



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
PLANNING**

(Reference: [Inquiry into the Role and Future of the Woden Town Centre in the context of a compact city](#))

Members:

MS J CLAY (Chair)
MS F CARRICK (Deputy Chair)
MR P CAIN
MS C TOUGH

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2025

Secretary to the committee:
Mr J Bunce (Ph: 620 50199)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.51 am

ADAMS, MR TOM, President, Phillip Business Community

OUVRIER, MS MARIA, Strategic Adviser, Southside Farmers Market

SKEIN, MR WAYNE, Proprietor, Southside Farmers Market and Managing Director,
Canberra Martial Arts and Fitness

THE CHAIR: Good morning, and welcome to the second day of hearings for the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning for our inquiry into the role and the future of the Woden town centre in a context of a compact city. Today we will hear from the business community, local residents, the Property Council and then the ACT government.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and the region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending or participating in today's event or watching from somewhere else.

This hearing is a legal proceeding of the Assembly and has the same standing as a legal proceeding of the Assembly. That means that today's evidence attracts parliamentary privilege. It also means that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. The hearing is being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and it will be published. We are also broadcasting and web streaming live. There was a bit of interest in yesterday's hearings; so there might be a bit of an audience out there today.

If you take a question on notice, please say, "I will take that on notice." That helps our secretariat to track down the answers. We do not often expect our community representatives to take questions on notice, but do that if you would like to. We are a bit tougher with our government representatives than we are with our community reps.

We welcome Phillip Business Community and Southside Farmers Market. Thank you for joining us today. Can you please state the capacity in which you are appearing today?

Ms Ouvrier: My name is Maria Ouvrier. I am also known as "Papastamos", professionally. I represent the Southside Farmers Market as an adviser. I am also a store holder there.

Mr Skein: I own and have operated the Farmers Markets for 10 years. I am also a store holder at the markets. We produce apples and beef in the Snowy Mountains up near Tumut.

Mr Adam: I am here representing both the Phillip Business Community, as the President—still, somehow—and also as the Managing Director of Canberra Martial Arts and Fitness.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will each ask a question, and we will go from there.

Would anyone like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Skein: I would like to make a brief opening statement.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to give us your short opening statement?

Mr Skein: I would love to. The Southside Farmers Market is a cornerstone of the community life in Woden, connecting local producers with residents and fostering a vibrant and sustainable food culture. However, as Woden's population continues to grow, the market's current infrastructure is no longer adequate to meet the needs, vendors or visitors of Woden, limiting accessibility. Insufficient amenities and a layout that cannot handle increasing foot traffic are impacting the market's ability to deliver a safe, enjoyable experience. Upgrading the infrastructure is essential to ensure the markets remain a thriving hub for commerce, community engagement and local economic development.

THE CHAIR: Thank you so much, and thank you for your submission as well. Tom, I am going to ask you the first question. Last term, I was on the committee on the Territory Plan, when it turned out that the area had been rezoned without consultation with the Phillip Trades, apparently. We asked a whole lot of questions and the government told us that they were in excellent communication with the Phillip Trades now and they were on top of the problem. Can you just tell me, briefly, where we are up to and what sort of interaction you have had with the government?

Mr Adam: I am glad you asked that question. In June or July we had a meeting with Minister Steel in the Northbourne office, in Dickson. Also at that meeting were business owners. Most of the people there were real estate agents and commercial property owners. We talked about the fact that the zoning down the middle of the Phillip business precinct was originally for dual zoning—so ground floor commercial, second floor commercial and then two stories of residential. But there was some variation in the actual rules about the no definition of heights. They removed that and they have made the entire thing and kept it at two stories of commercial. Unfortunately, there had been some purchases before the town plan was changed, and there was no indication of that. Our actual representation to the zoning changes was, “We do not have a problem with residential as long as there is not a reduction in the commercial footprint.” But, somehow, that got translated into “no residential”. So the discussion was that they were taking into consideration turning that zoning back again to residential, but there was no commitment made.

There was a lot of frustration from the property owners as well as the business owners in the area. The precinct, between Athlon and Hindmarsh, has had nothing substantial done to it—I have been there 15 years, and I know for a fact that, in the last 25, nothing has happened—and building owners are not going to invest in replacing like for like if there is no commercial interest to do so, apart from façade work.

THE CHAIR: Interesting. There was a lot of talk, when we opened this issue up, that Phillip Trades could become the southside Braddon; that that would be very nice; and that the government was very interested in shop-top housing. Two and a half years later, if there has been no commitment even to the zoning change let alone no zoning change, have you been told a timeline for when this issue is going to get resolved?

Mr Adam: Absolutely not, no.

THE CHAIR: Interesting.

Mr Adam: It is a frustration, because one of the considerations that we made back in the submission that I did in 2018 or 2019, from memory—because COVID does tend to blur things—was for the Phillip business community to also connect with the zoning that runs along Athlon Drive, between Hindmarsh and Mawson, to be considered for not just residential townhouses but also cafes and restaurants to make the streets more active. The current development that is north of Hindmarsh Drive to the east of basically where the government is deemed to Woden is very much just ticky-tacky rows of townhouses, like where I live out at Denman, with only a few minor shops. From the business community's perspective, it feels that the push is to focus really, really, heavily on the commercial side north of Hindmarsh Drive, and there is no action, apart from one-twelfth of \$1.25 million spent on a public toilet back in 2022.

THE CHAIR: Tom, we will have Planning Minister Steel for us to ask some questions of later on today, and we can put questions on notice. We asked him questions about this two and a half years ago. What questions would you like us to ask him, to see if we can get a different outcome now than we have had on this issue since 2018?

Mr Adam: Excuse my French, but it is like nailing turd to the wall when asking questions. But the question would be: could the government please display to anybody in Woden how there has been any effort to integrate south of Hindmarsh Drive's business community and business precinct into Woden proper?

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Thank you.

MS CARRICK: I would like to continue on this for a moment. Is there a document or anything that shows what the vision for the Phillip trades precinct is for 20 years or 30 years and where we are going with all of this?

Mr Adam: It would be great to see one of those. We have put in submissions. I wrote a 2020 piece that the Greens actually took into their agreement with Labor after the 2020 election to look at extending the tram to the Mawson shops. I am a proponent for the tram. So I just put that on the table. I think the trams are actually a good idea. I am actually quoted on ABC television as saying, "Woden does not finish at Westfield." That was in 2020 as well. That got me some grief.

It feels that there is very much a force to keep the commercial developers happy in the big end of town. Basically, south of Hindmarsh, all the properties are owned by smaller investors, and they are keen to do some work. Some have passed away recently and they are being sold off. But the properties are not going to be purchased and developed if there is no town plan. There is no looking at integrating it into it.

There is no safe way to walk from the Phillip precinct across to Woden without crossing several streets. One of the submissions we are going to be putting into the budget for next year is to replace the roundabout at Townsend and Botany with a set of lights, because of so many near misses. But it seems to be ad-hoc. I cannot even get a parking

plan put through. The last time the minister asked me to get consensus between the car yards and the mechanics and all the businesses that use all the parking area. It is like getting my mother and my aunt to agree about who is going to have Christmas. They are never going to agree on what is going to happen because it does not suit either party.

I have said to them, “You are the government; you need to make the tough decisions. If you do not make the tough decisions that need to be made, they are never going to be made, because the community cannot make a consensus on certain things.” There is a need for a town plan that connects from Mawson all the way up to the big roundabout. Everybody calls it the big roundabout. That is how I have always known it. There is no town plan. There is no town vision. I would love to see one, and I know that a lot of the business owners would have some input in it. A lot of the commercial property owners probably would not enjoy more smaller, commercial dual zoning, because that would increase competition and potentially keep rents down. There is a massive issue with commercial rents just being off tap and buildings being 25 per cent empty.

MS CARRICK: When you had your round table with the minister, were there discussions about how in the trades precinct you co-locate housing and trades? We often hear about how in Braddon the trades have been pushed out once the housing came. Have we had any discussions about how we are going to co-locate these and keep our trades there in addition to the housing?

Mr Adam: I pointed out with some irony that my business was above a tyre shop for four years and I did not have any issues with them. There were concerns about businesses that would make noise. But I do think that there would be an opportunity for, I do not know, some pragmatism when it comes to these things. A busy tyre shop is a great example because they use nematic drills early in the morning but they are not doing that sort of work before 7.30 in the morning and they are not going to be making noise after 4 o'clock or 4.30 in the afternoon.

But, again, this is the same problem that was looked at in Fortitude Valley in Brisbane. They had night clubs and things like that. If you are going to develop the buildings, then you need to develop for noise, but you also need to, I think, have a little bit of zoning in there for tenants that you cannot make a complaint about a business conducting its business during the day. There are always going to be problems. There was quite a bit of hesitation and fear coming from the government officials there. But the business community people are prepared to be pragmatic.

I run my business from 4.00 pm until 8.00 pm. We lock the door after 7 o'clock. The noise is all contained within the building. If I can function a business with people screaming and shouting and choking each other, wearing pyjamas in a padded room, I think a business can do nematic drills after 7.30 in the morning.

THE CHAIR: You just described cabinet.

MS CARRICK: Yes, but I guess the point is that things do not just happen by chance; there needs to be some planning about how they co-exist and having some rules around it.

Mr Adam: Yes; absolutely. A consideration would also be how you put those into

mandatory parts of strata rules, so that you do not get frivolous complaints. If you are purchasing a property, you have access to review the rules. I am in a strata and there were certain rules about the number of pets, how much noise and blah, blah, blah. If you want to seek an amendment to that, you can try. The law may say that, in this dual zone, businesses can operate from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm or restaurants until 10 o'clock, as long as they have the noise inside—or whatever it is—but people will always complain. Somebody made, I think, 4,000 complaints about the airlines landing in Sydney airport when they bought a house underneath the flight path.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: My questions are for Wayne and Maria around the Southside Markets. Currently they are operating at Canberra College. But, in the submission, you have put in having like a purpose-built space. I am wondering why you would like to move out of Canberra College? Could you just expand on that a bit more. What sites have you identified where you could potentially have a purpose-built site?

Ms Ouvrier: The Canberra College was an ideal space a few years ago. It is no longer fit for purpose. The markets are expanding. With the footprint in Phillip, with all the new apartments and high rises that have gone up—and I am an apartment dweller close by—we do not have a safe space to expand any more, and there is a demand for it.

MS TOUGH: It is really great to hear that it is in such great demand.

Ms Ouvrier: We also look at the plights of farmers that come to the markets who are subject to weather. It is kind of a disadvantage to them when it is raining, because they lose sales.

Mr Skein: That happened last week. We took a third of our stock home. Some of that is perishable. We could not bring it back the following week. And it wasn't just me; the mushroom guy next to me, who goes to so much effort to grow his mushrooms, plans ahead. He had copious amounts of mushrooms that he had brought to the markets, but at 10 o'clock we got a downpour and everyone bolted. He was left with boxes and boxes of mushrooms that he has worked so hard to bring and—

Ms Ouvrier: It impacts on vendors but also the economy in general. The cashflow immediately stops and produce is lost. It also discourages other potential vendors from outside the area joining the markets.

We are limited. We do not have many options to grow. I think going into a space like the CIT, where there is also the Woden town centre, it is two levels, you can disperse the foot traffic; make it safer for vendors to bring their goods in and to set up; create an undercover space area; and use the amenities that are already there. The new amenities that you would have to erect would be minimal, because CIT would already have established all their toiletries, and the same with Woden. We also like the idea of creating foot traffic for other businesses. So when they do come to the markets, they are passing through all those spaces.

MS TOUGH: Yes, coffee shops and all those—

Ms Ouvrier: So it is inviting. If you look at the other farmers market, you have to drive there and you are not creating traffic flow to other businesses, because you have to stop at that market and park and there is nothing else around.

Mr Skein: It is isolating, yes. That is the Saturday market.

Ms Ouvrier: I think we have been really lucky with the school. They have been fantastic. Their hospitality has been wonderful. But they do understand our limitations as well. We are working in closely with them to free up their space, because, as an education department, they have to make it available to the community all weekend not just to the farmer's market. So we would free up that space for them to provide other businesses or other schools, related to the education department, the ability to rent that facility.

Education departments, as we all know, should be leasing that space out on the weekend to educationally-related activities or businesses. Ours is kind of like that, because we can provide market stalls with education stall holders. Environmental stall holders can set up there and provide education to the public. But, if we moved, it would just give them more opportunities. It would give us a larger space, fit for purpose, and we would be able to expand and bring out a lot more farmers, who need that income.

Mr Skein: Yes.

Ms Ouvrier: Wayne, how many market stalls are you running at the moment?

Mr Skein: Sixty to 70. We cannot really take any more in. I am knocking a few stall holders back at the moment. I am saying, "I am sorry, I would love to accommodate you, but we cannot fit any more in." There are other spaces within the college, but we are very restricted on how we can get into those spaces.

Ms Ouvrier: I would like to see people who live up to 300 kilometres away, but we need to expand.

Mr Skein: Short food miles. But we have got to expand to say a 300-kilometre radius of Canberra, which covers the South Coast, where I am two and a half hours away; the Sydney basin, and there are a lot of market gardens around the Sydney area; and even out west. We have a guy from Dubbo who sells beef. On the capacity in the farmers market now, I cannot really expand anymore because we have no room. But we have got the traffic. We have got the people coming through. It is a vibrant and busy little hub on a Saturday morning. But, like Maria mentioned, a few weeks ago it poured down rain at 10 o'clock. Everybody basically left the markets and we were left with produce and we were like, "Now what do we do? Do we take it home?"

Ms Ouvrier: Also, we do not have any facility to accommodate the farmers when they do get to the markets. Many years ago, as an office worker, I had the luxury of air-conditioning, a table, and everything else and I would come to work and be in a safe environment. Farmers are out in the field, they stock up, they drive for up to four or five hours, they set up and they battle the weather, and then they have to pack up and drive home again. They are our backbone, and what do we do for them? Nothing.

MS TOUGH: What area in the CIT are you interested in using?

