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WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (WCCC)

SUBMISSION FOR THE 2022/23 BUDGET

Your local voice



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WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (WCCC) SUBMISSION FOR THE 2022/23 BUDGET

INTRODUCTION:

Thank you for the opportunity for the Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) to respond to the ACT Government 2022/23 Budget consultation process. As a Community Council we are committed to advocating and supporting the Weston Creek residents in pursuing the expectations and values that enhance and ensure their safety, well-being, and quality lifestyles. Whilst we acknowledge and appreciate the previous promises made by Government for improvements in the Weston Creek area, we are again left underwhelmed by the actual fruition of these projects.

WCCC recommends the ACT Government invests in the Weston Creek area to enhance the wellbeing and recovery, (community, social and economic), of the community to support a vibrant and liveable precinct with a particular focus on:

- Mitigating the effects of climate change in the area
- Providing a safe environment with an increased police presence
- Maintaining and beautifying Coleman Court, the shopping areas, and suburbs
- Development of indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities
- Improved active travel including public transport, cycling, and footpaths
- Targeted programs to support the economic recovery of the area

After extensive community consultation, and in alignment with the ACT Government's focus areas and core areas of responsibility, Council submits the following comments and highly recommends their inclusion in the 2022/23 Territory Budget.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY WELLBEING NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

The Weston Creek community values the green spaces, parks, and open spaces as vital links to physical and mental well-being. There are great concerns regarding air quality in the area. We urge that addressing the natural environment issues in Weston Creek be a high priority in preserving the well-being of both current and future generations.

- **Air quality monitoring station in Weston Creek.** Geographically Weston Creek has unique topography. Maintaining a healthy environment and being well informed is central to increasing quality of life. Monitoring the air quality and sustainability is critical to measure exposure to hazardous substances in the air such as smoke, pollen, and dust in real time. This would allow people to make decisions in their daily routines and improve their quality of life. Establishment of a climate monitoring network would also provide essential and informative infrastructure for Weston Creek residents and Government.
- **Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability.** As areas within Weston Creek are upgraded, it is expected that attention will be made to reducing emissions and ensuring government assets are energy efficient, and that more funding will be directed towards renewable energy. An efficient upgrade at **Fisher shops** would be welcomed.
- We note that **Coolman Park** (affectionately known as CooLo Park) has been listed as a future land release. Council urges that this park be taken off this list and be reverted to its original, green open space zoning, then rehabilitated in line with resident's wishes. This area has been identified as an urban heat island location by the CSIRO and this rezoning is therefore vital to the health and wellbeing of nearby residents.
- It is of concern to Council that the draft Planning Bill is lacking the human component. **The Planning Act needs** to be amended to codify the decision-making criteria with greater emphasis on the environment and human element. As we move towards the development of **Precinct Plans**, it must be stressed that the unique **village character of Weston Creek** be preserved.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Provide an air quality monitoring station in Weston Creek
- ❖ Revert Coolman Park zoning back to open green space
- ❖ Weston Creek local shops to be energy efficient with an upgrade to Fisher shops
- ❖ Extensive community consultation on a Weston Creek specific Precinct Plan

COMMUNITY RECOVERY

A fundamental human right is the ability to be and feel safe. The timely response of relevant authorities when a safety incident occurs has significant impacts on the perceptions of the community. Unfortunately, over a period-of-time, Council has been advised of resident disappointments in this area. Careful consideration to the following needs to be addressed in the budget.

- **Improved policing.** Council continues to ask for a greater and more visible presence of police in the area and a better police response rate to citizen reports. With the growing ACT population, we believe a new police station is required for the Weston Creek/Molonglo area. Although the Police Services Model sounds promising, there remains a perception that people do not feel safe in the area. In the interim we suggest a **shopfront style police point of contact** in one of the currently empty spaces at Coolman Court. For the community, this would be a positive sign of good will, build positive partnerships with police and the community, and increase trust and confidence of the government. This could be a trial to evaluate what may be effective and could also collect valuable information.
- While we have been advised by the Labor Government that Weston Creek enjoys one of the lowest **crime rates** in Canberra, there remains a feeling of unease and a feeling of being unsafe. We have been advised of house burglaries and number plate theft.

