

Submission to the ACT Budget Consultation – Strengthening Sport and Recreation in Woden Valley

I am writing to encourage the ACT Government to prioritise investment in higher-quality, more accessible sporting and recreation infrastructure across Canberra, with a particular focus on Woden Valley. As Canberra continues to grow rapidly—with population projections indicating the city is on track for nearly 700,000 residents by 2050 and around 800,000 by 2065—our local infrastructure needs to keep pace with demand in both established and growing districts.

Woden Valley is experiencing significant urban densification, with many new apartment developments around the town centre and surrounding suburbs. This growth is positive, but it increases the need for nearby, high-quality, multi-use community facilities that support health, wellbeing, youth development, and social cohesion. The budget consultation framework explicitly includes “jobs, sports, arts, culture and entertainment,” and this is a clear opportunity to deliver a practical, community-wide wellbeing dividend.

At the same time, several large green spaces—including the ovals in Lyons and Chifley—are not maintained at a level that enables meaningful community sport. In their current condition, they are often used primarily for informal activities such as dog walking rather than organised recreation. The recent addition of a playground at Lyons Oval is a welcome improvement, and it signals strong local demand for increased community activation of the space.

I encourage the Government to consider repurposing **Lyons Oval** into a major multi-sport centre for southern Canberra. A thoughtful redesign could include:

- a dedicated dog area similar to Yarralumla’s model,
- a multi-court indoor facility suitable for basketball and adaptable for indoor soccer, netball, and training uses,
- retained and upgraded outdoor oval space with cricket nets and versatile open recreation areas, and
- sensible parking and amenity upgrades to support regular community use.

This kind of hub would support the growing Woden community, reduce pressure on other over-subscribed venues, and generate flow-on benefits for local businesses through increased visitation and event activity. It would also align well with future transport access. The ACT Government’s current Light Rail to Woden program shows Stage 2A is underway with services expected to commence in 2028, strengthening the case for planning community infrastructure now that will be well-served by improved connectivity over time.

Finally, I strongly support retaining the **Woden pool** as an essential piece of community infrastructure. If budgets allow, the Government could explore a longer-term option of integrating aquatic facilities with a future Lyons Oval multi-sport precinct, creating a genuinely comprehensive recreation destination for the district.

In short, Woden Valley’s growth makes this an ideal moment to invest in modern, high-quality, multi-use facilities that reflect Canberra’s aspirations as a healthy, liveable, family-friendly city. A flagship redevelopment at Lyons Oval, combined with continued support for the Woden pool, would be a practical and highly visible commitment to community wellbeing in the southern suburbs.