Ms Ouvrier: The new CIT that was built in Woden. The last time I saw it, it was probably three or four months ago. I do not know if it has changed since then in terms of trees and what they have put in—which could obstacles, navigating around them. We would need a space that does not have a lot of sculpture—

Mr Skein: We need vehicle movement, and I am not sure whether it is possible for that area.

MS CARRICK: It does have a road going through it.

MS TOUGH: It is not open yet, though.

MS CARRICK: We do not want it to open for traffic but for access to the markets.

Mr Skein: Yes, well access. I am sorry if I am getting sidetracked.

MS TOUGH: No; this is helpful.

Mr Skein: To operate a farmers market that is practical for everybody, we need to be able to drive our vehicles. If what I am point to is our stall and this is the walking area, we need our vehicles to be left here or our trailers. We may take our vehicles out, because when we pack up, we pack down and pack into our trailers. But some of the producers run their produce out of their vans and bring it out as they need to, because it is perishable.

MS TOUGH: That makes sense.

Mr Skein: So we would need vehicle access into parts of that that CIT area. I do believe in the top section—I have had a look myself—there is a big bollard there that could be freed up. But I am not sure what impact that will have on that area if you are allowing, say, a cargo van in there to unload their eggs or whatever it may be. I love the spot, but we need to be able to have vehicle access in and out of that area.

MS TOUGH: Yes.

Ms Ouvrier: I love the monorail along that site that will run there. It is pie-in-the-sky stuff, but I can see an above-ground monorail, that encircles the whole of Woden—and the main stop is the farmers market.

Mr Skein: I immediately think of the Simpsons when you say monorail.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Skein: Another place of interest that Marie and I have discussed is the Callum Offices area. It is a massive area. What is that big building opposite there?

MS CARRICK: Callum Offices.

MS TOUGH: Yes.

Mr Skein: It is like something you see in Star Wars.

Ms Ouvrier: It was the first offices in Canberra, I think, isn't it?

MS TOUGH: It is heritage listed, but it is not in use.

Mr Skein: Why can't use it?

THE CHAIR: We ran this through hearings last term. It would cost \$80 million to get it up to that—

Mr Skein: \$80 million?

MS TOUGH: Yes, fire standards and a whole range of other things.

THE CHAIR: That is the quote that has come back from government and the private sector.

Mr Skein: So it is pretty aged?

Ms Ouvrier: It is not level.

MS TOUGH: It has drainage issues and air pressure issues.

Mr Skein: Why not just demolish it?

Mr Adam: It is heritage listed.

Mr Skein: Well, let the heritage listed pay \$80 million then.

Ms Ouvrier: I like the CIT because it would help shoppers do their groceries and then move next door into Woollies and get their bedsheets.

MS TOUGH: Yes.

Ms Ouvrier: So your introducing for one person potentially three different sites of purchase.

MS CARRICK: You could have your destination.

MS TOUGH: Thank you.

MR CAIN: I have a shortish question regarding the markets and then one about Phillip. There are the markets at EPIC, at the north end of town. Have you thought about the south end, in Tuggeranong, as maybe an easier way to get the parcel and the coverage that you need? I know it is a Woden town centre inquiry.

MS CARRICK: We do not want to lose our markets, Peter.

MR CAIN: Sorry, Fiona.

MS CARRICK: Far out!

MR CAIN: Just to make it happen, I guess.

MS TOUGH: Tuggeranong is a great place.

Ms Ouvrier: Woden is the new centre of Canberra—

MR CAIN: And there are a lot of farming districts close to that end of town.

Ms Ouvrier: Yes, coming off the Monaro Highway. To me, Woden is the new central town centre. If you are going to use the rail system, you really want to take advantage of the transport links, and that is where all the transport links are. Tuggeranong is not that far for people with farms in Cooma, and it is a few extra clicks up the road to Woden.

MR CAIN: You are not thinking of something like the Fyshwick markets or the new Belconnen markets? Your vision could not fit into something like that, I assume.

Mr Skein: I was approached by the committee at the Belconnen markets, when they were developing it, to become a stallholder there. Logistically for me, as a farmer, it was mind-boggling.

MR CAIN: I hear you. I am just exploring options.

Mr Skein: At the farmers market, everyone has their own product—eggs or whatever. I am an apple seller, and we do juice, so I do not want to sell meat—

MR CAIN: And it is not your seven-days-a-week thing; it is just when you turn up. I get that.

Mr Skein: We are a Sunday morning market. There are individual stallholders. They are responsible for what they bring. We have an amazing array of stuff. Going into something like the Fyshwick markets would be very complicated and it would take away the whole farmers market atmosphere.

Ms Ouvrier: The products would be different. They are on a large scale, whereas these are a straight off the farm.

MR CAIN: Got you. I am just exploring some possibilities. That is all.

Ms Ouvrier: They are two different products.

MR CAIN: Thank you. Tom, during hearings last year on rezoning, I asked whether the minister was planning to provide compensation to the owners who had relied on the residential zoning to either purchase or get DAs in process. All of that fell away. Regarding your conversations recently, has the compensation topic come up at all?

Mr Adam: No; of course not. Why would they?

MR CAIN: The minister said it was a flat-out no. This was probably 18 months ago, so I do not know if that has been—

Mr Adam: The only comments that I have had from him—unfortunately I cannot quote it, because it was face-to-face in 2021—was when he walked up and down the street with me in Phillip. When we were talking about COVID stuff, he basically said, “Those are business concerns and they’ve got nothing to do with the ACT government. Those are business decisions. You made a business decision. You decided to go into business.”

MR CAIN: Yes—you were relying on something the government committed to—

Mr Adam: I understand, but—

MR CAIN: and then they changed their mind.

Mr Adam: I hope this goes on the record: I am still disappointed that nobody in this government has done an inquiry in the last five years into how the ACT government responded to businesses during COVID. A lot of us have trauma—massive trauma. I am still paying off debt that I had to incur in that period. A lot of the commercial property owners are going into the area. What are they looking for? They are looking for equity and they are looking for growth, and property that they can sell so they can take away some of the value that they added to the area. But, without the ability to extract value, businesses do not invest for the good of things. That is the government’s job.

MR CAIN: It sounds like a business approach, doesn’t it?

Mr Adam: Yes. For a business to have a return on investment, it has to equal more than one. Government can make investments that equal less than one. Look at the tram. There is a frustration within the business community at the lack of town planning and the lack of commercial space growth. It has not grown at the same rate as the population and the footprint of Canberra, and that has constrained the ownership of commercial land to fewer owners and has pushed up commercial rents. My property in Phillip is 380 square metres and I pay about \$6,000 a month. My property in Coombs is 240 square metres and is a tin shed—and I had to pay for the air conditioning; it has a tin roof with no ceiling—and I pay \$10,000 a month, because there is no competition, because there is no town planning. There is no consideration of smaller footprint businesses within the development that runs along Athllon Drive.

In the future of Phillip, commercial rents will go up. I articulated this at the meeting in July: commercial properties are valued on potential rent, not actual rent. Buildings can be empty and still have a value. Businesses are valued on actual revenue, not potential revenue. So there is a disconnect. The properties in Phillip that have been empty for a decade or more, or have had sections empty for a decade or more, still go up in value and the rent still goes up every year, but business value does not go up. It went down in COVID and things like that. Commercial property kept going up. If you constrain the supply and you do not allow for competition, the prices will go up. There is very little

incentive for commercial property owners to redevelop when there is no available new land and/or there is no available growth or a value that they can extract out of the process.

MR CAIN: So you see Phillip as a new potential Braddon or some other similar mixed use—

Mr Adam: As long as we pull out the roundabout. Absolutely, there is an opportunity for mixed use and there is opportunity for integration, with low-density, ground floor commercial/residential properties running along Athllon Drive, where the tram will come through, connecting it better with Woden town centre, and some way of getting across Hindmarsh Drive without running the gauntlet. There is the potential for a plan that could look at the town expanding there. At the moment, nothing is being done and it looks worse than it did 25 years ago. And there is no night life there at all anymore, apart from the martial arts clubs. We all appear like freaks at 8 o'clock, coming out of our clubs.

MS TOUGH: Which roundabout is it?

Mr Adam: At Townsend Street and Botany Street.

MS TOUGH: I know exactly which one.

Mr Adam: When you try to cross that street and all the people come out of the gym, and kids—

MS TOUGH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I want to get to some of the practical and governance things that are going on here. We got some great evidence this morning. Thank you. Tom, you were saying that the value of vacant commercial properties goes up year on year, even though they are empty. What is the revenue stream for those property holders? Are they just happy to sit on a capital gain?

Mr Adam: Not all of them. A lot of them paid for the building back in the 70s or 80s. As long as they have tenants that pay the rates, maintenance and any other minor costs, everything is above board. One of the guys at the meeting complained that he could not increase the rents on his building and then drove off in his \$250,000 car. There are properties that are old and the owners do minimal work to improve them. Some owners are better than others. They are living off the revenue generated from them. Others have been sitting there. There is a building across from National Storage that they built back in 2011. A section of that building was empty for 14 years. You cannot say, "The rates are too expensive" if you have a property that is half empty for 14 years. The real estate agents say, "We have to hold the line on rents. Rents have to be at this point."

There seems to be no commercial incentive to say, "If you have a low-overhead business"—my margins are tighter than a fish's butt. I need a lot of space for what I do. I have to have it on the second floor; I cannot afford to be on the ground floor. There are not many real estate agents that are prepared to negotiate to get you in. They do not understand the economic impacts either. I have 300 customers that come every week.

They go to the print shop and they go across the road to the tyre place, and then they go to the cafe on Saturday. I take two bags of empty coffee cups out of my business every Saturday. There is no connection and there is no understanding, because they purely look at the dollar figure—“If I rent that out for less than what the ‘market value is’, my building’s value will decline and I can’t borrow against it for other investments and things like that.”

THE CHAIR: Thank you for explaining that. That was really clear and beautifully put. The other thing is practicalities. We have had a lot of people talking about the need for town planning. We have a master plan for there. Master plans do not really have any status. There was one in 2004 and there was one in 2015. We had a call for an urban design guide, which does have planning status. It has regulatory teeth. Do you think an urban guide—something that actually has status in the planning system and might be enforced—would be good? And we have had a lot of calls for a governance arrangement—a body, maybe like the CRA, which we have in Civic, or something like that, so that somebody is funded and is in charge of the town centre—somebody you would deal with when you want to have markets, and, when you have a problem with something or an area needs to be upgraded, somebody is in charge. Do you have any views on those two issues?

Ms Ouvrier: Yes. When you are running parallel multiple businesses, it would be hard to have one person take carriage of that, especially if the businesses are designed very differently.

THE CHAIR: We have the City Renewal Authority in Civic. They do not run the businesses. They get some money from the government and some money from local businesses, and they are in charge of activating. They are the ones who put in Floriade flowers and make sure there are festivals on, and, if there are cracked pavements, they are the ones who make sure they are fixed. They are sort of the municipal—they are not running the businesses, but the businesses can go to them, talk to them and pitch things to them.

Ms Ouvrier: I think that would be great because you would have the consistency of someone overseeing the site. It would cover OH&S and it would cover attracting others to the area for rental as well.

THE CHAIR: Who are you talking to?

Ms Ouvrier: In terms of expanding the business?

THE CHAIR: Yes, and in terms of the idea of having a southside market in the Woden town centre. This is a very popular idea in a lot of submissions. Who in government; which agency?

Ms Ouvrier: No connection.

THE CHAIR: None. Interesting.

Mr Skein: We have been running in Woden for 20 years, so it is nothing new. It is going to be around for another 20 or more years, I would imagine. It is something that

that part of town is thriving with and it needs to continue.

Ms Ouvrier: We are getting feedback from customers, from shoppers.

Mr Skein: They love it. It is their Sunday morning go-to.

THE CHAIR: We got 102 submissions. I did not count how many asked for a downtown market, but there were a lot. That was unprompted. It was not in our terms of reference. It was quite interesting.

Mr Skein: We need somewhere we can expand. The CIT centre has the room. There are two levels. You could potentially—I am thinking out loud—have a produce market upstairs or downstairs, one of the two, and, either upstairs or downstairs, you could have an artesian market, where you could bring in your—

Ms Ouvrier: Sourdough breads and all that.

Mr Skein: All that stuff, but also craft and arts. If it ever happened, I would like to try to keep the two separate, with produce up here and whatever down there, because some people do not like both. They love farmers. The Haig market as an example. There are a lot of craft stalls and there are a lot of food vendors, but there is a lot of craft as well. It would be great to bring that to the south, but without the produce, and have it on the lower level or the upper level.

Ms Ouvrier: I like that idea, but my focus would also be children. You could create a little hub for children at the farmers market. We do not have that. Do you remember the train at Weston Park?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Ouvrier: Did they close it down?

THE CHAIR: The mini train.

Ms Ouvrier: I think the owner recently passed away. I remember thinking: “Where do kids go for that traditional set-up now?” It would be good to create that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Tom, do you have any brief comments on that?

Mr Adam: Yes—two things. One is: please go to Singapore. I went to Singapore with my wife for her birthday. I got \$47 return flights, so I could not argue with that; I am such a miser. They have hawker markets. On the ground floor are food stalls and everything like that, and upstairs there are different ones. There are other ones. We travelled around.

Ms Ouvrier: I have been there.

Mr Adam: There are different ones: one has clothing, one has this and one has that. There is an opportunity. It is a multistorey building. It is an open-air market, but it is covered. People can go up an escalator. In terms of the municipal thing, oh my God. In

2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021, different business communities met with the Canberra Business Chamber and representatives of TCSS. We tried to get ministers there. TCSS got more and more frustrated with the quarterly meetings we had, because we kept bringing up the same issues: fix footpaths; this is broken; there are trees; et cetera. We kept bringing up the same issues. They did not fix them, so we would bring them up again, and they got frustrated. Then they lost interest in attending. It was much like the Molonglo Valley Community Forum and the Phillip Business Community. Until 2021 or 2022, ministers were interested in engaging with the community groups, and then in 2022 everyone stopped caring.

