



Belconnen Community Council

2024-2025 ACT Budget Submission

A large, scenic landscape photograph occupies the lower half of the page. It shows a winding river flowing through a valley with rolling green hills. In the foreground, a large, dark tree trunk is visible on the left, and some dry grass is at the bottom. The sky is overcast. In the top right corner of this section, there are four parallel blue diagonal lines.

May 2024



14 May 2024

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601
via email: barr@act.gov.au, budgetconsultation@act.gov.au

Dear Chief Minister

Belconnen Community Council 2024-25 ACT Budget Submission

The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) thanks you for the opportunity to contribute to the ACT Government's 2024-25 budget planning process.

Representing the residents, students, and businesses of the Belconnen district, this submission puts forward priorities identified through consultation with our community. The BCC encourages the Government to adopt bold measures that reflect the aspirations and challenges of our people and businesses as Belconnen continues to grow and mature.

Remaining the ACT's largest district by population, Belconnen is also set for significant population growth, with an expected increase of 70,000 residents by 2060. This growth underscores the urgent need for strategic investments in infrastructure, services, and amenities for Belconnen to maintain and enhance our economic and environmental health.

Our submission presents five key priorities Belconnen needs in your upcoming budget:

1. **Establish a Belconnen Renewal Authority** to drive coordinated and sustainable urban development and transform Belconnen into a seamlessly integrated community hub
2. **Secure the Belconnen Bus Transitway** by committing full funding to complete the project by 2028, enhancing public transport reliability and efficiency for Belconnen
3. **Enhance the Northside Hospital** by boosting services and seeking additional Commonwealth support to bolster service delivery and accelerate planning and development of new facilities to meet our increasing healthcare needs
4. **Deliver education to Belconnen** by identifying, securing, and commencing the planning of a school site in the Belconnen Town Centre.
5. **Commit to the Canberra Stadium** remaining in Bruce and progress planning work to deliver a modern stadium and entertainment precinct for the ACT.

Further, we make supplementary recommendations for your consideration covering:

- City services
- Transport, roads, and active travel
- Hospitals and healthcare
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Education, community, and recreation

We would welcome any further discussion regarding this submission. Should you wish to engage with the BCC, please contact me on 0438 458 220 or via email to chair@belconnen.org.au.

Yours faithfully

Lachlan Butler
Chair
Belconnen Community Council





Key Priority Recommendations

Establish a Belconnen Renewal Authority

to drive coordinated and sustainable urban development and transform Belconnen into a seamlessly integrated community hub.

Secure the Belconnen Bus Transitway

by committing full funding to complete the project by 2028, enhancing public transport reliability and efficiency for Belconnen.

Enhance the Northside Hospital

by boosting services and seeking additional support to bolster service delivery and accelerate the planning and development of new facilities.

Deliver education to Belconnen

by identifying, securing, and commencing the planning of a school site in the Belconnen Town Centre.

Commit to the Canberra Stadium

remaining in Bruce and progress planning work to deliver a modern stadium and entertainment precinct for the ACT.

Comprehensive recommendations

City services

Enhance recreational and leisure opportunities by upgrading amenities at Margaret Timpson Park and Lake Ginninderra.	p5
Expedite the development of the former Belconnen Health Building site or extend Margaret Timpson Park.	p6
Enhance the appeal and functionality of Benjamin Way through a comprehensive beautification project.	p6
Allocate funding for the swift implementation of circular economy initiatives and identify a long-term green waste facility for Belconnen.	p6
Enhance public awareness of the illegality of parking on footpaths and verges, increase enforcement, and introduce stricter penalties to protect urban trees.	p7
Install static and natural barriers, such as large rocks, to protect our mature trees from damage in high-traffic areas.	p7
Stop removing self-seeded trees to support natural revegetation efforts, adjust mowing practices to avoid damaging self-seeded trees, and only remove dead trees when they present a safety hazard.	p7
Increase support for community groups, such as Landcare, to leverage their expertise and volunteer efforts in enhancing local environments.	p8
Expand the Healthy Waterways Program to enhance the region's ecological sustainability and water quality.	p8