- Council has been cautioning that the current response to **dangerous driving is inadequate and will lead to further road trauma**. Dangerous driving has been repeatedly reported but does not seem to be diminishing. Sadly, there has been recent fatalities in the ACT. Dangerous incidents of burn outs, speeding, and general bad driving are contributing to a heightened risk of road incidents. We believe that this issue is also related to the lack of police presence in Weston Creek.
- Additionally on the *Women's Health Matters Canberra Safety Map*, areas in Weston Creek have been reported as unsafe for women. **Safety for women** is an important issue for Canberra as a safe, liveable, and active travel city. Council requests **improvements in pathways, lighting, and visibility** in such areas as bus stops.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Greater visible police presence in Weston Creek
- ❖ A shopfront style, police point of contact at Cooleman Court
- ❖ Improvements in pathways, lighting, and visibility in such areas as bus stops in Weston Creek
- ❖ Review of the processes of *Fix My Street* with a focus on improved customer service and appropriately completed deliverables.
- ❖ Government develops and implements a comprehensive policy response to dangerous driving, including a better targeting of police resources.

SOCIAL RECOVERY

Continued investments in sport and recreation facilities, parks and gardens, play spaces and shopping centres will support the social, community and economic recovery of Canberra. Residents of Weston Creek have raised concerns about the **lack of maintenance in public spaces**. We commend them for their pride in our area and support their requests for better maintenance and management plan of public spaces. This would include better playground monitoring, tree attendance, repair of footpaths, clearing of cycle lanes, and grass mowing.

- **Featherston Gardens** are a beautiful and well-kept garden of Weston Creek. The volunteers do a superb job of maintaining the area and Council supports their request for public toilets in-order-to expand the range of visitors. It is also of concern to note the delays experienced in storm damage repairs to the Gardens resulting in reduced safe access to the gardens for volunteers and the public.
- Weston Creek residents are increasingly frustrated with the processes and lengthy delays related to **Fix My Street**. A more streamlined and transparent process of response is required. Being advised that a complaint has been solved when it has merely been passed on to another government body is not indicative of a quality customer service.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Provide toilets at Featherston Gardens
- ❖ Liaise with the Featherston Gardens subcommittee to provide timely maintenance and repairs to the garden to ensure the safety of volunteers and visitors
- ❖ Review the processes of *Fix My Street* with a focus on improved customer service and appropriately completed deliverables.

- **Sport and Recreational Facilities playing fields and sport infrastructure** in the area are lacking and/or needing maintenance. We look forward to consultation on these further developments.
 - Volleyball, badminton, table tennis and gymnastics clubs are all experiencing high demand and limited venue availability. An **indoor sporting facility** for the residents of Weston Creek is a high priority.
 - **Arawang Netball Facility in Stirling**, we are hopeful that upgrades will be completed in this term of Government.
 - **Rivett Oval** change rooms and actual access to the ovals are in disrepair. Females do not have access to change rooms. These issues need urgent attention.
 - **Holder Oval** is often the target of vandalism. Neighbours would appreciate better lighting and maintenance of the oval.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Consult with the sporting and recreation groups of Weston Creek with a view to build an indoor sporting facility in Weston Creek
- ❖ Upgrade Arawang netball courts
- ❖ Provide female change rooms and repair the general access to Rivett oval
- ❖ Provide ongoing and regular maintenance of Weston Creek ovals, including Holder oval, with increased lighting provision

The Budget consultation process encompasses the ACT Government's core areas of responsibility, which include: **public transport, roads and active travel roads** and **suburban and municipal services**. Effective road systems reduce road trauma and improve economic and social impacts. This is vital in the recovery period after COVID-19 and would also allow all people to move easily within the neighbourhood and make connections with other people, work, places, and services easily and safely.

Council notes that Weston Creek has been listed as a major stakeholder for the **light rail project**. Council would appreciate active and ongoing consultation with the Project Team to ensure the best possible outcomes for the residents of Weston Creek during the light rail planning and construction phases.

- The most pressing need is the **entire Streeeton Drive corridor. Road design, reconstruction, maintenance, and consideration for all road/transport users** (including cars, pedestrians, and cyclists) is a high priority. We believe that there is potential to leverage additional funds from the Commonwealth Road Safety Black Spot Scheme to fund these specific examples of intersections needing urgent attention (as was recently announced for the Brierly Street and Hindmarsh Drive intersection).
- With the Village Building Company Development on the old AFP site, concerns have been raised regarding the Government's responsibility to ensure safe car and pedestrian travel. **Heysen and Gruner Streets** will have increased traffic, requiring attention to these roads and connecting intersections.
- **Mulley Street and Streeeton Drive** is dangerous, particularly at school drop off and pick up. This intersection needs better line of site. The narrowing of lanes in this area has confused drivers. Two car lanes and a dedicated bicycle route is needed here, especially to encourage different transport access to the village centre.
- **Hilder Street and Streeeton Drive** is another pinch point. We have received feedback the 80km speed limit is too high for traffic in this area and a 60km limit has been requested here.
- **Cycle Route C5** off road for bicycles is meant to meet certain width, but it does not meet these standards. Therefore, it is not safe and needs attention.
- Council supports the work of Pedal Power ACT and their advocacy for the **maintenance and repair of cycling infrastructure to ensure cyclist safety and enhance cycling** in Weston Creek.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Improve the entire Streeton Drive corridor - road design, reconstruction, and maintenance - with consideration for all road/transport users
- ❖ Improve the traffic management and flow of Gruner Street and at the Heysen Street intersection
- ❖ Improve the line of sight at the Mulley Street and Streeton Drive intersection including attention to car and bike lanes
- ❖ Reduce the speed limits on Hider Street and Streeton Drive
- ❖ Maintain and/or replace cycling paths, particularly C5
- ❖ Ongoing consultation with the Weston Creek community regarding the light rail planning and construction.