We even made a joke about this: wouldn't it be awesome if one of the MLAs from each of the different areas was actually a councillor, like on the Gold Coast City Council? I grew up on the Gold Coast. There is the Gold Cost City Council and you have local representatives, and you can talk to them about the problem. Phillip has had broken footpaths for 15 years. I have had a job with Fix My Street—that is how we communicate with government, because there is no point in writing to the minister—since 2020 regarding two broken manholes. They replaced a 20-metre section of footpath—guttering along a footpath was broken—and two metres to the right of it is a section that is still broken. That is a case of: “Not my f-ing job.” A contractor was engaged throughout Phillip. There were four contractors to replace one section of kerb. We would love to have somebody come along and say, “Could we coordinate this?” We get a sense from the government that there is an expectation that the building owners will fix it—that, if you leave it long enough, the building owners will get pissed off and they will fix it, which they will not do.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: I would like to ask about your needs if you were to have markets in the town square in Woden—down the stairs to the plaza. What do you need the government to do to enable you, regarding storage, power and those sorts of things? There are no power bollards, so do you need power bollards throughout the area?

Mr Skein: Yes, we do.

MS CARRICK: Or storage. Do you need help? What sorts of things would be stored or what would be taken away? What are the logistics if we start next year? The covered thing is potentially years and years away

Ms Ouvrier: If we were to kickstart it quickly?

MS CARRICK: Yes.

Ms Ouvrier: I have been looking at—what are those gadgets for electricity—portable inverters?

MS CARRICK: Generators.

Ms Ouvrier: Inverter generators.

MS CARRICK: You should not need generators.

Ms Ouvrier: Inverter ones are appropriate for markets. Markets in other areas have them. To kickstart straightway, without having mains electricity, we could convert stallholders to inverters. There is a particular brand that seems to have the lowest decibels. You can create policies and guidelines around what kinds of inverters you would use so that it does not affect the surrounding area. I would love to introduce little capsules that farmers could sleep in, when they come at 3 o'clock in the morning, and also purpose-built showers for the farmers. For other amenities, I would pass to Wayne because he probably has more specific—

MS CARRICK: On that, the CIT is there, so perhaps there is an option for showers and bathrooms to be used in the CIT. Perhaps things could be arranged.

Ms Ouvrier: Yes. What I also like about the CIT—

MS CARRICK: Collaboration.

Ms Ouvrier: is that it has overseas visitors. We have a lot of Southeast Asia students, and others from across the globe, studying at the CIT site, who would bring their families over on holidays as well.

MS CARRICK: About storage—

Mr Skein: Yes. Storage is very important. We store tables, fridges, display cabinets—mainly tables and marquees. We do not need a huge area, but we need storage. It makes the day for the farmer or the maker or the producer so much easier if they do not have to chuck 10 tables on the back of their trailer or bring their display fridge in every week. That in itself is a logistic nightmare. Having a storage facility onsite would be an absolute requirement, because you open at 4 am, or whatever time it may be, and set up your stall. It would all be there, and then you would put it back at the end of the market. You would go home with no produce left, hopefully, and just what you brought your stuff in. Storage is—

Ms Ouvrier: And a refrigeration unit would be ideal.

Mr Skein: Yes. That could be good, but it is not essential at the moment. Power and storage would be our number one priorities. Without those, we cannot really run a successful market. That is what we need to start. We can build up everything else gradually. They are the two main things we need: power and storage.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: That brings us to the end of our time. Thank you so much for your time this morning, Maria, Wayne and Tom. I do not think we had any questions taken on notice. Our secretary will send you the transcript. You should definitely read it, Tom. You had some corks.

Mr Adam: Yes!

THE CHAIR: Thank you for helping us today.

Mr Skein: We want to be here to help you guys, and we want to make the Woden community vibrant, with everybody, not just with the farmers market. We want everyone to bounce off each other's walls. We want to make Woden the place to be: go to the farmers market; go to the movies in the afternoon; spend your money.

MS CARRICK: I do not know if anyone listened to 666 this morning—the minister's talkback. The minister seemed to think that everything is terrific. There is a real disconnect.

Ms Ouvrier: Well, it looks terrific on the outside. Farmers—

THE CHAIR: We will now suspend proceedings. You are welcome to keep talking. I just need to say that while everyone is here.

Hearing suspended from 10.38 to 10.49 am.

BOURKE, MR MALCOLM
BRETT, MR ROLLO
GEMMELL, MR BILL
MILLER, MR MARTIN

THE CHAIR: We welcome our first panel of local residents. Thanks for joining us.

Mr Miller: I am the former chair of the Woden Valley Community Council, from 2014-2016, and then some lady over there took over! The rest is history, as we say. I was a signatory on her 100 signatures, for her party. That is only conflict of interest.

Mr Bourke: I am appearing in an individual capacity.

Mr Brett: I am President of the Farrer Residents Association, but “Farrerdisse” does not have a process of gathering a community view to put to you; therefore, I am here in a personal capacity.

Mr Gemmell: I was chair of the Weston Creek Community Council for a couple of years, am a former deputy chair of the Public Transport Association and have involvement in numerous other groups around town.

THE CHAIR: Please note that, as witnesses, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and you are also bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. We have not been having opening statements. If anyone has a burning desire to make an opening statement, we will let you do so for a minute, because otherwise we find the entire hearing is opening statements. Does anyone have a really short opening statement to deliver? Rollo and Malcolm do. Rollo, you may give a brief opening statement.

Mr Brett: My wish is that all development in the revitalisation of the Woden town centre will be viewed through the lens of mental health. To this end, I recommend that the planners and developers are required to consult with ACT mental health staff to ensure that the mental health of the community residing in, working in, visiting or affected by the development of Woden centre is taken into consideration.

Mr Bourke: I am a student going into year 12 at Narrabundah College. I am a lifelong Farrer resident and a nearly daily user of the town centre’s infrastructure, spaces, shops and services. I am excited to offer the perspective of someone who uses the town centre currently and to help shape its future. I have been directly invested in everything from housing supply to affordability, public and active transit, the availability of third spaces and community facilities for all ages, but particularly youth. In 2048, the year in which I turn 40, I want to see a Woden that incorporates all named uses, from housing to transit infrastructure and from commercial to community facilities, in a new dense core that represents our city’s ambition to provide people with quality, diverse housing in places that place less strain on the environment, that are walkable and accessible by public transport, and that suit a growing city’s needs. Thank you for the opportunity to offer my perspective.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: I really like the term “Farrerdisse”. My questions are mostly for Malcolm. You might be the youngest witness we have appearing over the two days. I am interested in a younger person’s perspective of: what is Woden like now; how do you interact with the town centre; and where would you like to see it going? What does a young person need from the town centre at the moment?

Mr Bourke: My relationship with the town centre has essentially transformed. I could go from my house to Melrose High without needing to go through Woden. It was just a couple of quick kilometres. Now that I am in Narrabundah, I need to use the town centre’s public transit infrastructure every day. I change buses from the R4/5 or the 61 to the R6 to head over there. Especially when I have just missed a bus, I go in and use the shops or other facilities that may exist. I often study at the Woden Library.

Woden is currently definitely in transition. It feels like a transitory place for me. In lots of cases, I use it to go to other places, but, with the activation of Bradley Street and with the opening of more public spaces such as West Plaza, we are beginning to see a Woden that incorporates people who use methods of transit other than motor vehicles in order to get around. If that transformation keeps occurring at the pace at which it has, with housing as one of the main goals, but another goal is creating public spaces and community facilities that are actually relevant to the people who will use them, I feel that we can get a much better result for the people of Woden and western Molonglo as well.

MS TOUGH: Thank you. You mentioned you use the library. Are there places younger people go to just hang out around Woden, such as the library? Is that why you need more third spaces for people to be?

Mr Bourke: It is essentially about sitting in the food court at Westfield—

MS TOUGH: A fun past time!

Mr Bourke: or around Maccas and stuff. In Woden, we have the youth centre, which desperately needs a lot more funding and a lot more infrastructure around it. Once the interchange is done, it will be a lot more accessible from the remainder of the town centre, particularly the bus interchange, but we do need more third spaces, particularly for young people in Woden.

MS TOUGH: Thank you.

MR CAIN: You all have different foci on the centre. Bill, you have some interest in hospital connectivity as part of your submission. I am happy for any commentary. The hospital does not seem to figure a lot in discussions about the light rail route and the development of the town centre. We heard this morning that the Phillip business district does not seem to be considered part of the Woden precinct. The hospital may be a bit the same. What do you think government can do? Let’s make the hospital a bit of a focus now.

Mr Gemmell: Thanks for reading my submission, Peter. I am being very selfish in treating this as: how does Bill get between Weston Creek, Woden and the hospital? Quite frankly, it is a truncated journey if I want to use public transport, which is my preferred mode. The bus from Weston Creek comes into Woden, and you usually see

the bus to the hospital leaving as your bus is arriving, so there are the time connections of the transport—or one seat across to the hospital. There is plenty of spare time in the timetable. We keep seeing reports that say buses are running early regularly. Why can't the buses move around? Simple.

They have fixed the entrance to the hospital now, I am told. I have not had to go there for a while, but they fixed the entrance and made a grand entrance for buses in the old emergency entrance. So they have done the infrastructure, but they do not have people connected, to make it easier. As a result, you have a car park that is always chock-a-block and you have people complaining they cannot park their cars. They take somebody there for emergency treatment or very heavy-duty treatment, and they cannot even park their car. I have had to retrieve the car on those grounds, because my partner has not been able to find somewhere to park the car when she is taking somebody else there. There is a cascading effect. To me, that is illogical.

MR CAIN: My theme is the hospital. I am interested in what the other three witnesses here—

Mr Miller: If we had the planning done again, we would probably have the hospital closer to the town centre. Where Woden Green is, Woden east, would probably have been a better spot. They had to completely rebuild the hospital. It has been under construction for 25 years and they have not finished it yet. I think the light rail should go down Yamba Drive to the hospital. For the last couple of years, I have been going to Sydney with my youngest son. We catch the light rail. It is good. It goes from the Children's Hospital in Randwick to the city and back again. It is not far. It is a different idea to what we are supposed to be getting here in Canberra—mass transit. Plus you have the uni students as well. It should go to the hospital, like a dog leg, stop there, and then have another connection across Launceston Street, in front of Canberra College, and back to an interchange—that sort of way. That sort of little dog leg could be accommodated, and then you would have a shuttle going there through the day. That would be a better connection.

Mr Brett: I put in my submission the comment that the rail should go that way. I see it as impractical when you consider where the light rail will go, which is not south. It is not going further south than Woden town centre. The reason I say that—

MR CAIN: The government has said it will.

Mr Brett: Okay, but, if you look at the duplication between Sulwood Drive and Drakeford Drive, along Athllon Drive, there is no capacity built into that for light rail.

MR CAIN: Everything about the light rail so far has been about retrofitting it on top of existing infrastructure, so that would not be a new thing for the government to do.

Mr Brett: I have asked the government about that. The two planning organisations have not got together. If, in nine years of planning, they cannot get together and tell each other what they want, then retrofitting, to my mind, is not on the agenda.

MR CAIN: That is exactly what they are doing.

Mr Bourke: Regarding public transit to the hospital, I catch that bus connection every day; I just go a bit further to Narrabundah. Currently, due to the construction around the new Woden interchange, the buses go on Bowes Street, across Launceston and then down on Yamba towards the hospital before they carved off on to Easty, and then down like the R4 goes, and then across. It services all the stops on the bits of Ainsworth Street that are north of Hindmarsh Drive. The connection via Yamba Drive has been a lot quicker and services people who want to go to the hospital and people going onwards to places like Narrabundah College, Kingston and Manuka. It is a lot better than the previous Ainsworth Street connection provided. With the new network that is coming, I believe in February, there will seemingly be a return of buses to Ainsworth Street. That is something that I, personally, have reservations about, due to the speed of services to the hospital and onwards to the inner south.

MS CARRICK: I am wondering about the option for a shuttle bus that goes from the bus interchange across to the hospital, back and forth. There was one in the master plan. It never happened, but it is potentially a good way to pick up people from the bus interchange and shuttle them across. Are there any views about whether that would be a good idea?

Mr Miller: Yes, but it would depend on which way it goes. It could continue to do a loop from where the new interchange is—Launceston, Yamba, Hindmarsh. A direct route would be harder to do, through Easty Street. I think I have seen a plan for it. The light rail is coming from Gungahlin. The hospital is the second-biggest employer in Woden, and I think having that sort of dog leg to the hospital would make better sense than through the Yamba roundabout, along the creek there, which takes you out to a bike path and then on to—I think there are some issues with that. It could be done better.

Mr Gemmell: I have a view on that. We are building light rail. We are spending a lot of money on it. We should, in my view, think about a spur line from Woden to the hospital with a short shuttle—not for every service, but maybe every second or third light rail service could go to the hospital, up and back, and then resume its journey on to Gungahlin. It is done elsewhere. I have been pondering it for a long time. It means one vehicle, one seat, local access, and a superior transport option. It comes down to the government's budget and the government's will, but it would certainly relieve a lot of the congestion and would make it seamless.

Mr Brett: My answer is yes, do it immediately. The need is there. When we eventually get light rail actually arriving, with the complications of that—whether it is going south and all that—the service will still be going and will still be very useful, so please do it now.

THE CHAIR: Variety. I want to have a chat about green space, activation, walkability and cyclability. We have had a lot of comments about that. I would love to hear your views about both walkability and cyclability, to get from one place to another place, but also general activation. We did not see a single bike out there when we had a wander around. I suspect everybody has some views on that. Bill?

Mr Gemmell: I primarily came to run the argument on the Corinna Street precinct and the lack of human scale. It is difficult to walk, there are no buses through there, and, to try to get to the other side of town, there are hard barriers. If you go to a meeting in the library after hours, for example, you have to work out how to get to the bus interchange

to get home. The default is to go underground, to Woden Plaza. If you have principles that you are operating on and say, “I don’t want to drive if I can avoid it,” you have to work out how to get to the bus. There has been infrastructure in the street.