Public transport, roads and active travel

Increase bus services to at least once per hour, seven days a week.	p9
Increase the capacity of peak services to encourage more commuters to travel via public transport.	p10
Add another rapid route into, and expand the public transport connections from, West Belconnen.	p10
Dedicate funding to a comprehensive feasibility study to evaluate short-to-medium-term infrastructure that will improve public transport services.	p11
Provide resources for preliminary feasibility studies and community consultation for the Light Rail Stage Three (City to Belconnen).	p11

Comprehensive recommendations

Public transport, roads and active travel (continued)

Allocate funding to identify and invest in safety, accessibility, and quality-of-life improvements for public transport stops in Belconnen.	p11
Conduct a thorough investigation into potential sites for new park and ride facilities across Belconnen.	p11
Designate funds to maintain and enhance road infrastructure to withstand the impacts of climate change, ensuring long-term sustainability and safety.	p12
Allocate resources for detailed evaluation and strategic planning of road and traffic improvements in Belconnen to optimise traffic flow and enhance safety.	p12
Target electric vehicle infrastructure enhancements in Belconnen.	p12
Commit funds for a rejuvenation project for footpaths across Belconnen.	p12
Commit to expanding and enhancing cycling infrastructure through Belconnen.	p12

Hospitals and healthcare

Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to incentivise the recruitment and retention of healthcare workers in Canberra	p14
Expand the range of services offered at walk-in-centres and commit funding to minimise wait times to incentivise their use.	p15
Allocate funding in the 2024-2025 budget to begin site planning and design work for the West Belconnen health centre.	p15

Economic Development

Proactive support and encouragement for an ongoing Federal Government presence in the Belconnen Town Centre.	p16
The ACT Government should expand its employment presence in the Belconnen Town Centre.	p16
Support and encourage private and institutional investment in the Belconnen Town Centre and across the Belconnen district	p16
Continue and expand funding for the shopping centre improvements program.	p17

Comprehensive recommendations

Housing

Implement strategies to ensure housing in the ACT is more affordable and accessible, aligning with international best practices, and tailored to meet the community's evolving needs.	p18
Increase funding for constructing, acquiring, and maintaining public housing in Belconnen.	p18

Education, community, and recreation

Prioritise resources for school planning and construction work to ensure that there are no further delays for the Strathnairn school	p19
Commit additional funding for technology and infrastructure upgrades in Belconnen's schools.	p20
Increased funding for administrative, learning, and training support to attract and retain teaching staff.	p20
Establish a clear timeline for increasing ACT Policing resources in the Belconnen district, including in West Belconnen, and for a new Belconnen police station.	p20
Increase the value of the Deed of Grand provided to Community Councils	p20



City services are vital as they directly influence the quality of life within communities. They ensure urban and suburban areas remain liveable, sustainable, and ready for future growth.

We recognise increasing concerns from residents and businesses about piecemeal development and the need for cohesive planning within the Belconnen Town Centre. Community feedback has highlighted a fragmented approach to urban development, with projects progressing without sufficient coordination, leading to disjointed infrastructure and underutilised public spaces. Disjointed infrastructure and underutilised public spaces affects the district's aesthetic coherence and functional integration. Issues such as traffic flow, public transport accessibility, and the distribution of community services are becoming increasingly problematic.

We propose the establishment of a Belconnen Renewal Authority (the Authority) to oversee comprehensive urban renewal projects, transforming Belconnen into a premier destination for business and recreation, improving living conditions, boosting the local economy, and attracting visitors.

The Authority would advocate for and address infrastructure needs, focus on sustainable development, and enhance community engagement to integrate new and existing developments to create a more cohesive and vibrant Belconnen Town Centre.

Key Priority Recommendation

Establish a Belconnen Renewal Authority to ensure coordinated, sustainable, and community-focused development that transforms Belconnen into a seamlessly integrated urban centre.

Green spaces and recreational activities within Belconnen Town Centre

The green spaces around Lake Ginninderra and within the Belconnen Town Centre, including Margaret Timpson Park, are highly valued by the community. Improvements to amenities in these spaces are long overdue and would see improved community use.

