Planning and Infrastructure to Build Community

For a just and fair Canberra, the next ACT Government must:

- **Carry out an audit and stocktake of community needs in planning and transport including community facilities**

- **Demonstrate a renewed focus on social planning and engagement with marginalised groups**

- **Develop a policy framework and investment model for the long-term provision of community facilities across the city leading to proper funding for community facilities and community development**

- **Require developers to build community infrastructure into new developments**

- **Provide appropriate incentives and place greater responsibilities on developers to create community facilities and make developed spaces more liveable**

- **Guarantee on-demand transport (like community transport) as well as mass transit (like trams and buses)**

- **Develop a cost benefit business case to make travel on public transport free**

- **Fund the Community Development Network for the ACT and Region (CDNet).**

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The issue

Canberra is a growing city with the population set to reach half a million over the next decade, with changing demographics including:

- New suburbs or densification of suburbs without supporting social, community or commercial infrastructure

- More casual and precarious workers accessing transport at different times

- Fraying community facilities in Canberra – often old schools that no longer meet community expectations for energy efficiency, occupational health and safety and disability access

- Many schools inaccessible to communities outside of school hours

- A lack of funded community development workers

- Economic and structural shocks including the bushfires, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

These changes **mean an audit and stocktake of community needs including community facilities, community services and transport is urgent and overdue**. An audit would acknowledge the changing demographic characteristics of each ACT region, levels of disadvantage and the respective requirement for new and / or improved facilities and services.

ACTCOSS supports **better planning and more *social* planning**. To achieve a sustainable, connected and harmonious community need with a focus on people who face disadvantage, we support a **greater emphasis on community co-design**, consultation and engagement of both urban space and transport infrastructure by users in their communities.

This should include **pro-active consultation with people most effected by planning and transport decisions** including people with disability, young people, Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander people, women, and groups representing low-income and marginalised Canberrans. This will require targeted engagement with these communities and capacity building of communities on issues relating to social planning and policy. This could include the development of social planning policy capacity and resources within ACT Government, such as a community development coordinator and / or a social planning team.

Based on outcomes of an audit and stocktake, an incoming ACT Government must better fund community facilities and community development, including ongoing support for CDNet. This should include requirements / incentives for developers to build community infrastructure into new developments, especially in medium density settings. We also call for the development of a policy framework and investment model for long-term provision of community facilities across the city.

Transport investments need to meet actual community need, not only mass transit requirements. This includes those most at risk of social disconnection – people without cars, people with disabilities and people on low incomes. This includes casual and precarious

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workers moving outside of the traditional 9-5 mass transit time periods. We need a new ACT Government to:

- Carry out a comprehensive community needs assessment to ensure transport design, planning, integration and implementation address the needs of those with transport disadvantage

- Invest in community transport at sustainable levels with long-term commitments so that providers can renew vehicle stock and plan across a multi-year timeframe. There should be a specific community needs analysis for community transport

- Improve other on-demand transport provision including lifting the cap on the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme for people with disabilities, as well as delivering full compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act Transport Standards across the bus network

- Improve the fairness and adequacy of transport-related concessions by extending concessions to learner, probationary and restricted driver's licences, aligning the discount on licence fees for Health Care Card holders (currently 50% of costs) with Pension Card Holders (100%)

- Investigate the costs and benefits of making all public transport free through a cost benefit analysis.

The evidence

- There is an absence of data on the transport and infrastructure needs of vulnerable Canberrans and this is one reason why we have called for a comprehensive needs analysis, audit and stocktake.

- Population projections indicate our city will **need to cater for over 600,000 people** by 2050.[1]

- Our **population is ageing**. In 2016, 12% of our population was aged 65 or over, with that figure expected to continue to rise.[2] The change in our demographic profile has significant implications for housing provision, community services and infrastructure.

- The ACT has **significant pockets of transport disadvantage** including for people who face barriers to moving around the city and people without cars.

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1 ACT Government, *Canberra's living infrastructure plan: cooling the city*, ACT Government, 2019, https://apo.org.au/node/259131.
2 ACT Government, *A growing and diversifying population*, ACT Planning Strategy website, n.d., https://www.planning.act.gov.au/act-planning-strategy/setting-the-scene/a-growing-and-diversifying-population.

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- Transport is the third highest category of expenditure for low-income households in the ACT after housing and food.[3]

- Both socially advantaged and socially disadvantaged people can experience transport disadvantage, however, the nature of this disadvantage differs. For socially disadvantaged groups, transport difficulties tend to relate to the ability to access transport and the costs of travel, whereas for socially advantaged groups, transport difficulties tend to relate to traffic congestion and time availability.[4]

- Australians in the bottom income quintiles experience transport difficulties far more frequently than those in the top quintile.[5]

- There is a well-established relationship between transport disadvantage, social exclusion and poor health and wellbeing outcomes.[6]

- The ABS note that a city which is car dependent may restrict their access to services, employment, shops, social and other activities – Australian adults without access to a passenger vehicle stated that a lack of transport was the second most common reason (20%), behind health reasons (53%), for not attending cultural venues or events, including botanic gardens, zoos, museums or public libraries. For those who had access to a passenger vehicle, only 3% identified a lack of transport as a barrier to attendance.[7]

Testimonials

"The need for adequate community transport is the backbone to supporting vulnerable people in our community to access essential services. If we had the additional funds to do so, we could transport so many more people for their medical, social and educational needs." – Jenny Kitchin, CEO, Woden Community Service

"There is a need for more visioning and framing of transport as a tool to addressing the barriers, hardship and stress experienced by people who are on low incomes or face other barriers to participation….accessibility has multiple dimensions (for young people, women, low income people and people with different diagnostic disabilities). Not only does transport

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3   ABS, *6530.0 - Household Expenditure Survey, Australia: Summary of Results, 2015-16*, ABS, 2017, https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6530.0.

4   K Rosier and M McDonald, *The relationship between transport and disadvantage in Australia*, Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2011, https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/relationship-between-transport-and-disadvantage-austr.

5   ibid.

6   L Ma, J Kent and C Mulley, 'Transport disadvantage, social exclusion, and subjective well-being: The role of the neighborhood environment—evidence from Sydney, Australia', *The Journal of Transport and Land Use*, 2018, vol. 11, no. 1, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26622389#metadata_info_tab_contents.

7   ABS, *4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, July 2013*, ABS, 2011, https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40July+2013.

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need to be integrated but strategies themselves need to be integrated – with each other and within themselves" – Moving Canberra Transport Think Tank, June 2019

"ACTCOSS suggests that housing choice needs to be about more than densification, but about ensuring that new development is accompanied by adequate social and community infrastructure, adequate greenspace and, above all, that it delivers more affordable housing within the reach of people in the lower income deciles" – Dr Emma Campbell, CEO, ACTCOSS

"There is a fundamental need for an audit to determine the needs for community facilities, including the needs of service delivery and support that are essential for people with disability, mental health, parenting support and justice liaison from the AMC to reintegrating into the community. Too many services are required that may seem unsustainable but are desperately needed for members of the community in order to participate and feel included" – Bonnie Millen, Senior Policy Advisor, Advocacy for Inclusion.

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