When they did the bike lanes, they stopped the buses during the construction period and they have not reactivated. I have not been able to get a straight answer out of anybody on that, except that the TWU did not like the narrow street and did not want to drive the buses along there. Well, sorry, it is a public service. It is very difficult to walk. There are trip hazards. A lot of the responses I get say that it is not that hard to walk. Well, you try. For a disabled person who struggles to walk 50 metres and is trying to live independently, to get around to do their shopping and get home, it does not work. They have given up. They have either given up or they have somebody driving, or they are driving even though they should not be driving. They want to do it independently, but all options have been closed off to them.

There is not much green space. You have the Woden concrete square and no shade. Being fair-haired, I get sunburnt looking at it. That is the problem: there is nowhere to have any respite. The quickest way to go from the library to the Bowes Street precinct is through the Indigenous Affairs building. If that is shut, you have to walk here and there. We were recently looking at helping somebody get to Access Canberra. The lift is difficult for some people to get to, from where you could possibly park a car. If you have caring responsibilities, there is nowhere to legally leave your car and help them get to the lift to get there. When you dispatch them and move your car, they are gone.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, Bill. I will check with the other panellists. Rollo?

Mr Brett: It is a great argument for developing the suburbs with facilities that are bike-friendly, such as at Mawson. Put in a basketball court, a netball court, a barbeque and something between the Ampol service station and the playing fields, and you will activate people. They will ride their bikes there.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Malcolm?

Mr Bourke: You mentioned active frontages on developments—correct?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Bourke: I have a few comments on that. What we see with the current active frontages in places like the W2 development near the library and Grand Central, near the CIT, is active frontages and no-one taking up the offer. There is Lovett Tower, which is practically empty. I agree with what we have seen—the sale of territory-owned service car parks to provide more community frontage—but I warn against having a frontage that no-one uses; having a frontage that no-one rents. I am quite interested in drama. I do it at school. Things like—

MS CARRICK: You would like our street theatre, then.

Mr Bourke: Performance venues for that. The Community Council ran an art gallery at the bottom floor of Lovett Tower a couple of years ago. Correct me if I am wrong, Ms Carrick. Incentivise those frontages to actually be used. Yes, have more, but ensure

they are used.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Martin?

Mr Miller: I used to ride my bike to the town centre a lot, for shopping and that sort of thing. There was only one underpass and that was blocked off for over a year when someone had a car fire. It is not really big enough. Regarding the new cycleway, during its construction I met with the project manager and a few other people. I had Graham Downey with me. He is blind. He said that those concrete balls were like a trap if you are blind. You get your foot caught underneath. He reckoned that they should not have been put in. Rather, have a normal bollard of that height. Then, when they put all the bollards next to the Phillip Health Centre, it pushed all the pedestrians away, because there is still some drop-off parking. It is a narrow path. I think it is less than 1.5 metres. It should be 1.8 metres to have two wheelchairs going past. People have to walk on the gravel right next to the building to get past. To better connect that cycleway, there needs to be a separated cycleway around the major roads around Woden. You cannot really get on to it from the southern suburbs of Woden, and also on the other side.

There is the one on Matilda Street. That is the first separated cycleway in Woden, but it goes from nowhere to nowhere. It goes from one end of the street to the other, and that is it. I talked to the consultants there at the time—Cardno. I said, “If you’re riding a bike, you have to turn sharply,” and he said, “I don’t ride on the path; I ride on the road.” I have done a lot of study into cycleways around the world, and we should be doing a hell of a lot better than what we have there now. I was surprised that Richard said yesterday that everything is pretty good. You do not see cyclists—

THE CHAIR: We got a different written submission from Pedal Power. Do not worry about that.

Mr Miller: Have you been to the Sirius building? We are not supposed to call it the Sirius building any more. They have a two-storey bike parking facility. It is generally full. There are about 60 bicycles in there. I do not know whether you got to see that. There are a lot of people riding to the town centre.

THE CHAIR: Malcolm, very politely, has his hand up.

Mr Bourke: I also have a bit of commentary on how active transit could be improved. Regarding the north-south cycleway, I cycle, walk or take an e-scooter into Woden occasionally. The resurfacing has been welcome, but I note that the east-west active transit, through the town centre, could be improved. For example, if you are trying to get from Lyons or, further afield, Weston Creek, over to Garran, the active transit into Woden from Lyons is good. You have the nice, separated path heading down from Chifley. Through Woden, you have to navigate going east-west. If the path on the side of Canberra College, on Launceston Street, were improved to a C-level cycleway, as you see—

Mr Miller: Yes—a separated cycleway along Launceston.

Mr Bourke: north and south, that would do well for active transit in the Woden Valley.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: I am interested in the active fronts that you were talking about. We have just heard from the Southside Farmers Market about opportunities in the town square and the CIT plaza, to bring markets there. We have the opportunity that the Scentre Group proposal brings with more development. It brings opportunities. Is it important to keep sun in the public spaces and get Scentre Group to activate their side of it, as first movers, to start getting some activity? It is very hard for the other areas to start when it is dead, so you need a first mover. Malcolm, are the ground spaces that you were talking about adequate? When you look at other buildings, like 220 next door, you see a beautiful big foyer underneath. Verity Lane is full of activity with a food court.

Mr Miller: In Civic—yes.

MS CARRICK: If you look at the one in Grand Central, it is not very deep. Does that inhibit commercial places from taking it up, because it is so small? You mentioned W2. Most of W2 has residential car parking on the ground floor, leaving a small bit at the front. How do we activate our town squares? Do we need a plan? Do we need governance that oversees it?

Mr Miller: I will go first. Definitely in winter, you need to get the sun in. I remember meeting government consultants there with regard to the new Woden CIT and Woden urban renewal. I said, “Meet at this place near the stairs” at a certain time. This was in winter. I went there and no-one was there. Apparently they had moved to a sunnier location because it was too cold in that spot, which I thought was interesting. Yes, you need sun. People congregate where there are sunny areas, so it is important to keep those, and also enliven the area. Over the years, we have tried things. We had the Woden Valley Community Festival, which used to be in Eddison Park. The government ran some festivals as well, separately in the park, but we need more food vans and that sort of thing—pop-up things happening.

One of my sons says that we need a night-time cafe. After 5 o’clock, just about everything closes. The mall closes. All that is left open is a few grocers and a couple of restaurants. A night-time cafe is in Narrabundah. It is open from 6 pm to 6 am. It is quite good. It is not in the clubs. You are not around pokies and alcohol. It is quite popular.

Mr Bourke: Straight out of the gate on the Scentre Group development, it represents, as you said, an opportunity, not just to provide 4,000 homes for people in Woden. I was involved in one of the co-design workshops they hosted in October, around what people wanted from community facilities. Those were very productive. There was the provision of things like basketball courts, performance spaces for art and drama—things like that. You mentioned shade and sun in our public spaces. Currently, Woden is a bit of a wind tunnel, especially in the town square. You feel like you will be swept up as you walk by.

Mr Miller: There was a plan to fix that, but it did not eventuate.

Mr Bourke: There are opportunities for infrastructure that you could add to mitigate

the wind. There has been a bit of that, with the covered seating on the side closer to the shopping centre, but there has not been much else. The opportunity is there to add community frontage. The buildings with the pretty small frontages are done. Realistically, we cannot knock down the car park and put it back in. That is something for a developer to do, by talking with developers. The opportunity is there to add more active frontage with things like the Scentre Group development—particularly adding things like wind-mitigating features and seating with umbrellas, as you see in Civic Square or City Walk, near the mall. Those are things that would do very well for Woden.

Mr Brett: We are an affluent and privileged society. Whatever we come up with, could we again run the lens of mental health over it, please.

MS CARRICK: Definitely.

Mr Gemmell: Urban places are for people. They are not for buildings, they are not for cars, they are not for trucks; they are for people so they can interact with other people. The mental health aspect is important. We are looking at the literature on the loneliness epidemic. You are lonely because you have nobody to talk to. If you do not provide a place for people to meet, they are not meeting. You need to get ideas circulating. There is no music there anymore. There used to be a great little bar called The Contented Soul. There was music in an outdoor environment. After work, people would walk there and get together. That closed down and has not been replaced, and anybody who went there laments its loss. Those are the sorts of things that are now lacking in Woden, in my view. It has to be a combination of the shopping centre owners and government to facilitate something and make it happen. I am sure business would be happy to participate if the environment were created and they could activate these spaces. It just not happening. There is no will, in my view, for that to happen.

Mr Miller: The City Renewal Authority has place plans and that sort of thing. There has not been a place plan done for Woden, and that is what really needs to be done. It needs to be done in all town centres, I would say. You do not need to have a levy on shops or business owners to do a place plan. They already pay enough in commercial rates as it is. You need the government to do a proper place plan, with more greenery, park land and pocket parks—that sort of thing. That was supposed to come out of the 2015 master plan, but it never did.

MS CARRICK: Speaking of the 2015 master plan, we all want housing for everybody, so we will have well over 10,000 apartments there. You see Garema Place, with a low level to let the sun in. Emu Bank does not have towers overshadowing it. There is Hibberson Street. Strips in Gungahlin and Tuggeranong—Anketell Street—have sun coming in. Do you think that in the Woden town square area and the CIT plaza, on the north side of them, we could keep the building height low to let the sun in, for what is left?

Mr Miller: Of course. If you saw our submission to the 2015 master plan, we had the taller buildings aligned to where the transit was, and then heights going down. We even suggested that, along Corinna Street, there should be a maximum level of six to eight storeys, so you would have a more human scale. Corinna Street should be pedestrianised more. You can have buses running through there, but stop the cars from going back and forth between the ends of Corinna Street. That was supposed to happen.

They raised the level between the library and that part, and the Woden Seniors area, but it does nothing, and it is still a rat-run. That would have been much better than having the taller buildings at the centre, overshadowing public spaces. That is what we said too: in the Phillip business area, you would have six storeys aligning towards where the transit is. But now they have changed it, so we will not have any residential buildings there.

MS TOUGH: I want to pick up on Corinna Street. Yesterday, when we did our tour, we went along Corinna Street. Parts of where the DOMA developments have been done with The Alby are quite thriving, but—

Mr Miller: That is on Furzer Street.

MS TOUGH: Yes—that area. Corinna Street has the green spaces that seem to just sit there, in a way. There is green space on that side and not so much in the town centre, and then, way over on the east, you have the park. How do we take that bit of Corinna Street, featured to the town centre, with all those DOMA constructions, and connect it? It feels a bit disconnected from the library and back to the square, even though it is probably the same distance from some of those housing developments.

Mr Miller: The idea in one of the plans was to pedestrianise or have a shared zone on Corinna Street, but someone did a study and said there were not enough people crossing the road at that time. We walked around with the Walk21 guy—I think it was the head guy—and a couple of government officials. When we looked at that, he said, “We need to get rid of these cars and the car park”—that little carpark that causes a bit of congestion there. He was saying that should happen. Probably the rest of us were against that. It would not make it much better—so I believe, anyway. We have some trees, but the trees are right in the middle of the walkways. They should be at the edge. All the infrastructure should align. Some of those pathways are terrible.

MS TOUGH: That was really helpful. Thank you.

MR CAIN: Regarding the town centre, we did a walk around Woden yesterday for a couple of hours. A few of us were surprised to see that, right through the town centre, there is a plan for a road. A paved surface is blocked at the moment. It appears that it is intended to connect the north side to the south side of Woden and vice versa.

THE CHAIR: Bradley Street and Bowes Street.

MR CAIN: The town centre only has the Piccolo cafe and the post office at one face. How do you enliven? I think there is one power point, ridiculously. How does it make sense that that is the town centre for community gatherings? How do you fix that? It is a real challenge. There is a youth rehabilitation centre facing one side as well.

Mr Gemmell: It was not always that way. I worked around Woden for too long. I worked in Aviation House, I worked in what used to be called Sirius, I worked in what is the Indigenous Affairs building, and I worked in Cosmo. I used to go there for lunch most days. That square was lined with cafes. You could sit down at a table, have a feed, talk to people and catch up, or on Friday afternoon you could go to the Contented Soul. It worked. I do not know what happened, what went wrong, but it was deactivated. I am quite passionate about this. The whole thing has been dehumanised. Sure, you need

shade. Martin has made good points about the trees in the wrong spot. Those balls astound me. Why was Corinna Street not made to go one way or humanised, with barriers or something like that, and made friendly? The whole thing confounds me. It needs a good think, but on a human scale. I put a few cautions. The government have active travel targets and the government have greenhouse targets. Neither will be met when they are doing things like this. That is very important. Why put out targets and then not act on them? There is a disconnect between the policy and delivery.

Mr Brett: The principle seems to be developer profitability, which is why it is not working. How can we change that? I am not sure.

MR CAIN: I do not know how it is particularly profitable either, to have a series of blank walls around an open space for the community.

Mr Brett: They are making money, and their responsibility is to their shareholders or the owners, not the people.

Mr Bourke: I have a problem with looking at the Woden of the past and saying, “Yeah, that was good.” It is que sera, sera, in a sense. We built the housing, which is good, and we are going to build more, which is even better, but we essentially have the Woden we have at the minute. We talked about the CIT plaza. Currently, five stores front the plaza: the op shop, the Asian grocery, the Piccolo cafe, the Japanese restaurant and the convenience store.

Mr Miller: The cigarette store, or something.

Mr Bourke: Practically. I do not go in there. I feel that the modus operandi for the road connection through the plaza—it is currently a dormant road connection—meant losing the internal connection that was provided by Callum Street to go through the town centre or to go within the town centre, but it is a hundred metres. No-one is driving that. I feel that the road connection was a bit misplaced, in terms of creating more pedestrian-friendly roads around Woden. Bradley Street is a good example. I note that, in the New Life in Woden development, there is no real plan for Bradley Street, other than to put housing in apartment towers around it and have it as a nightlife precinct, but I do not see the need for a road connection between the entry to the car park at the end there, near what is currently Timezone, through to Neptune Street. I do not know anyone who sees a need for a road connection there.

I feel that, if that were pedestrianised, we would have a really nice flow of public squares and public spaces, potentially from Bradley Street square through to the CIT plaza and up to the town square. You could have that activated with a lot more opportunities for shade. The main way I would like to see that is through trees and things like windbreaking. You could see a really nice flow of public spaces around what is currently the domineering aspect of Westfield. Especially young people’s experience of Woden is Westfield, the bus interchange and Canberra College, and not much else.