We call for improvements to Margaret Timpson park including, but not limited to:

- An outdoor children's playground;
- Increased seating and table arrangements with appropriate shade;
- Public toilet facilities; and
- Lighting improvements, including along Benjamin Way.

The existing barbeque facilities around Lake Ginninderra are well-maintained and popular. Increasing these facilities would alleviate current demands and further enhance the area's amenity. Improved seating and lighting around Lake Ginninderra, particularly along Emu Bank, as well as the installation of outdoor gym equipment, could enhance this valuable asset to our community.

Recommendation

Enhance recreational and leisure opportunities by upgrading amenities at Margaret Timpson Park and Lake Ginninderra.

Utilisation of vacant spaces

The former Belconnen Health building site, now a problematic area that collects water after rain, poses a health hazard and remains underutilised. Although the BCC understands that this site has been identified for a demonstration housing project, we note that there has been no progress on this front for many years.

The BCC therefore urges the ACT Government to set a clear development timeframe for this site or consider extending Margaret Timpson Park to realise its potential community benefit.

Recommendation

Expedite the development of the former Belconnen Health building site or extend Margaret Timpson Park.

Beautification and connectivity of Benjamin Way

Benjamin Way serves as a primary entrance to the Belconnen Town Centre but lacks clear identity and connectivity other than the recognition of the Belconnen Owl.

Investment in beautification would foster community pride and enhance connectivity. Proposed improvements include:

- Increased lighting, including aesthetic feature lighting;
- Landscaping upgrades, particularly on the median from Chan Street to Lake Ginninderra; and
- Additional public artwork.

Recommendation

Enhance the appeal and functionality of Benjamin Way through a comprehensive beautification project.

Circular economy and waste management

The BCC supports initiatives within the ACT Circular Economy Strategy 2022-25. Immediate investment in the ACT's circular economy will facilitate better recycling habits and decrease pressure on existing waste management facilities.

Similarly, resolving planning challenges for a permanent green waste facility in Belconnen is essential. Focus should be placed on genuine community consultation and bolstering community sentiment with infrastructure to support the permanent facility (such as arterial road upgrades) and possible environment and technological commitments.

Recommendation

Allocate funding for the swift implementation of circular economy initiatives and identify a long-term green waste facility for Belconnen.



Urban tree protection and canopy expansion

Despite the Government's commitment to protecting mature trees on public land, preservation efforts on verges and footpaths, especially in high-traffic areas, remain inadequate.

Notably, mature eucalypts along Ibbott Lane near the Capital Food Markets are particularly vulnerable, with frequent damage from vehicles.

As a timely and implementable measure, the BCC calls on the ACT Government to increase public awareness concerning illegal parking on footpaths and verges, as well as bolstering enforcement efforts and imposing stricter penalties to deter such practices. Discouraging these practices will also aid accessibility for persons living with disability, vulnerable pedestrians (particularly the young and elderly), and decrease damage to pavements and vegetation.

Separately, we commend the government's goal to achieve a 30% canopy coverage to mitigate urban heat island effects and enhance sustainability. There remains, however, significant potential for further tree planting around Lake Ginninderra to enrich the greenery. Practices like the removal of self-seeded trees counteract our sustainability goals.

Halting this practice would support natural vegetation in areas where older trees have perished. Additionally, dead trees that serve as fauna habitats should be preserved unless they pose safety risks. Moreover, mowing practices need careful management to protect young, self-seeding trees, especially those without tree guards.

Recommendation

Enhance public awareness of the illegality of parking on footpaths and verges, increase enforcement, and introduce stricter penalties to protect urban trees.

Recommendation

Install static and natural barriers, such as large rocks, to protect our mature trees from damage in high-traffic areas.

Recommendation

Stop removing self-seeded trees to support natural revegetation efforts, adjust mowing practices to avoid damaging self-seeded trees, and only remove dead trees when they present a safety hazard.



Community engagement and support

Community groups, such as Landcare, provide invaluable volunteer hours and possess deep knowledge, should receive increased government support through funding, resources, and access. This support would significantly boost their environment and community impact.