Bus network issues needing attention include:

- Residents appreciate the R7 direct route to Civic.
- However, connections to local routes can be problematic. On behalf of residents, Council advocates for **improved bus services and links** in and around Weston Creek.
- The end of **Hindmarsh Drive could be park and ride**, with a bus stop. Not just a bus driver toilet-stop. A battery charging station could also be included as part of the Canberra Battery Plan. This would also address some bus issues on Brierly Street.
- At least one of the **buses needs to go directly into the hospital area**. This will be important in the construction phase of the new interchange. This may also serve to mitigate the argument that too many buses currently terminate in the Woden Town Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Improve bus links to Weston Creek such as the connection of the R7 and local stops
- ❖ Move the park and ride to Hindmarsh Drive (with a bus stop)
- ❖ Provide buses directly to the Canberra Hospital

- Council notes the Development Application 202138682 for **1 Brierly Street Weston (Raiders Club)** with the proposal for lease variation to remove the concessional status from the Crown Lease. It is with caution that Council questions the long-term plans and development for the site. It would be of great concern for Weston Creek to lose one of the few community meeting spaces available.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ That Government protect amenities for the community including meeting room spaces and community hubs.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Economic recovery will be best achieved through focussed and relevant programs. Of note for Weston Creek:

- **Upgrade of Brierly Street:** The WCCC 2021 survey provided overwhelming community feedback for cafes, street art, outdoor eateries, gardens, entertainment, and traffic calming. Council looks forward to further significant Government investment in Stage 2 Brierly Street and beyond.
- Council notes the Development Application 202138682 for **1 Brierly Street Weston** with the proposal for lease variation to remove the concessional status from the Crown Lease. For maximised economic benefit it seems entirely reasonable to the Council that the **any revenues gained from the Raiders de-**

concessionalisation process be paid at the agreed assessed value to the government and then be quarantined for spending in the Weston Creek area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Significant investment and extensive development of Brierly Street to revitalise the area
- ❖ Government be aware of the implications of any de-concessionalisation processes on the relevant community and take caution regarding the de-concessionalisation of the Raiders Club, Weston
- ❖ Any gained monies from the process of de-concessionalisation of the Raiders Club be quarantined for spending in the Weston Creek area.

Throughout the COVID lockdowns and beyond, **Weston Creek Community Council** has broadened the areas and fields of its community consultation to best express the views of a wide range of groups.

We believe that our consistent and ongoing consultation with the community through our surveys, public meetings (which are also available digitally), social media presence, newsletters and projects provides valuable input into these processes. These have proven to be valuable avenues of people being able to have their say, be listened to and be involved in decision making. Council is proud to have assisted and advocated for residents with such issues as public housing maintenance, social events, information sessions, online broadcasting of meetings, and age friendly signage.

To continue this valued work conducted by volunteers, **Council requests additional funds** to assist with the development of **community-oriented programs, such as forums**. To further enhance community volunteer work and to extend activities, Council requests that Government considers reviewing and contributing to such items as: paying of Council insurance, increasing Deed of Grant, supplying storage, and requiring new developments to cater for community meeting spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Council requests that Government considers reviewing and contributing to such items as: paying of Council insurance, increasing Deed of Grant, supplying storage, and requiring new developments to cater for community meeting spaces.

Please note that we have consulted widely with community on this topic, including at community public meetings, newsletters, and community mail outs. We have sought, and received, valuable information which has in turn informed this submission. We will also share our submission on our Website and Facebook pages. We are happy for our submission to be made public for other Canberrans to read. We agree to the WCCC budget submission to be made public and to be uploaded to the Budget Consultation website.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this input. As an active community group, Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) looks forward to participating in any future consultations and/or discussions.

Council extends an ongoing invitation for Government to make presentations at WCCC public meetings including on matters raised in this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Committee, Weston Creek Community Council