MS CARRICK: You could go through to the north—walk up to the—

Mr Miller: One of the plans was to make Bradley Street a shared zone. That went off the board. There is the thought that you need to keep pedestrian zones open for cars to,

apparently, give night-time surveillance or whatever, because, if you pedestrianise an area, you will get different types of people socialising late at night. Copenhagen has pedestrianised so many areas of their city. It is a wonderful place to be.

Mr Bourke: You can look closer to home, at places like Sydney. They have pedestrianised Martin Place and George Street. That has made George Street a really nice transit area and a really nice lingering area. I feel that something on Bradley Street in Woden would do a lot of good.

THE CHAIR: We are nearly at the end, so this will be a quick question. The government have released their latest LiDAR mapping of trees in Canberra. Our tree canopy coverage has gone down in the last five years. Woden town centre has a lot of concrete. Would it be better if some of those concrete areas were not concrete? Would it be better if they were green, for climate change and amenity? There is nodding. The *Hansard* cannot indicate nodding. Does anyone want to say yes or no?

Mr Bourke: Yes.

Mr Brett: Certainly.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Malcolm has some comments.

Mr Bourke: Yes. There is opportunity for vertical gardens. That is quite intriguing. Either retrofit them on existing buildings like Lovett Tower, which has sheer concrete surfaces, or as part of the Scentre Group's New Life in Woden development. There is the opportunity for vertical gardens to provide more green, as opposed to grey. It is a lot better. In our public spaces—the town square, CIT plaza, and hopefully an eventual Bradley Street square—we can provide a lot more tree canopy coverage. I feel that would make the place a lot more hospitable.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Are there any other last words on green—

Mr Miller: Yes. More green spaces. In one of our submissions for the section 7 site, which is the one that has been bought by the Hellenic Club, we say there should be a much larger green park put there. We have lost the town centre park, because that has been zoned as a community facility zone. That is Arabanoo Park, in the middle there. When people say “community facilities”, they talk about playgrounds, barbeques and that sort of thing, but “community facilities” could also be housing. All the green can go, which is disappointing.

Mr Gemmell: The experience with green plants is that they need to be maintained. They need to have proper watering and fertilising schedules and be properly maintained, otherwise you are at the same place regarding heat mapping.

THE CHAIR: Absolutely. That was awesome. That brings us to the end. Thank you so much for your attendance today. There were no questions taken on notice. Our secretary will send you the transcript for you to look at. Thank you for your evidence.

Short suspension

DODD, MS JUDE
HUBERT, MS SARAH
McGEE, MS FRANCES
RAISIN, MS LOUISE

THE CHAIR: We now welcome our second panel of local residents. For the *Hansard* record, could each of you please state the capacity in which you are appearing?

Ms McGee: I am here in a personal capacity. I live in Curtin and I go to the Woden shopping centre all the time.

Ms Hubert: I am here in a personal capacity, as a resident. I have also worked in various parts of Phillip for the last 15 years or so.

Ms Dodd: I worked at Woden Valley Hospital for nearly 40 years. I did not live in Woden all that time, but I have lived in Woden, in Swinger Hill, for the last 18 years. So I have known Woden for at least 40 years—and it has changed a lot. I am here in a personal capacity to stick up for it.

Ms Raisin: I am here in a personal capacity today. I moved to Canberra to work in Woden in 1987 and I have been living in Woden Valley since 1990. I made my home in Woden and had two children. I use the facilities there—the pools at Deakin and at Phillip, because I am a keen swimmer, and other facilities there as well. But, like Jude said, a lot has changed, and we need more activity to make it a more friendly place to be and to give people things to do. At the moment, I feel it is very much a thoroughfare and not a destination.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. As witnesses, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and you are bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be considered a serious matter and it may be considered contempt of the Assembly. We have not been doing opening statements. Unless anyone has prepared an opening statement that they would like to table, we will jump straight into questions.

MS CARRICK: On the theme of the previous session, we were talking about the core area. Where would you see to be the beating heart where a busker would go because they know there would be life and people? If you do not know where it is, where should it be?

Ms McGee: The door to the shopping centre, from Woden town square. There is often a busker there. That is about it.

Ms Raisin: Like the previous group said, at the Woden town centre, we used to go to the Contented Soul and the cafes there. It used to be fantastic. I do not know why it changed. I think it probably has something to do with the shopping centre wanting more people to go inside than sit outside. We really need things for people to do. There is a missed opportunity in the CIT Plaza, where they could have put a basketball court or a playground or even just a basketball hoop like the one that is in the city near the merry-go-round—something for people to do at lunchtime to let off steam when they are at CIT. There is nothing except to go to the shops or go for a swim.

Ms Dodd: There is nothing at Woden anymore. It used to have life. They had that wonderful opportunity with the CIT, and it is dead as a doornail—absolutely dead. I have been down there several times since it opened in July just to make sure of my facts—and my facts are that it is still dead. Students are not bringing any life. There is nothing. There is nothing spilling out that says, “Come in and join in your community and enjoy this space.” There is nowhere. The town centre has been dead for even longer. So we have two dead spaces, and it would be so nice to get them livened up.

Ms Hubert: In a very small defence of CIT, I was there at a concert that some of the students gave the other day at the back in that new area. I have forgotten what it is called.

Ms Raisin: West Plaza?

Ms Hubert: Yes, probably. It was lovely. They were on the grass. The sun was beating down, because this was the middle of the day. I and the other few people who were relatively interested were standing over where the Red Cross is under the shade there, there were a few students over with the bands, and there was a big gulf in the middle. So that did not work very well either.

I think one of the significant problems with what has happened to the town square is that all the employment has moved north, and all the office space that was being used has been turned into apartments. So those people are doing whatever they do during the day and the office workers are that much further away. So the town square has become redundant. I do not know how you overcome that. But I think that is the significant—

MS CARRICK: On the governance arrangements, who is in charge here to make sure that things work and that there is collaboration? Do you think, say, a Woden renewal authority—like the City Renewal Authority—where somebody actually talks to the business owners, enables the markets to operate and makes sure there is power in the right spots et cetera—

Ms Dodd: Yes; there needs to be oversight of the whole area. There are itty-bitty things happening in different places. There is no incentive for Westfield to open up. Why would they? There is no reason for them not to do what they are already doing. There needs to be someone with a vision to see how all those little bits and pieces can be put together to make it a happy, lively place.

Ms McGee: At the moment, each developer does what each developer wants to do, with no thought or consideration of what the developer next door is doing. There does not seem to be any coordination among them. Somebody will build a building here and somebody else builds a building there, but they do not appear to be talking to each other or saying, “Why don’t we do something together, for the thousands of residents in these hundreds of flats?”

Ms Dodd: Exactly.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: I want to pick up on sporting facilities. Yesterday we heard from

volleyball and basketball, in particular, about the need for sporting facilities. It has also come up in a lot of different submissions. I am just wondering where in Woden you would see those kinds of facilities—in a particular part of the town centre or in one of the adjoining suburbs? Where would you see those kinds of facilities situated in Woden?

Ms McGee: It has to be in the town centre, where it used to be, like the basketball courts and the swimming pool—which is going to disappear shortly. It has to be central so that people can get there.

Ms Dodd: Yes, transport.

Ms McGee: If you put something out in—I do not know; picking a suburb—Torrens, how many people from, for example, Hughes do you think would go to Torrens? It has to be central so that people can get there easily.

Ms Hubert: An ideal place would be on the site that the Hellenic Club are looking to redevelop. That has really good potential. It is right beside the interchange and right beside CIT. You have some of the demographic right there on your doorstep.

Ms Raisin: And it is close to transport.

Ms Hubert: Yes

MS TOUGH: Yes; one of the open air car parks that is sitting around at the moment.

Ms Hubert: Yes.

Ms McGee: It is also near Canberra College. So you would pick up the college students and the CIT students.

Ms Dodd: It seems that apartments always get first pick of the good spots, don't they? It is getting a bit wearing.

Ms Hubert: I suppose it is not going to work with the Geocon swimming pool debacle, but one of the things that developers could do is utilise their inner, charitable consciences and put things like basketball courts underneath there for public utility.

Ms Dodd: Something occurred to me recently. Don't they have to pay vast amounts of money in lease variation fees? Where does that go? Why is that not transparent? That is something that really gets me going. They should be putting something back into the community if they are helping themselves to a prime location.

THE CHAIR: It obviously goes into central revenue.

MR CAIN: It goes to consolidated revenue.

Ms Dodd: Not good enough.

THE CHAIR: No.

Ms Hubert: It is not coming back to our community.

Ms Dodd: No.

Ms Hubert: We have lost our basketball courts, our tennis courts and our pitch-and-putt. What else was there?

Ms McGee: The bowling green and the pool.

Ms Hubert: Yes, the bowling green. The tenpin bowling went when Grand Central Towers went up. There were all those things that we used to be able to do that we cannot do anymore.

MS TOUGH: I want to quickly pick up on what you said, Sarah, about it going in the bottom of a building.

Ms Hubert: Yes, a residential building.

MS TOUGH: With so many buildings going up, there is that potential for it to be the whole ground floor or the whole bottom two floors or something near that bus interchange.

Ms Hubert: Yes. I was talking to someone yesterday about philanthropy—that people can have their name on it. It could be the Caitlin Tough Basketball Arena—because are the builder that has built it and put it underneath. That would be in commentary. People will be saying. “We are here at the Caitlin Tough Basketball Arena watching these teams.”

MS TOUGH: Yes, like the snow theatre and those kinds of—

Ms Hubert: Yes; all that sort of stuff. So it is potentially worth people’s publicity to do it.

MS TOUGH: Yes; to have the naming rights.

Ms Hubert: Yes.

Ms McGee: I want to pick up on the lease variation charges? The whole point of that was so that private developers could not make a profit out of the use or the sale of public land. So they give it back, but we are not seeing anything coming back in terms of community facilities or public facilities.

MR CAIN: Like we have said. it goes into consolidated revenue and then it has—

Ms Hubert: Vanished.

MR CAIN: It is an invisible amount of money that is spent somewhere.

Ms McGee: We know where it is spent.

Ms Dodd: But there is no plan.

MR CAIN: You and others have presented really worthy aspirations for a district centre. I do not think there is any disharmony on the committee about those aspirations. With the juggernaut of direction at the moment, I am interested in your views on how you reverse that current trend or the propensity to towers. The reality is that those towers create a lot of revenue for government. In my opinion—just in my opinion—it is driven by getting as much money from land as possible, which actually aligns with the business case for the developers. So I am interested in your thoughts on how to actually reverse that to get some of these community-centred uses that you have all highlighted.

Ms Raisin: Like Malcolm, I attended the co-design workshop with Scentre Group. They are keenly interested in providing some community facilities. I do not think their plans are really enough, but they are still not really build-out plans; they are incomplete and there is potentially some chance for us to influence that. Of course, it is dependent on them being able to build what they propose in order to make enough money to provide those facilities. But they have said that one of the first things, or the first thing, that they will build are community facilities. We are not sure they are really suitable—basketball courts on the fourth floor and all that kind of thing. That needs to be fleshed out. But the government needs to really take the time to work with them and the community councils that are involved—like the Weston Creek, Woden, Tuggeranong and Farrer residents associations and that kind of thing to kind of work together. That is that governance thing that Fiona is talking about. We do not have any of that.

Ms Dodd: I agree. I have two opinions on this. My first opinion is on light rail—a terrible waste of money. I think we should be putting the money into other things on this side of town. It has worked well in the north, but I think it is throwing good money after bad, chucking it at light rail in the south, when we have so many other things that need doing. Secondly, as Louise says, I would make the developers that are building those towers contribute somehow back into the community. They would be my two main things.

MR CAIN: Sure.

Ms McGee: Once upon a time, government used to provide what was called a public good—which is community facilities. The ACT government seems to be leaving all that to the private developers now. The developers are not doing it and the government are not doing it. So the only way that I can see is for the government to make sure the developers provide something. If the government are going to refuse to provide community facilities as a public good—which is what they used to do or what they should be doing—they are going to have to force the developers to do it, even if it means basketball courts on the fourth floor, which is going to be totally unworkable.

Ms Hubert: Yes. Some of that could come through incentivising in some way, of course. In the past, people like the Police Boys Club and the YMCA provided some of those public areas like basketball courts, access to gymnasiums and so on. We seem to have lost that as well. I do not know how you incentivise people to get involved in those sorts of things again. I think that is quite hard.

Ms Dodd: The government has to provide land or cheap rent or something, obviously.

Ms Hubert: Yes; that could be a way of doing it—providing land.

MR CAIN: Obviously I have just thrown an open question out there—but thank you.

THE CHAIR: We have heard that the Woden town centre is pretty hostile for people. We have heard that from a lot of sources, and it is pretty obvious to look at. I am particularly worried about climate change and heat. There is green at Eddison Park, but that is a long way away. The government's latest figures on the tree canopy show that the tree canopy has gone down in the last five years. We are meant to be getting up to 30 per cent and it is going in the wrong direction. It is going in the wrong direction in Phillip and Woden as well. Do you think there needs to be more green space for amenity but also heat island in the town square itself, or do you think it is okay to just have all the green over at Eddison?

Ms McGee: No.

Ms Dodd: No; We need both.

Ms McGee: Absolutely we need more trees.

Ms Dodd: Of course we do.

Ms Raisin: We cannot plant enough.

Ms McGee: When the new bus depot was built on Launceston Street, I do not know how many trees were chopped down there. When the tram comes, every tree between Adelaide Avenue and Yarra Glen are all going to be chopped down. According to the EIS, there will be a reduced tree cover, because there will not be enough replanted. In other areas of the tram route, they are going to plant a little more than what they chop down. But, on the route to Woden, we are going to end up with less trees.

Ms Dodd: The main problem with planning is it is not planning at Woden. It is not urban planning. It is not sensible urban planning, anyway. Developers are allowed to build blocks next to each other—and there are rows and piles and more and more proliferating blocks. But no-one is obliged to build a little pocket park or an area for residents to grow vegetables or anything. They just stick a pot plant on the roof and that is a box ticked. That is just ridiculous. There is no reason they cannot be made to include something green in every development—on the ground; not on the roof.