Feedback from our recent budget survey also underscored a strong community demand for meaningful environmental initiatives. The survey highlighted the Healthy Waterways Program, suggesting that its expansion could greatly improve local water quality and ecological benefits.

Recommendation

Increase support for community groups, such as Landcare, to leverage their expertise and volunteer efforts in enhancing local environments.

Recommendation

Expand the Healthy Waterways program to enhance the region's ecological sustainability and water quality.

Public transport, roads and active travel



A well-designed, integrated transport network is essential for connecting people to jobs, education, healthcare, and family, while also reducing travel times and congestion for private vehicles. Affordable and accessible transport options are vital for promoting social inclusion and must be prioritised by the ACT Government with sufficient and timely funding.

The BCC therefore strongly advocates for the acceleration of the Belconnen Bus Transitway project. This critical infrastructure is key to improving the efficiency and reliability of bus services between Belconnen and Civic.

Noting that in November 2023, the ACT Government committed to implementing bus priority measures on this route by 2028, the upcoming ACT Budget must allocate sufficient funds to progress the planning and execution of this project as outlined in the amended Belconnen Transitway Motion. This will form the cornerstone of near-term public transport improvements for Belconnen, significantly boosting confidence in public transport within the community.

Key Priority Recommendation

Secure the Belconnen Bus Transitway by committing full funding to complete the project by 2028, enhancing public transport reliability and efficiency for Belconnen.

Enhancing service reliability and accessibility

The BCC appreciates the introduction of additional Saturday public transport services. However, the ACT Government urgently needs to review and enhance services during nights, weekends, and public holidays.

Establishing a reliable, seven-day-a-week timetable would significantly improve public transport reliability and encourage commitment to its use. Sparse services during these times push the community towards reliance on private vehicles, undermining environmental sustainability efforts, and entrenching attitudes toward perceptions of the necessity of private vehicle ownership in the ACT.

Recommendation

Increase bus services to at least once per hour, seven days a week.

Increasing public transport capacity

For public transport to serve as a dependable alternative to private vehicles, passengers must be able to trust the timetable and service.

There are fewer buses today than in 1993, and without expanding the bus fleet, Transport Canberra will be unable to meet the growing demand from the increasing population in Belconnen.

Public transport, roads and active travel



Our community has made it clear to the BCC that overcrowded buses during peak travel times not only prevent more passengers from boarding but also discourage future use of public transport due to discomfort. The BCC frequently receives complaints about the R2, R3, and R4 buses being marked "full" before even departing from the Belconnen Town Centre. An increase in bus numbers and driving staff is essential to manage this demand.

Recommendation

Increase the capacity of peak services to encourage more commuters to travel via public transport.

Adapting to demographic changes

As West Belconnen evolves, particularly with the ongoing Ginninderry development, public transport routes and timetables must be improved to meet these changes. The anticipated population growth in this region of Canberra, which is expected to continue for the next 40 years, will inevitably increase traffic and strain existing road capacities. Planning for, and introducing, additional Rapid routes now, before new residents become reliant on commuting via private vehicles, could limit future dependence on car travel.

Recommendation

Add another rapid route into, and expand the public transport connections from, West Belconnen.

Public transport infrastructure

While recent media attention has focused on Light Rail Stage 2 from the City to Woden, the Belconnen district cannot be left behind. Until the arrival of light rail to Belconnen, it is imperative to implement infrastructure projects that improve public transport services.

Bus priority measures, such as dedicated bus lanes, should be constructed to enhance service reliability and speed. Noting that the ACT Government's long-term plan is for light rail to underpin our public transport system, these solutions should work with or enable a smooth transition to light rail.

With progression of light rail to Woden expected to continue for several years, the ACT Government must also now act by undertaking studies for Light Rail Stage 3 to improve the east-west transport corridor and support growth in Belconnen. Further, with the existing and projected populations of West Belconnen, Light Rail Stage 3 must go to Kippax.

Funding preliminary community consultation and feasibility studies is essential to minimise the delays that have affected Light Rail Stage 2. These studies should consider possible routes to provide more certainty for broader government investment in bus, 'park and ride', and cycling infrastructure to deliver an integrated public transport system.

