent to John Gorton Drive] to link with the cycleway from Weston Creek into the City. This only needs to go to the bridge over Weston Creek before the traffic lights at Streeton Drive and would provide a cycleway from Molonglo to the City.

iii]. Investigate options to improve the worsening bottleneck where the Cotter Road meets Adelaide Avenue. Council notes that the long-awaited Mint Interchange, which was identified as a long-term [10-15 year] priority in the draft Moving Canberra: Integrated Transport Strategy, was not included in the recent ACT Infrastructure Plan. We request that the future of this project be clarified in the context of possible changes to Weston Creek and Molonglo bus routes resulting from the commencement of light rail services between the City and Woden.

Outcome. Encourage the use of both public transport and cycling as a method of transport

d. The Public Domain.

There is a need for additional funding to City Services to allow it to maintain the Public Domain. There are many instances of

- signs being covered by vegetation,
- signs missing,
- dead trees along many roads,
- dead branches over roads, footpaths and bus stops,
- grass not being mowed as regular as should be,
- a lack of road sweeping in Coombs and Wright, and
- footpaths that need repair, renovation as well as new footpaths given that residents are now expected to walk much further to catch buses. Many of our residents are older and now have walking aids and so there needs to be footpaths for them as well as those current to be in good repair.

The Districts looks untidy and needs to have more activity to maintain the areas.

Outcome: Encourage the community to have greater pride in their environment and thus make their own contribution with garden maintenance and less littering.

e. Sporting Facilities

ij. Molonglo - The only oval in Molonglo at the moment is behind locked gates and a fence at the George Weston Primary School. For a population of over 6,000 people this is hardly sufficient. Action needs to be taken for the provision of additional sporting ovals for the District.

ii]. Mount Stromlo – Stromlo Forest Park is a great resource and place for cyclists. Many of these cyclists use the Mt Stromlo road for practice in climbing and decent. It is clearly not safe without any shoulders on the road. To make it safe there needs to be a widening of this road to provide marked bicycle lanes to enable all cyclists to use this road safely.

iii]. Rivett Oval – the oval is home for Royals Rugby training and their Junior teams. Nothing has changed with the Oval for 40 years. The pavilion needs refurbishing or replacing so that it can properly host training and visiting junior teams.

f. Parking at Cooleman Court

The proposed provision of a further car park adjacent to Cooleman Court is cautiously welcomed. However, Council and the community have some concerns about the location, design and safety issues

associated with the proposed car park and what is the meaning of temporary.

We again draw attention to the fact that the parking scarcity situation at the Weston Group Centre is mainly due to the lack of shops and facilities in Molonglo

g. Transport.

i] The Bus Network - Council has made public its views on the new bus service for Weston Creek and Molonglo. We thank the former Minister and the Transport staff for their discussions over the final proposals and the outcome. We are very pleased with the outcome and we understand the buses are well patronised. This is what the community has been asking for and we are pleased that it is being well supported.

ii]. Park and Ride Parking – There is a need for additional Park and Ride parking to allow even greater patronage of the new Bus Network. Council has suggested additional parking at Kirkpatrick Street, some parking at the proposed increase adjacent to Coleman Court but clearly not the majority of spaces, possible at the Terminus at the end of Hindmarsh Drive and between Dixon Drive, Streeton Drive and John Gorton Drive adjacent to the Community Garden.

Thank you for the opportunity to give our input into the budget process.

Tom Anderson
Chair
Weston Creek Community Council
6 November 2019