Ms Raisin: And they build right up to the edge of the footpath. So there is no space around these developments. I was riding my bike on the Corrina Street bike path this week. Half of that has a barrier, so you have to go right to the edge of it. The bike path is covered by a barrier where you have to negotiate around the shard. It is not well connected either. You cannot get across to the supermarket; you have to get off your bike and find a pedestrian crossing—of which there are now two. But there needs to be more trees. You cannot plant enough trees for climate change.

Ms Hubert: As someone on the previous panel said, we need ongoing maintenance of

the trees, the grass and the paths. The only way a path seems to be fixed is if one of us dutiful citizens gets in touch—

Ms Raisin: Has a fall.

Ms Hubert: Yes. Gets in touch with Fix My Street to say the path is sticking up. Then it may or may not be fixed within the next few years, literally. One in Curtin has been fixed now, but that was awful for—

Ms Raisin: On the bike path.

Ms Hubert: Yes. There were great lumps sticking out of the bike path for maybe three years. It just makes you so cross. There is no auditing of any of the paths. I just walked through the city to get here. Outside the petrol station, just at the bottom of Braddon, the trees have waves of bricks going in between them. It is an absolute deathtrap. It would be a benefit to somebody to fall over and break their leg, as they get a fortune out of it because it is been like that for ages. It is neglected. The whole city is neglected in that way. It is very disappointing.

Ms Raisin: It is an accessibility issue too, because you cannot get your wheelchairs or less-mobile people around. The new bus interchange at Woden is a lot further from the shops and you have to cross roads and there is no protection. The old bus interchange was dingy but you never had to cross a road and you had protection from the weather.

THE CHAIR: Do you think if some of that area was pedestrianised it might assist?

Ms Raisin: Yes.

Ms McGee: But there is a road through the middle of it.

Ms Raisin: Yes; you have to cross a road.

Ms McGee: It is miles away. If you are in a wheelchair or a walker, or even just eight months pregnant carrying a toddler, it is a long way to go.

Ms Dodd: What is that road for anyway? What is it?

Ms Raisin: The road through the West Plaza?

Ms Dodd: It is just madness.

MS CARRICK: It has car parks in the middle of it.

Ms Raisin: It could be a basketball court and a playground.

Ms McGee: With the trees, there are a few trees now in Woden town square, which has made it much nicer. There are trees in the new one near the CIT. I suppose they will grow eventually, but at the moment it is pretty hot and barren.

THE CHAIR: And it is still concrete in between those trees.

Ms McGee: It is all concrete.

THE CHAIR: With a wee bit of astro-turf.

Ms Dodd: Yes, and a few rocks.

Ms McGee: On a 35-degree day, which it was the other day, you are not going to hang around.

Ms Dodd: Hideous.

Ms Raisin: You would go to the pool, because that is another green spot.

MS CARRICK: My question is about things for people to do. There are a lot of towers now—we will be up over 50 once the Scentre Group ones come—and there are a lot of dogs in those towers, too. We were talking to the building manager for W2 and he said the dogs are weeing on the pavement.

Ms McGee: Surprise, surprise.

MS CARRICK: Do you think that there should be some planning around getting a dog park or somewhere convenient for people to walk their dogs?

Ms Dodd: It would have to be fairly central, or people would not bother to take their dog for a wee if there was a sudden need for it. It would have to be central—which means taking up vital land. But what are the government's priorities? That is what you have to ask.

Ms Raisin: The developers know they are going to have dogs in their apartment towers. They need to provide something as well—some grass, to start with. I think Woden Green was advertised on the basis that they have a dog park somewhere in it. I have not seen it yet. I have not been up there. But I think it is on one of the levels.

Ms Dodd: Is it?

Ms Raisin: Yes; it was advertised. There were big things along Callam Street talking about it, with dog pictures and jumps and all that kind of agility equipment.

Ms McGee: It is all very well having a dog park, but I would rather have a people park before a dog park.

Ms Raisin: It could be both.

Ms McGee: Yes. Some people will not go into a dog park if they are scared of big, large dogs barking at them.

Ms Raisin: Yes; an off-leash area separate to the rest. Yes; agreed.

MS CARRICK: With respect to the apartments, we heard from the Real Estate Institute

yesterday that the very small ones are not moving and that there is a high vacancy rate. Do you think they need to have a look at the stock they are building and whether they need some bigger apartments for people to downsize into? What do you think about the stock we are getting?

Ms McGee: It is tiny.

Ms Dodd: It is ridiculous.

Ms Raisin: Fifty square metres for a one-bedroom apartments. I have been looking at real estate lately, looking for an apartment in Woden for my in-laws. They are currently renting in Sky Plaza. It is a beautiful apartment and it is spacious—100 square metres. The two-bedroom apartments in all of the other developments are like 80 square metres, and some of them less. They are very pokey and they are not very accessible for somebody with mobility issues and a walker, which is what we are trying to deal with. Most of them are one-bedroom apartments. There are very few two-bedroom apartments and three-bedroom apartments.

We need to build more different sized apartments so we can move in there at a point in time and that we have all age groups so that the social structure is there for all of the age groups and stages of life to contribute and socialise together. We need more of those larger apartments—and they are just not selling. The Real Estate Institute would know better than anyone, and that is anecdotally what they have told us too. We have been looking around, and it is very hard to find an apartment that is suitable for people in their 80s.

Ms McGee: Fifty square metres for one bedroom is pretty big. In Gungahlin, there is 50 square metres for two-bedroom flats.

Ms Raisin: That would be awful.

Ms McGee: They are awful, and you cannot possibly have a family in there. Families cannot afford houses anymore. If you have one, two and maybe even three children, you need at least a three-bedroom apartment and you need a big space. You cannot plonk them into 70 square metres and squash them in. That is before you get to visiting grandparents and things like that. They are just too small.

Ms Raisin: Also, their floor plans are not very good and they do not get enough natural light. A lot of the vacant ones, or the ones for sale, are in the Geocon developments—I hate to say this, but WOVA and Grand Central Towers. The majority of the apartments for sale and for rent are in those two.

MS TOUGH: I want to talk about housing in the town centre itself. I know a lot of people are moving into that housing because it is on the bus interchange and so they can get anywhere they need to get to. There is some employment with the commonwealth Department of Health, ACT Health and the hospital. So there is an employment hub, more towards the northern end now, but there are those government departments there. So it is attracting a group of people for whom that is perfect for them. They do not need to have a car anymore because they can walk to work and then catch a bus to anywhere else in Canberra they need to get to. That also makes it a great spot

for public and community housing, because you are right there. I am just wondering about your thoughts on how public and community housing fits in the area and making sure that these buildings have a mix of it in the developments.

Ms Dodd: You have to have a reason to live in Woden, apart from the fact that you are looking for an apartment. There is nothing to do in Woden. There is nothing for kids. There is nothing for any age group, really. There are no facilities. As we have been discussing, it is dead.

I think there is a lot to be said for making the place a bit more appealing to all age groups. As Sarah was saying, people cannot afford a house with a garden anymore—or young people mostly—and they would be more attracted to an apartment. But they have to have a life as well. There are places, as people keep saying, like Verity Lane and Garema Place. There are a lot of places in Canberra that are good examples of how to give an area some life, but Woden is not one of them.

Ms Raisin: And you do not want to just live there so that you can travel somewhere else easily. You want to live there because there is stuff to do. That is the same for your social housing and affordable housing. You need that mixed in, just like you said, into every development, so that it is spread out—like it always was in Canberra—through the suburbs so that you can cater for these people. Then there is emergency housing for people in dire need. As we have said, Lovette Tower is empty and Callam Offices are empty. What are we going to use them for?

Ms McGee: There is already build-to-rent in Woden around the Oaks and the Ivy—around that end. That is fine, provided they are employing. Otherwise, you are going to end up with a slum or a ghetto. They are dumping a whole lot of affordable rental or low socio-economic people in Curtin, which is just up the road. So you are going to have these big concentrations of low-income people. They are supposed to be spread out. What happened to the old salt and pepper? If you dump them all in the one spot, it gets back to, “They are going to be kicking car tyres or stealing car keys,” or whatever. It is not going to solve any problems; it is going to make them worse. But spread out and as long as there is employment, that is the key.

MS TOUGH: Putting them in every building, is what I mean. That is the salt-and-pepper approach. If every building has social and public housing, some buildings might feel like they have more than others, but it is across the whole—

Ms Dodd: It is a no-brainer.

MS TOUGH: Yes.

Ms Hubert: If you are building towers, they should have the potential for families, singles or older or younger people. They should be built so that they—

Ms McGee: Flexible.

Ms Hubert: Yes; flexible and so they have accessibility in all places within them. We are in the 21st century. All places should be accessible these days, but Woden is a fine example of inaccessibility gone mad, really. It is such a piecemeal place now and there

is no link between—

Ms Dodd: No thought or vision.

Ms Hubert: Yes. None of this discussion has taken us over to the other side of Hindmarsh Drive, which is a really important part of Phillip and Woden. It is like a different suburb, really. It is just not included at all, and it is very important because that has a lot of employment in it, independent employment.

Ms Dodd: Yes, that is true.

MS TOUGH: Yes, there are a lot of small business in that part of Phillip.

Ms Hubert: Yes, exactly, and affordable small business, I should think—affordable rents and so on, which possibly the more Woden end does not have.

Ms Raisin: It used to. There used to be local businesses in Woden Plaza, as it was called then. A lot of them moved out to Mawson or closed down because it became unaffordable to have a shop in a place like Westfield.

MR CAIN: In the previous session, I asked about the connectivity or lack thereof between the centre and the hospital. In the session earlier, we were talking about the lack of connectivity of the centre to the Phillip Trade District. How do you connect those two really important precincts to what is going to be a very dense residential region?

Ms McGee: At the moment, the number six bus from Woden goes through the hospital—and that is it. It is too far to walk, especially if you need the hospital. If you are sick, there is no way you can walk there.

Ms Dodd: There has to be a shuttle of some sort that is useful—not just a once every blue moon.

Ms Hubert: It is relevant. Some of the people who use the hospital are sick, obviously, but some of them are visitors. For visitors who may well be able to walk, it is an awkward walk for people to get—

Ms McGee: Yes; it is a long way.

Ms Hubert: If you are a visitor in the hospital and you say, “How do I get to Woden?” the reply is like, “Just walk that way until you find it.” You cannot say, “Follow this road,” or—

Ms McGee: Getting to the Phillip area, you have to walk, really. You can cross the road there but, if you are coming from the other end of Woden, it is still a fair way. If you are going to be buying stuff and carrying stuff, you would not be walking, would you?

Ms Hubert: We have only one underpass, really, haven’t we? That is the one that links through to the Lyons. An underpass under Hindmarsh might be—

Ms McGee: That would work.

Ms Hubert: We do have an underpass, but it is on the east side of the creek.

Ms Dodd: Yes; the wrong side of the road.

Ms McGee: It does not go to Phillip.

MS CARRICK: Jude, you mentioned the shuttle bus. How would that work?

Ms Dodd: I do not know. You would need something that is accessible. So it has to be maybe a small vehicle that has got wheelchair access to it somehow—or at least those wheelie things that people push. But it would have to go regularly and the people would have to know about it. It would have to be practical, frequent and well-advertised. It would, I am sure, get plenty of uptake, especially once we get the new bus interchange on Callam Street, whenever that is going to happen, which it looks to be quite soon. It would not be that hard to sort of scoop people up and straight to the hospital much easier than what it is now when that is all opened up.

Ms Raisin: And regular, because the parking at the hospital is difficult.

Ms Dodd: Even the disabled parking is a mile and a half down from the actual hospital.

Ms Raisin: It is actually too far. My in-laws have to drop the person at the door and then go find a park. Walking back is even too difficult.

Ms Dodd: It is so far, it is ridiculous.

Ms McGee: There is also the private hospital there, the Capital Private Hospital. There is no parking there.

Ms Dodd: That is true.

Ms McGee: I do not know what you would do. You would have to, I suppose, park in the public hospital. I think the private hospital has a shuttle from the car park.

Ms Raisin: Does it?

Ms Dodd: Yes.

Ms McGee: I think so. But it is not just patients; it is also people going for outpatient appointments, follow-up appointments, once they get out of hospital.

Ms Dodd: That is right—outpatients.

Ms McGee: There is a lot of coming and going—with X-rays and all those sorts of things. It is hard to park at the hospital. It is a long walk to the main entrance. If you are going to see a specialist at the private hospital, you don't have a hope.

Ms Dodd: I discovered an interesting thing the other day, which is that the R6 has

recently stopped going down Ainsworth on its way to the hospital. It comes around Launceston Street and comes up Yamba Drive. I discovered the reason for that is that it actually goes it actually goes right up to where the old main entrance of the hospital was—where the old ambulance bay was, which is really handy. So a little shuttle bus could do that easily.

THE CHAIR: I want to ask about something that has come up a little bit—Callam Offices.

Ms McGee: My favourite!

THE CHAIR: It is a cool building. It is heritage listed. I asked the Planning Minister about it in 2023 about what is happening with it and the answer was that it will cost \$80 million to make it habitable. It has kind of just sat there, and it strikes me that \$80 million is 160 public homes, a few hundred community homes and maybe a lot of sporting facilities. It is quite a lot. This morning and yesterday, we have heard quite a few people saying, “It should be used for this,” or “The site should be used for this,” but it is kind of limbo. Do you have any views on what the government should do with an \$80 million heritage building in the heart of Woden?

Ms McGee: Use it.

Ms Raisin: Use it.

Ms Hubert: It is such an asset.

THE CHAIR: Use it by spending the \$80 million dollars on that building and not spending the \$80 million on other things?

Ms McGee: We could say that about everything.

Ms Dodd: Community centres, youth centres and all sorts of things.

THE CHAIR: So invest the \$80 million in that building?

Ms Dodd: I think so, rather than building a whole new building for whatever they are planning. Community centres have been talked about for years. That is a jewel in the crown of Woden’s architecture. I met the man that designed it. I am a big fan of his work, and I just love that building. It is a gem. It is an absolute architectural icon. We should be so proud of it and showing it off and throwing money at it but also making it useful for the public. It could almost be a tourist attraction. You could have a cafe there. With the history of the place—brutalism and the whole thing—there is huge potential, and it would save money building other buildings that would house what could go in there.