Public transport, roads and active travel



Recommendation

Dedicate funding to a comprehensive feasibility study to evaluate short-to-medium-term infrastructure that will improve public transport services.

Recommendation

Provide resources for preliminary feasibility studies and community consultation for the Light Rail Stage Three (City to Belconnen).

Supporting service experience improvements

Investing in quality-of-life improvements such as better lighting and covered bus shelters is critical, and overdue across Belconnen. These enhancements significantly improve commuters' safety and comfort and encourage higher public transport use.

Additionally, expanding park and ride facilities can also improve public transport uptake and alleviate parking congestion across Canberra.

Recommendation

Allocate funding to identify and invest in safety, accessibility, and quality-of-life improvements for public transport stops in Belconnen.

Recommendation

Conduct a thorough investigation into potential sites for new park and ride facilities across Belconnen.

Road safety and efficiency

In the ACT, private vehicles remain the predominant mode of transport, necessitating infrastructure that aligns with community expectations. Although patient and appreciative of concerted efforts for road repair following recent weather patterns, the Belconnen community wants consistent investment to improve road infrastructure.

Ageing roads cross Belconnen urgently need updated road markings and signage to enhance safety, particularly as driving conditions deteriorate. Additionally, with Belconnen's population on the rise, there is broad concern about the apparent lack of focus and planning on traffic management in Belconnen, and in particular for the Belconnen Town Centre.

Important projects include improvements at the Ibbott Lane and Lathlain Street intersection, and long-term projects such as the long-promised duplication of arterial roads both within and surrounding the district.

Public transport, roads and active travel



Recommendation

Designate funds to maintain and enhance road infrastructure to withstand the impacts of climate change, ensuring long-term sustainability and safety.

Recommendation

Allocate resources for detailed evaluation and strategic planning of road and traffic improvements in Belconnen to optimise traffic flow and enhance safety.

Electric vehicle infrastructure

Recent feedback from the BCC's budget survey highlighted strong community interest in expanding electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. The community supports enhancing public and residential charging facilities, particularly for apartments, to pave the way for wider EV adoption. There is genuine community sentiment reflecting a commitment to sustainability and the increasing importance of EVs in daily life.

The BCC commends that the ACT Government bolsters its ongoing efforts to induce demand for corporate investment in charging infrastructure with additional commitments and targeted support to EV businesses, property owners and developers to facilitate the EV transition.

Recommendation

Target electric vehicle infrastructure enhancements in Belconnen.

Improving active transport options

Promoting active transport is a key government policy. The existing footpath and cycleway networks in several Belconnen suburbs and around Lake Ginninderra have been neglected and require urgent attention.

Footpaths are crucial for connecting the community and encouraging outdoor activity and their state of disrepair in Belconnen's well-established suburbs is increasingly dangerous. Further, many footpaths and cycleways could benefit from widening and improved lighting, particularly in areas of high activity, such as around Lake Ginninderra. Footpaths near schools and bus stops also require study, repair, and ongoing maintenance.

Beyond footpaths, cycling infrastructure plays a pivotal role in promoting cycling as a viable alternative to driving within the Belconnen district. To ensure they service this purpose effectively, proactive efforts are needed to future-proof new and updated roads, accommodating the addition of cycling infrastructure as demand continues to increase.

Public transport, roads and active travel



Strategic planning and implementation of safe, attractive, and convenient cycling options can significantly enhance the overall cycling experience. Pedal Power ACT has identified several potential projects that could improve the cycling landscape for residents of Belconnen, focusing on long-term viability and user-friendliness. These include:

- **West Belconnen Path** - A path linking the Barry Drive off-road cycle path through to the west end of Belconnen Way.
- **Belconnen Town Centre** - A separated path on Benjamin Way, a cycle path along Lathlain Street and completion of the Belconnen bikeway at the west end of Emu Bank.
- **Ginninderry Connection** - A network linking Page to the West Belconnen suburbs, and through to Ginninderry.
- **Coulter Drive Path** - A path linking North Belconnen to the Belconnen Town Centre and on toward Molonglo Valley.
- **Barton Highway Crossing** - A safe way of crossing the Barton Highway between Kaleen and Bellenden Street

Recommendation

Commit funds for a rejuvenation project for footpaths across Belconnen.

