

## **Budget Submission: New Playground for West Belconnen**

### **To the ACT Government Budget Consultation Panel,**

I am writing to submit a proposal for the upgrade of the Berne Crescent playground in West Belconnen as part of the upcoming ACT Government budget. West Belconnen is an outer suburb that is experiencing population growth, yet it remains under-resourced in terms of accessible recreational infrastructure. An upgraded playground would provide significant social, developmental, and health benefits to local families and children while enhancing community cohesion. This space has the potential to service the community much more effectively with additional facilities.

Currently, there is no shaded space for children to play in Macgregor, making outdoor play particularly challenging in summer when temperatures can be extreme. There is no bin, meaning that rubbish accumulates. Without proper infrastructure, this space is often under-utilised. The pathway through the area is a common route to Macgregor Primary School, meaning that an improved playground could become a focal point for the community, providing a safe and engaging space for families.

While the recent upgrade at Harper Street, MacGregor is a positive step, it does not service the rest of West Belconnen, where the majority of population growth is occurring. A new playground in a more central location would ensure that all residents have access to high-quality recreational infrastructure.

### **Rationale for the Playground**

West Belconnen – in particular old and new Macgregor - is a vibrant and growing community, yet families and young children face limited opportunities for outdoor play. The provision of a well-equipped, modern playground would help address this gap by:

- **Encouraging Outdoor Activity:** Playgrounds promote physical activity and support the health and well-being of children.
- **Fostering Social Inclusion:** A new playground would create a space for families of diverse backgrounds to interact and build a stronger local community.
- **Supporting Early Childhood Development:** Play areas contribute to cognitive, social, and motor skill development in young children.
- **Enhancing Local Amenity:** The addition of a playground would improve the attractiveness of West Belconnen as a family-friendly place to live.
- **Expanding Community Services:** With the inclusion of barbecues, water stations, shaded areas, and seating, this space could become a central hub for families and community gatherings.

### **Community Need and Equity**

As an outer suburb, West Belconnen has fewer infrastructure investments compared to more established inner precincts. Many families in the area have limited access to safe, modern play spaces without traveling significant distances. A new playground would ensure equitable access to essential community infrastructure, aligning with the ACT Government's commitment to strengthening suburbs and enhancing liveability.

Additionally, the new playground at Denman Prospect serves as an excellent example of what could be achieved in West Belconnen. By following a similar design, we can create an engaging, well-resourced play area that meets the needs of the community and supports active lifestyles for children. A playground modeled on Wombat Stew in the district park, which includes barbecues, shaded areas, and a well-integrated play environment, would be ideal for the local community.

## **Location and Design Considerations**

The playground should be designed with:

- **Inclusive Equipment:** Facilities for children of all abilities, including wheelchair-accessible features.
- **Shaded Areas:** Protection from the sun to ensure safe year-round use.
- **Seating and Amenities:** Benches, picnic tables, and nearby restroom access to encourage extended visits by families.
- **Sustainable Materials:** Environmentally friendly construction to align with ACT Government's sustainability goals.
- **Additional Facilities:** Barbecues, water fountains, and shaded areas to enhance the usability and appeal of the space.

## **Conclusion**

A new playground in West Belconnen would be a valuable investment in community infrastructure, benefiting families and children while ensuring fair resource allocation to outer suburbs. I urge the ACT Government to consider and prioritise this request in the upcoming budget to enhance the quality of life for residents in our area.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Sincerely,**

Dr Samuel White

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