Ms McGee: There is your community facility and meeting rooms for local groups and that sort of thing.

Ms Dodd: Exactly.

Ms Raisin: The community centre was promised 10 years ago.

THE CHAIR: And they are still scattered.

Ms Raisin: And nothing has happened.

Ms Dodd: Art galleries, music venues and community centres—all the things we do not have—could almost fit into that building. It is wasted.

THE CHAIR: The other thing we have not heard much about, which surprises me, are the heights of buildings. We have not heard a lot of people talking about the heights of towers. A couple of people have mentioned Scentre, but almost no-one has mentioned the heights.

Ms Hubert: They are too tall.

THE CHAIR: I am just interested in that. We have heard a lot about wanting developers to put things in the buildings. I am interested in whether you think there is like a problem with height—whether it is solar overshadowing or just mass of people. Do you have any views on that? I was surprised it did not come up more.

Ms McGee: They are too tall—fifty-five storeys! Come on!

THE CHAIR: Is that because of solar overshadowing or because of how many people?

Ms McGee: There is solar overshadowing, because the area underneath is going to be in constant shade. That is just the way the sun works. It is just too massive. This is a suburban shopping centre; it is not New York. It is not even pretend Parramatta.

THE CHAIR: What do you reckon is the right height?

Ms McGee: I reckon about five or six. Look at Paris; there are six-storey buildings everywhere. Nobody complains about Paris, because they do not have a 55-storey market building.

THE CHAIR: If the government has a goal of having 3,500 new homes in Woden town centre, that might not fit in five or six storeys.

Ms McGee: Well, why are you dumping that many people in a shopping centre? It comes back to there being too many people. It is going to be a very dense population. It will be something like Singapore. At the moment, the zoning for Woden is what—28 storeys?

THE CHAIR: Twenty-eight, I think, is about the highest that is there. I think 28 is the current highest.

Ms McGee: The highest one is in—is it Belconnen?

THE CHAIR: Yes, I think we are the highest now.

Ms McGee: Yes, that is the highest one and that is—

THE CHAIR: But in Woden Town Centre I think it is 28.

Ms McGee: There is one at 27 in Belconnen, and that is just too big. It is too massive. It is not people scale; it is not human scale. You are walking in this, like, concrete canyon.

Ms Dodd: It isolates people.

Ms Hubert: Yes; I am concerned about the people who live in it in the future because of climate change and because of mental health. Do you want to be on the 54th storey of a building when the temperature outside is 44 degrees?

Ms Dodd: And you cannot open the windows.

Ms Hubert: You cannot open the windows and the wind is blowing around. It is appalling.

Ms Dodd: Horrifying.

Ms Hubert: Yes.

MS TOUGH: I have a question on the density. If we do not build more density around our town centres, be that Woden, Belco, Tuggeranong or wherever, where are we going to build new houses? There is a physical boundary of where we can build in the ACT. We need more public housing. We need more houses for everybody. Also, obviously, there is missing middle as well to increase housing in the suburbs. We have a finite space. If we are not going to increase the density in our town centres, where are we building?

Ms Raisin: My suggestion to Scentre Group was to reduce the overall height but build more towers up on top of the existing shopping centre. If you look at their plan, the towers are all around the outside at various heights from 55 downward.

Ms Dodd: Even it out.

Ms Raisin: Yes; so even it out a little bit more and, over time, because we have moved the bus interchange so far away from the shops, build more shopping along Callam Street—because they are going to build there anyway, through Bonner House and the two car parks—so that they can go back and retrofit the existing plaza with more towers but reduce the overall height and still have the same number of people. I do not think it will be six, though. It will probably be 16, but not 55. Fifty-five is taller than Mount Taylor, taller than Mount Stromlo and taller than Red Hill. You will be able to see it from everywhere.

Ms McGee: Wasn't there a rule that you could not build higher than the flagpole on Parliament House?

MS TOUGH: Only in Civic, I believe.

Ms McGee: You would be able to see it from Civic.

THE CHAIR: We do not have that rule.

MS TOUGH: It is just in Civic.

Ms McGee: What about no higher than Lovett Tower, which is already there?

MR CAIN: I am not sure that is a rule either.

THE CHAIR: There is currently a proposal for a 55-storey, which is why I asked the question. I thought that was interesting.

Ms McGee: It is just too massive.

MS CARRICK: Off the back of that, I guess it comes back to planning. Sure, densify town centres, but is there a balance between the town centres? Can we spread it out around the town centres? Could Tuggeranong take another 20 towers there? There is the lack of planning to spread it out. Woden seems to be targeted, big time, for the amount of densification.

Ms Hubert: The smaller shopping centres like Mawson, Erindale and Coolamon Court—

Ms Dodd: That is where we need six storeys.

Ms Hubert: Yes, have more densification around them if—

Ms Dodd: Medium density.

Ms Hubert: Yes; six-storey buildings

Ms Dodd: We need an urban planner.

Ms Hubert: Yes, we do. There have been good ones in the past. There was a plan apparently for Canberra but it seems like it was “That was the middle and the rest of it can take care of itself.”

Ms McGee: Curtin already has a five-storey block of flats and it is about to get a six-storey block of flats.

Ms Hubert: Yes, they are.

Ms McGee: It will be six storeys—and there are small, local shops.

Ms Hubert: People have to live somewhere, and we have to work out where to put them. If developers are offering us 55 storeys and we are saying “No; thank you very much,” because we do not want to be put in them when there is nowhere else to go—

Ms Dodd: There is maybe a compromise.

Ms Hubert: Yes. Six storeys around our shopping centres is probably a bit of a—

Ms Raisin: Group centres.

Ms McGee: I am wondering where all these people work—not in the public service; they keep sacking them. There are only so many coffee shops.

MS CARRICK: In the previous session, Rollo spoke about mental health issues and isolation and loneliness. Loneliness is a big thing in our community. Rollo mentioned bringing a mental health lens to everything that we do. How do you think the government could do that?

Ms Dodd: It is all about social connection, isn't it? You have to have a community that is connected. That involves all the different things that we have been discussing—youth centres, art galleries, community centres and green space. They all have to be pretty much co-located in each town centre—not just one and not others. That would be a really good start.

Ms McGee: You have to provide the space to have people come together, even if it is just the local book club for one tower.

Ms Dodd: That is right; meeting rooms. A simple meeting room is not an easy thing to organise in Woden.

Ms Raisin: Yes. In my submission I spoke about things like repair cafes and stuff where people can come together and where you are getting different age groups together—not just having all the old people together and all the young people together. You need that connection between the different ages. Somebody gave me an example. Their mother lives in a tower in Bondi Junction, which another Westfield development. She is elderly. She comes downstairs. She can go to the cafe and she has made connections with the other people who come to the cafe and the people who work there and the local shop and that kind of thing. Having those towers within close proximity to or including shops and commercial things helps bring people together as well.

Ms McGee: Sports teams are also a big thing.

Ms Raisin: Yes; the Woden Dodgers do not have a place to train. It is ridiculous.

Ms McGee: It takes us back to basketball courts.

Ms Raisin: We heard yesterday about the volleyball. That was a good story.

Ms Hubert: We recently got a dog—which we have not had in the past—and the idea a dog park is a lovely idea. We have met so many people since we have had our dog. Everybody with a dog stops to talk to each other—so the dogs can talk to each other. It is the most amazing thing. All of a sudden, I am talking to four or five new people every day. So those open spaces for those sorts of connections are really valuable.

Ms McGee: And a children's playground—the same thing.

Ms Hubert: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. That brings us to the end of our session. Thank you for joining us.

Ms Dodd: Thanks for having us.

THE CHAIR: It was great. Our secretary will send you the transcript so you can take a look at it. Thank you.

Hearing suspended from 12.25 to 3.30 pm

BERRY, MS ASHLEE, Executive Director, ACT and Capital Region, Property Council

THE CHAIR: We welcome Ashlee Berry from the Property Council. Please note that, as a witness, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and you are bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Ashlee, we have not been taking opening statements. We have your submission. Is there anything you want to open with briefly or should we just—

Ms Berry: I am happy to move straight to questions.

THE CHAIR: Great. Good on you. Ashlee, we have had a few chats about how we get enough community and public housing in new developments in Canberra. We have had quite a bit of evidence about how that should be done, how it should not be done and how it is working in other places. Do you have a view on the role of public and community housing in the Woden town centre and inclusionary zoning—that patch of regulation?

Ms Berry: Across the board, we obviously need more public, social and community housing. We need more types of housing, but we particularly need more homes for vulnerable Canberrans. That should ideally be close to town centres, close to public transport and close to services, and we have seen that across Canberra. When people are moved around, there are often some really negative impacts, so, from my perspective, we need to make sure that we have public and community housing close to the town centre and in the town centre—absolutely. In terms of how we do that, that is probably the more challenging part of the question.

Our members are often including public and social housing in their developments where they can, where it is permitted from a feasibility perspective and from a zoning perspective. There is absolutely a willingness to do that, but it can be challenging. We spoke to members recently—this was a project in Woden, I believe; I cannot remember which project it was, but it was part of a general discussion—about some challenges for them where they have public and community housing as part of their development. Tenants have moved in, which is great—they have somewhere to live—but there are some social challenges in the development that are impacting the private market sales of the development. So, from my perspective, we need to make sure that we can include public and social housing as part of these developments and have a really good mix, but we cannot do it in isolation, so we need to have the wraparound services that are often required. We need to have them embedded in the community and in the network. I am sure there are ways in which we can do that with organisations—for example, St Vincent de Paul, which often provides that. We need to make sure that is happening and that it is not happening just in isolation.

Inclusionary zoning, from our perspective, is one way in which those targets could be achieved. We would need to see exactly how that is going to work before saying absolutely that we would support it, but in principle, yes, it is needed. Something needs to give. We cannot have LVC and inclusionary zoning. That would make projects not stack up. Things are hard to get them to stack up at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Inclusionary zoning is now one aspect of the planning minister's statement of priorities—

Ms Berry: Correct.

THE CHAIR: which is great. A lot of people, including the Greens, have been asking for it. Making it commercially feasible is one thing. Tools might include LVC, land price, or giving developers more height or different incentives or government funding. There is probably a range of tools. The wraparound services are also good. There was the negative example you mentioned. Was that through Housing ACT or community housing? It was probably through Housing ACT.

Ms Berry: I believe it was. It was an off-the-cuff remark that someone made that has stuck with me about one of the challenges for integrating public and community housing. To me, it does not mean that we do not do it; it just means that we need to look at how we can do it so that the residents are supported, but that ultimately developments can still be sold. We need them to be sold in order for the next ones to take place and for things to still be feasible.

THE CHAIR: Is LVC the main commercially feasible tool you have looked at or are there lots of ideas out there and you are just noting that we need one of them?

Ms Berry: LVC is the main one because that has been the one lever that the ACT government have at their disposal to remove, whereas it is not as easy to reduce construction costs on a project-by-project basis. We need to look at things from the very start. That comes down to land price as well, which is again within the government remit to some extent if it is a project being sold by or a parcel being sold by the Suburban Land Agency. But, if it is a private sale, there is not a lot for the government to do to impact the price. LVC is the one lever that the government have that they can pull in order to have feasibility actually stack up. This is not about developers being able to pocket more profit, because the way in which LVC is applied on projects means it is ultimately borne as a cost. It is part of the adding up, regarding what a developer needs to then sell the projects for. When we remove the LVC, the prices can come down. Things like height are really important. If we want to have more open spaces and more public realm, the way that we can make projects stack up more is to increase the height.

THE CHAIR: Awesome. Thank you very much.

MS CARRICK: I would like to go to height and the public realm. In Woden, we have reasonable heights. They want to go to 55 storeys now. But we are not seeing green space around the bottom of the buildings. If it is a single building, they will take the entire block. If there are multiple buildings, there might be some concrete and some garden beds through them. We say that more height and more density will enable the green spaces, but how do we get it?

Ms Berry: That needs to be looked at within the planning controls. If things are being approved, that means that they are meeting the current planning requirements. That would need to be looked at as part of the planning controls. If there is a desire for a certain amount of green space and things like that, that needs to be included in those planning controls.

MS CARRICK: Thank you. We spoke to a woman in a cafe in the middle of Woden. She talked about the impact of work from home on her business. There are not many businesses around the public spaces in Woden. I went there during the day and saw some women having a smoke behind a building, and we started chatting. I asked, “What do you do in Woden?” and they said, “We just go straight home after work.” Do you think that, if there were a bit more vibe, a bit more happening, a bit more activity, it might be attract people to come to work and also perhaps fill some of the empty stock there now?

Ms Berry: It absolutely needs to be an objective to get people back, and not just in the city. I have focused a lot on the city, but our town centres are impacted as well by work from home particularly, but also by changing demographics and cost-of-living pressures. We often hear that people are not going out as much. The younger generation does not go out as much. There are no after-work drinks. I think that is in part because they are not coming into the office in the first place and lives have changed. People are busier. Often, for a married couple with kids, they are both working rather than one working and one being at home. So there are other pressures as well.

To me, it is about making a vibrant place, and that applies to all town centres. Woden is significant. We have the CIT that has now opened, we have Canberra Hospital and we have the bus interchange. It is a hub, or it should be a hub, so we need to make sure that it has all the places—not just Westfield but also places around Westfield—and opportunities for people to not just eat and drink but actually have experiences. I am not exactly sure what they are, but there needs to be some consideration about what the people want. That is probably the biggest drawcard. What do people living around Woden—not just in the town centre but also in the Woden area—want? It is about getting that information and then trying to get that delivered, because that will support local businesses. It will support the coffee shops and it will support some of the smaller retailers that are probably struggling because people are not working there and they are not going there, or, if they are, they go and then leave; they are not staying around at the end of the day. It is a challenge.

MS CARRICK: Yes. You hear people saying that young people do not drink much anymore or they preload before they go out. Anyway, they are not out drinking as much. I hear young people say they want to connect with each other and they want places to go. Perhaps it is more about sporting infrastructure or cultural street theatres—whatever can bring like-minded people together and be active, not necessarily in a cafe or drinking in a pub.