Recommendation

Commit to expanding and enhancing cycling infrastructure through Belconnen.

Hospitals and healthcare

The North Canberra Hospital (NCH) is the primary hospital for the Belconnen district and is essential for the residents on the north side of Canberra. With predicted population growth increasingly focused in Canberra's north, the importance of NCH will only grow as it begins to service a greater proportion of Canberra's population.

The ACT Government must therefore work with the Federal Government to secure the necessary funding to augment services, particularly those services presently only available at the Canberra Hospital in Garran. Further, we are also informed of mismatches between community expectations and existing facilities (such as parking arrangements) at NCH.

The BCC therefore welcomes the ACT Government's commitment to planning a new North side hospital to replace the NCH. It is critical that the upcoming budget contains the necessary funding to ensure this project is prioritised and delivered in a timely manner.

Key Priority Recommendation

Enhance North Canberra Hospital by boosting services and seeking additional support to bolster service delivery and accelerate the planning and development of new facilities.

Recruitment and retention of healthcare workers

Given the significant challenges of extended wait times and understaffing at both the Canberra Hospital and NCH, the upcoming ACT Budget should also focus on initiatives to attract and retain skilled healthcare professionals.

Committing funds to design and launch incentive programs may help retain staff by offering competitive benefits and position the region as a destination of choice for healthcare talent. It may be time that the scope of those incentives expand beyond direct remuneration and flow into persuasive supports to make residence in Canberra as a healthcare professional a more convincing prospect.

Any such program should also include looking at housing options available to healthcare professionals and seek to expand the supply of affordable housing to primary healthcare staff as a means to both attract and retain these essential workers.

Recommendation

Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to incentivise the recruitment and retention of healthcare workers in Canberra.

Addressing community concerns for health service expansion

Feedback from our recent budget survey indicated significant community concern over several critical healthcare areas.

Hospitals and healthcare

Key themes included:

- Accessibility and affordability of General Practitioner services (particularly in relation to ACT Government support to incentivise bulk billing);
- Improved out-of-houses healthcare options, emphasising alternatives to emergency department visits for non-emergency situations;
- Greater access to specialists was highlighted, with specific focus on extended waitlists for paediatricians and psychiatrists in Canberra;
- Calls for pilot programs or initiatives to support doctors and healthcare services to target increases in efficiency in service delivery for chronic conditions;
- Enhanced dental care services; and
- Expanded access to mental health services.

In response to these concerns, the BCC urges the ACT Government to consider the merits of expanding the range of services offered at walk-in-centres, as well as increasing the number of walk-in centres.

Recommendation

Expand the range of services offered at walk-in centres and commit funding to minimise wait times to incentivise their use.

A health centre for West Belconnen

The BCC welcomed last year's announcement of a health centre for West Belconnen. As outlined in the ACT's Infrastructure Plan Update, it is essential that the government provides a good geographic spread of services close to where people live, especially in areas of future growth.

The BCC is concerned that engagement has been undertaken for the South Tuggeranong site, early site planning and preliminary design are underway for the North Gungahlin and Inner South sites, but no update or timeframe beyond the announcement is available for the West Belconnen site.

Recommendation

Allocate funding in the 2024-2025 budget to begin site planning and design work for the West Belconnen health centre.

Economic development



Enhancing economic viability through government presence

Investment in economic development is essential for enhancing resident's quality of life, attracting businesses, and sustaining the region's competitive edge in dynamic economic conditions. Crucially, the decisions made in the ACT budget should cultivate an environment where both businesses and communities can flourish.

The presence of Federal Government departments in town centres significantly bolsters their economic viability. The Federal Government remains a vital employer in the Belconnen Town Centre, supporting both residential and business communities. With improved transportation options, there is no reason that other government departments or large commercial enterprises cannot be attracted to the Belconnen Town Centre. We urge the ACT Government to facilitate, increase, and service government employment presence in Belconnen, including that of the ACT Government.

Recommendation

Proactive support and encouragement for an ongoing Federal Government presence in the Belconnen Town Centre.

