

# Stormwater Upgrades at Dickson Shops

Dickson Residents Group (DRG) is seeking budget support for upgrades to the stormwater infrastructure underlying the core Dickson Shops (enclosed by Badham Street, Dickson Place, Cowper Street and Antill Street) in the 2025-26 ACT budget. This work is needed now to address safety and economic issues, and to ensure that the Dickson shops upgrade already budgeted for 2025-26 is not undone by future stormwater works.

The stormwater infrastructure underlying this area is aging and no longer adequate to handle requirements. After rain, there are many large pools that form around drains, creating fall hazards and potential intrusion into shops. Downpipes on buildings also back up and cause overflow from gutters and penetration into buildings. These barriers hinder access to shopfronts as well as public transport in the area.

This is both dangerous for all visitors to the shops (especially those with limited mobility) as well as expensive for shopkeepers and the wider community. These issues not only affect the daily operations of the shops but also impact the overall attractiveness and functionality of the area, discouraging visitors and reducing economic activity. The situation continues to deteriorate so it is clear that upgrades will be required in the near future.



Dickson Shops after recent rain showing water backup from drain. Note pools cover nearly entire width of public space.



Blocked drains in Taglietti Square

The City Renewal Authority (CRA) will be undertaking a significant renovation to the core Dickson shops in 2025-26, and has consulted DRG about this upgrade, including ways to minimise disruption to shops. The upgrade will entail relaying of paving across the area, as well as other works. We have recently become aware that funding for repairs to the stormwater underlying the area is not yet secured for 2025-26. This is despite Chief Minister's Barr letter to the DRG of 22 January 2025 stating that the CRA's plans for the Dickson upgrade included "[s]tormwater system improvements to reduce flooding."

This leads to the almost unthinkable possibility that the CRA could spend millions of dollars upgrading the shops area, then have it all torn up again shortly after to complete the stormwater upgrades. This would be an embarrassing waste of taxpayer money caused by a failure to integrate infrastructure works in Dickson. It would also add yet further disruption to shopkeepers who are already struggling to remain financially viable.

By including funding for stormwater upgrades in the 2025-26 budget, the ACT Government can ensure a seamless and efficient implementation of the overall redevelopment plan for the Dickson Shops. This approach will not only save resources but also demonstrate thoughtful and sustainable urban planning. By addressing stormwater issues upfront, the government can help pave the way for a successful and

enduring transformation of the Dickson Shops, enhancing its appeal and functionality for years to come.

Funding for upgrading the Dickson Stormwater Infrastructure relates to a range of areas in the ACT Government's Wellbeing Framework:

- Health and Safety – Improved stormwater management reduces trip and slip hazards in a busy pedestrian area
- Social Connection and Connectivity – By making the Dickson shops safer and more attractive, it encourages community access and interaction.
- Economy – the Dickson shops are currently facing a number of challenges. Upgrading the stormwater system will make the area safer, more accessible and more attractive, thereby promoting greater visitation. Ensuring this work is completed with the shops upgrade will also reduce disruption to the shopping area, which will minimise impacts to shops.
- Governance and Institutions – completing this work in conjunction with the shops upgrade demonstrates integrated decision-making and efficient use of government resources. Not doing so will lead to extensive duplication and waste of effort and resources.
- Climate Change – climate change is likely to lead to greater recurrence of heavy storms; with current infrastructure, the risk of serious inundation in the shops area will increase, leading to increased risks of accidents and serious economic impacts.

### **About Dickson Residents Group**

We are volunteers from the Dickson community who work to ensure Dickson remains a highly liveable, socially inclusive, safe and sustainable community. Our stated role is “to represent, serve and advance the interests of all Dickson residents, particularly those who may be vulnerable or less able to represent their own interests.” You can find out more at <https://dickson.org.au>.