Recommendation

The ACT Government should expand its employment presence in the Belconnen Town Centre.

Fostering business adaptability and attracting investment

With national business uncertainty high due to decade-high interest rates, high input costs, and persistent inflationary pressures, it is imperative that businesses be encouraged and have opportunities to innovate and adapt. We would like to see Belconnen Town Centre promoted as a location of choice to reinvent, repurpose, and redesign their operations.

The BCC suggests that the ACT Government explore avenues to attract greater private and institutional investment to Belconnen, particularly considering the proximity to the University of Canberra, and local retail, hospitality, commercial, and sports facilities. Our input into the draft District Strategies and Territory Plan consultation highlighted the need for a mixed-use design guide to ensure a real blend of compatible uses in Belconnen's zoning.

Recommendation

Support and encourage private and institutional investment in the Belconnen Town Centre and across the Belconnen district.

Strengthening retail and local employment through infrastructure

Robust residential growth in Belconnen has spurred demand for street-level retail and local employment opportunities, signs of successful urban renewal that should be supported.

An investment by the ACT Government into enhancing both the town centre and local centres would further promote street-level retail and improve out-of-hours amenities.

Economic development



Local centres serve as vital community hubs and should be developed to reflect their central role in community life. The BCC supports the ACT Government's ongoing shopping centre improvements program, which has already enhanced features at the Charnwood shops and the South Kaleen shopping centre. It is crucial that these upgrades continue systematically to ensure consistent improvement across all local centres.

To further enhance community spaces, several upgrades are recommended to transform local centres into more welcoming and functional areas. Additional seating areas should be installed at shops to create inviting spaces where people can gather and socialise, enriching the community feel. Upgrades at local shops are also encouraged to modernise facilities and improve the overall shopping experience, making these centres more appealing to residents and visitors.

The introduction and retrofitting of playgrounds at strategic locations within these centres can make them more family-friendly and increase their appeal to younger residents. It's also crucial to ensure that all facilities are accessible to people with disabilities, promoting inclusivity. Moreover, a commitment to maintaining and upgrading the infrastructure surrounding local shops, including pathways, lighting, public toilet facilities, and the natural environment, is essential.

These enhancements will ensure that local centres are safe, appealing and functional, fostering a strong sense of community and well-being among residents.

Recommendation

Continue, and expand, funding for the shopping centre improvements program.

Housing



Tackling housing challenges

Access to good quality housing is a fundamental human need, crucial for all residents of the ACT. Despite its importance, the current housing market is increasingly inaccessible for many, necessitating urgent government action to improve sector-wide conditions.

The absence of affordable, well-located housing impacts Canberra's ability to attract in-demand workers and in turn, grow the economy. To counter this, the ACT Government should conduct a comprehensive analysis of the housing market, encompassing owner-occupied homes, short and long-term rentals, and public housing. It is also critical to understand demographic shifts that could influence future housing demand.

Internationally, studies and policies in various jurisdictions have emphasised the critical role of maintaining a steady, abundant supply of both private and public housing to stabilise or reduce housing costs. The ACT Government should examine these international examples and academic research to identify effective practices that could address local supply issues and ensure that housing is available in central, well-located areas. The government should then adopt policies with clear, measurable objectives to ensure these best practices are effectively implemented.

Furthermore, the government should commit to significant increasing funding for the construction, acquisition, and maintenance of public housing. This should be part of a broader strategy that includes policies promoting appropriate infill development while preserving Canberra's cherished natural surroundings.

Recommendation

Implement strategies to ensure housing in the ACT is more affordable and accessible, aligning with best international practices, and tailored to meet the community's evolving needs.

Recommendation

Increase funding for constructing, acquiring, and maintaining public housing in Belconnen.

Education, community, and recreation



Investing in education is foundational for long-term social benefits and economic growth, equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive. Quality education promotes social equality by allowing all children to succeed, regardless of their background.

Well-funded schools provide superior resources, technology, and learning environments that are crucial for enhancing student engagement and academic performance. By investing in education the ACT Government invests in the immediate welfare of its students and the sustainable development and prosperity of the region.

Educational facilities in the Belconnen Town Centre

It is well established that there is simultaneously decreasing land availability combined with new residential developments in the Belconnen Town Centre. Despite this, there is limited activity in relation to securing and developing a school site in the Belconnen Town Centre.

As more residential developments rise into the Belconnen skyline, the need for a local school becomes increasingly urgent to cater to the growing number of families. A centrally located school will reduce travel times, alleviate traffic, and service as a modern community hub.

Key Priority Recommendation

Deliver education to Belconnen by identifying, securing, and commencing the planning of a school site in the Belconnen Town Centre.

Strathnairn school development

The BCC notes the delay in the construction and opening of Ginninderry's first early childhood education centre and Primary to Year 6 school in Strathnairn. The school had been promoted as being ready to open in 2025, however, this has been delayed to 2026.

We call on the ACT Government to commit additional resources to accelerate the project, and ensure no further delays, to support the growing community with a significant number of young families expecting that their children may be supported and educated by the ACT where they live.

Recommendation

Prioritise resources for school planning and construction work to ensure that there are no further delays for the Strathnairn school.

Support for educators and technological enhancements in education

Modern, technology-equipped educational environments are essential. As with the rest of the ACT, schools in the Belconnen area must keep pace with rapid technological advancements to ensure our students are not disadvantaged.

Education, community, and recreation



By increasing funding for technology and infrastructure upgrades, we can create learning spaces that are not only conducive to current educational practices, but are also adaptable and future-ready.

Additionally, teachers are the cornerstone of our educational system. Their role extends beyond teaching; they inspire, guide, nurture, and shape our children's future. However, the increasing demands and challenges on educators necessitate investment in additional supports. Such support could come in various forms, including, but not limited to, professional development, improved working conditions, and resources to aid in their teaching.

Recommendation

Commit additional funding for technology and infrastructure upgrades in Belconnen's schools.

Recommendation

Increased funding for administrative, learning, and training support to attract and retain teaching staff.

Policing resources in the Belconnen District

Concerns persist regarding the adequacy of police resources in the Belconnen district, which have not kept pace with the area's population growth. In past submissions, the BCC has strongly advocated for establishing a police presence at Kippax as West Belconnen continues to expand. To effectively address these concerns, developing a clear and structured timeline is imperative to outline the enhancement and deployment of additional ACT Policing resources throughout Belconnen.

Recommendation

Establish a clear timeline for increasing ACT Policing resources in the Belconnen district, including in West Belconnen, and for a new Belconnen police station.

Funding for community councils

Like all community councils in the ACT, the BCC is a volunteer-led organisation that is important in fostering community engagement and advocacy. To further build reach and effectiveness of volunteer efforts, the BCC seeks additional funding for Community Councils. Such an increase will provide essential resources to empower community councils like the BCC to serve their communities better, driving more effective community advocacy and engagement.

Recommendation

Increase the value of the Deed of Grant provided to Community Councils.

Education, community, and recreation



Revitalisation of Canberra Stadium

A new Canberra Stadium continues to offer significant potential as a key entertainment and sports hub for the ACT. The current stadium's location provides access via major roads and existing and future transport connections makes it ideal for major events and would promote a vibrant entertainment precinct outside the City, akin to Olympic Park in Sydney.

This approach avoids the compromises and costs required for a Civic stadium, including the lowering of Parkes Way and ensures Canberra remains a home for national sporting teams and a destination for international sporting and entertainment events. Further, the Bruce precinct would hold opportunities for development, including restaurants, bars, and additional amenities that enhance visitor experiences.

Key Priority Recommendation

Commit to the Canberra Stadium remaining in Bruce and progress planning work to deliver a modern stadium and entertainment precinct for the ACT.

About the Belconnen Community Council



A not-for-profit community organisation

The BCC is a spirited and proactive voice of the residents and businesses of Belconnen. Established 1991, the BCC has continuously promoted the wellbeing and development of our community.

As a non-political, volunteer-driven organisation, we aim to be at the forefront of advocating and nurturing for our region, making it an even more attractive place to live, work, and enjoy life.

The Belconnen Community Council receives support and funding from the ACT Government.

belconnen.org.au/get-involved/