Ms Berry: Absolutely, or not needing to constantly spend more money to have those connections. There is the old saying: “If you build it, they will come.” We need to look at what the demographic wants. What could we provide from a government perspective? What could the private sector provide when they are developing new buildings? Again, this could be part of an LVC offset framework or something like that or part of development requirements. “Inclusionary zoning” is probably not the right term for this, but, within the development framework, what does the public want and how do we get it? We need to be innovative and we need to be creative, and, from an industry and government perspective, we need to work together to make sure that we can deliver things that are used but also useful, worthwhile and bring people in.

MS CARRICK: Yes. That reminds me: we are often told that we can use the amenities in schools, but that does not do anything for the town centre itself and for bringing people into it. We have been told that, if we get an indoor sports stadium, it can be either on the fourth floor of the Scentre Group building or in a school, but having something on the ground floor in the town centre is like honey. It attracts young people to it when they walk past. It is on design lines. Do you think that having the right infrastructure in the right place is important to create the vibe?

Ms Berry: It absolutely is. It is absolutely crucial that it is not just the right infrastructure but also, as you said, the right place and it is accessible to a wide range of people. We have the bus interchange at Woden. The next stage of light rail is set to go to Woden, but, if people do not live on the light rail track, they will probably still need a car, so it is also about parking. It is about how we make it as easy as possible so that people say, "I'm going to drive and I know that there is a car park," or say, "I'm catching the bus" or "I'm catching light rail." Across the board, we need to make it easy for young people and families in particular to get in.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: I will pick up a bit on what Fiona has said. There are a lot of empty commercial spaces around the Woden town centre. There is a lot of commercial space there, but a lot of it has been left empty over the years for who knows what reasons. Firstly, do you have any data on vacancy rates? And what do we do to try to encourage businesses back into these spaces? Is it a bit of a chicken-and-egg scenario: having more people moving to the space so you get business, but, without business, people do not want to come into the space? How do we get it right to make sure that businesses can flourish in the area?

Ms Berry: I will take the question on notice about commercial vacancies in Woden in particular. I will see what data we have. There is an ongoing challenge for ground floor commercial tenancies across Canberra, but particularly in Woden. There are a number of things that we could do to improve that. One of the issues that we often find in speaking with landlords and agents is permitted use. That is something that we would love to see addressed. What you can actually use is often very tight. In order to add uses, you are looking at a lease variation. Whether that requires payment is another thing, but it still can be—

MS TOUGH: It is still a process.

Ms Berry: It is still a process. It is very hard for owners and agents. If there is a particular use and they move out, to get someone back in is difficult. Relaxing some of that would be really helpful to get people back in. The other challenge that we have is around commercial rates. Quite often, even though it would seem that landlords are paying commercial rates, they do in the first instance, but a lot of it is passed on to tenants. It is not viable for people to have shopfronts in those areas because the commercial rates across Canberra are too high.

When you weigh it up, you have very limited scope of who you can have as a tenant and you have high commercial rates, but you also do not have the people coming in,

because they are working from home or they just do not come in because there are not the attractions. Those are the issues. If we could chip away at all three of those, then we might see fewer commercial vacancies, which would be ideal because, as you said, it is a bit of a chicken-and-the-egg scenario. If we have people there and we have vibrant and a diverse range of commercial uses—we do not just want a row of coffee shops, we do not want a row of dry cleaners; we need to have a diverse range of businesses so that people think, “I have to do these two or three things. I can do that in one convenient way, and there is a vibrant coffee shop. I can go there. I can pick things up.” It could be something a bit unique as well. It is a challenge, but they are the three things: zoning, commercial rates and getting people there.

MS TOUGH: One of the things we have heard is that commercial property values are based on potential rent, according to some witnesses, and obviously a business is valued on what it is actually making. Some businesses have said that means that some commercial property owners would prefer to have their building partially vacant or vacant because of what the potential rent is—keeping the value of the building high—rather than reducing the rent slightly or enough to attract tenants. Even though they would then be tenanted, it would reduce the value of the building. Have you heard much of that happening?

Ms Berry: I have not necessarily heard of it happening, but that analogy is correct. What it comes down to is that, if the value of the building declines by a significant amount, then when we see banks foreclosing, because you do not have the proper LVR ratio. It is an issue, absolutely. Perhaps there is a way that we could reduce that risk and work through that, but, from a commercial owner perspective, we do not need buildings to have their value reduced. That is a significant risk. Also, for some buildings, it is about the value overall. They might have only one or two tenancies vacant. It is complex. It is not as simple as saying, “Let’s slash all the rents,” because that becomes a huge challenge from a financial and feasibility perspective.

MS TOUGH: Some of the existing tenants might say, “If you’ve cut the rent so a shop can open next door to me, why won’t you cut mine or freeze mine?” or whatever.

Ms Berry: Correct. It is challenging all round.

THE CHAIR: Does that mean that commercial rents can never go down?

Ms Berry: In theory, yes. We find that they will probably never go down. They may stay stagnant or there may be incentives—there may be fit-out incentives or outgoings and exclusions—but I would be surprised if commercial rents went down.

MR CAIN: I am interested in two areas. Concerns have been expressed to me, and I am sure to others. What role does the Property Council have? The first area is the quality of the builds, particularly the towers. I know there is legal recourse and there are regulatory schemes and all that, but I am curious as to what role the Property Council has in that space.

Ms Berry: As the Property Council, we completely support needing to have really strong building quality. We need to have high building quality and we would expect that our members are only delivering quality buildings. The challenge is that our

members are primarily the other developers, which means they are the investors and the financiers, not actually the builders of most of these projects. In some circumstances, particularly in Woden, our members are the developers and the builders. They are one and the same, and they are subject to a whole range of checks by the ACT government, private certifiers and their own internal compliance quality assurance systems. Our message is that everyone should be building with the utmost quality and, if there are issues, we would expect the certifier, as the last stop, to address that, but the ACT government as well when they do their mandatory inspections.

One of the challenges that we have here in the ACT is that we do not have trade contractor licensing. That is something that we know that the ACT government has spoken about. We know that the minister has committed to looking at that next year. We have certainly been part of some early discussions with the City and Environment Directorate about trade contractor licensing being implemented next year. It is a really important missing piece of the puzzle. You need to have the people that are doing the work. I am generalising, but often the big defect issues that we see around Canberra are about waterproofing, so we do not have the ability or the mechanism to hold the people that are doing that work to account. That is a challenge. Yes, there are contractual ways, but that only applies if the company is still around. That is a challenge from a quality perspective. We are working towards that, but, to me, it is also about reputation, quality and making sure that the people who are doing the work are appropriately skilled and, if they need to have a licence, making sure that they have a licence and holding them to account across the supply chain, rather than just one person or one individual being held accountable.

MR CAIN: Thank you. Related to that, as you are aware, the development builder will select a certifier to come and check their work. Regarding risk analysis, alarm bells go off. Again, I am checking on what role the Property Council feels it has to ensure that there are no improper arrangements between the developer and the certifier to pass work that should not necessarily be passed—for example, “Let this pass and you will have the maintenance contracts later” or some sort of commercial or other relationship between the builder, developer and certifier.

Ms Berry: It is something that I know people have raised. Two or three years ago, there were some changes around residential contracts. A builder was unable to self-select the certifier; they needed to get the homeowner to do it. That was probably at the recommendation of the builder, but there is still that separation—that the builder cannot just appoint. That is for smaller residential projects. The builder cannot just say, “This person is the certifier.” The homeowner needs to take some steps now to actually appoint them. As to your concerns around certifiers and developers, I have not heard any of those issues. Nothing like that has been brought to me. The members that we have, and certainly the certifiers that I deal with, are of the utmost quality, and the certifiers themselves are subject to a pretty rigorous code of conduct. They are governed under some pretty tough professional requirements—in particular, their insurance. The certifiers can be just as liable for the defects, in addition to the developers and the builders.

In the ACT courts, we have seen individual certifiers being held liable for negligence when they were not doing what they ought to be doing and when they passed things that are not of the right standard or right quality. I do not see that as an issue. It has

potential, but I certainly do not have any evidence or any examples before me where that has been an issue. That is because the certifiers that we have operating are doing what they need to do and they have their own professional reputation and regulations that they need to adhere to.

MR CAIN: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: The ACT government are committed to doing public certification. They have committed to doing it, but they have not yet done it. Have you heard anything about where that is up to? Have you heard from the minister or from your members about where that is up to?

Ms Berry: I have not heard anything on how that is progressing. There are some challenges with the ACT government bringing everything in-house, but I am sure there are ways that we could work through that, regarding pure workload. We have a significant number of private certification companies operating across Canberra and they are all very busy. It would involve a huge department, from the ACT government's perspective, and it would be about how they fund it—all of that. There are still some challenges to work through. I do not have any updates. It is certainly in the back of our mind as we wait to get an update. I would be just as interested as the inquiry to find out where it is up to, because it will have a significant impact. If it were brought in and there was no private certification at all, it would have a significant impact on the industry. Certifiers would not just potentially be out of business; it would also affect timeframes, processes and how it would all work.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: How do we have evidence of complaints around certifiers in town centres? We have heard about poor building quality, and there are no appeal rights. They are exempt from going to ACAT.

Ms Berry: In terms of the developments?

MS CARRICK: Yes. If you are in a town centre, you cannot go to ACAT. They are exempt.

Ms Berry: To me, if it were a quality issue—you are talking more about it being a quality issue with the build—and if residents or local people had concerns about the quality, they need to bring that up, not with the planning side of ACT government but with the Construction Occupations Registrar and the building team. That is completely separate to the third party appeals and the planning side of it. If there are concerns about building quality, building to the plans and that side of it, that needs to be brought up with the registrar.

MS CARRICK: True, and people do that, but they also go to ACAT when they have issues with a certifier. I think I have seen them in ACAT regarding residential builds. I could be wrong.

Ms Berry: I have seen the Construction Occupations Registrar take disciplinary action against certifiers. That is an option. The registrar does that rather than the residents.

That is a challenge. The residents of especially multi-residential buildings do not have a contractual relationship with the certifier, so that can be a challenge. They would need to lodge their complaint with the registrar rather than go directly to ACAT, I believe.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: That brings us to the end of our time. Thank you for joining us, Ashlee. A question was taken on notice about data on commercial vacancies. Our secretariat will get back to you with the UPT to assist you with that. Thank you for your time.

Ms Berry: Thank you very much.

Short suspension

STEEL, MR CHRIS, Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development,
Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport

GREEN, MR BEN, Executive Group Manager, Planning and Urban Policy, City and
Environment Directorate

O'BRIEN, MS FREYA, Executive Branch Manager, Strategic Planning and Policy,
Planning and Urban Policy, City and Environment Directorate

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. We welcome Chris Steel MLA, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, and officials from the City and Environment Directorate and the Suburban Land Agency. As witnesses, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and you are bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. We are not taking opening statements. We have 103 submissions. There is a lot of content to go from, so we will jump straight to questions.

Minister, I am interested in the density planning that we are doing in the Woden town centre. Scentre has finalised their community engagement on their concept master plan. The plan that they have put out includes a major redevelopment of existing sites and the purchase of some unleased land from the territory. That Scentre concept master plan proposes the development of around 3,900 dwellings by 2052 in the Woden town centre. The Woden District Strategy says we need an extra 3,400 dwellings, so we are looking at just one property developer that is suggesting more developments than the district strategy has. Can you run me through how our planning system is going to make sure that we get the right number of homes? Is it the number in the Woden District Strategy or is it some other number?

Mr Steel: I am aware of the Scentre Group proposal. That is a preliminary proposal that has not yet formally come to the independent Territory Planning Authority for consideration, although I understand they have had some engagement with the Territory Planning Authority. I have certainly been briefed by them in relation to their proposal, so I understand the elements of it, as it stands at the moment. Obviously, some work has been done—now some years old—as part of the planning system review, the creation of the Woden District Strategy and also the development of the new Territory Plan, particularly the Woden district policy, in relation to some of the planning requirements for the town centre.

The ACT government is currently in the process of developing a transport oriented development framework for the corridor in the Inner South and the Woden Valley, stretching down as far as Beasley Street in Torrens and Farrer. It also incorporates the Woden town centre. This is called the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. This looks at the opportunity for more housing, but also, importantly, community facilities, opportunities to protect and enhance green space in the area, and opportunities in the Woden town centre. Housing is obviously a big priority for the government at the moment, and, because of the need to provide more opportunities to enable housing supply, we are looking at the shopping centres, including the town centres and group centres.

THE CHAIR: I will jump in and focus it a bit. With our outcomes focused planning system, what I am trying to work out is when these development proposals go to the

Planning Authority, if, for instance, you have development proposals saying, “Here are 3,900 new dwellings” or “Here are 5,000 new dwellings” or “Here are 10,000 new dwellings” and the government has done its planning process and said, “We need 3,400.” Is the planning system going to look at some of those and say, “No; we don’t need so many there. That one is too tall”? Will that be covered or is the planning system just going to approve them?

Mr Steel: I will let Ms Green talk to it, but the key point is that what we expect is that a major plan amendment would be required for a proposal like the one that is being contemplated by Scentre Group.

THE CHAIR: The 55-storey development by Scentre?

Mr Steel: A change to planning policy is actually required to facilitate the development. It may involve changes to various parts of the Territory Plan, but there may also be opportunities to change the number of dwellings and so forth that might be permitted on particular leased land in the Woden town centre. The Woden District Strategy and the Territory Plan are not static documents; they are subject to amendments. They can be proposed by proponents like Scentre Group and other leaseholders in the town centre, including the government, and they will be considered. They are considered against the Planning Strategy, which itself is proposed for a refresh over the coming years, particularly to, again, look at housing priorities and the need for more housing, but also the infrastructure that supports that. The district strategies are meant to be reviewed every, I think, five years under the Planning Act as well. They are subject to change and review, but can be updated between.

THE CHAIR: When the Planning Authority—the planning system—is doing this work and when it is looking at how many homes, how will it make sure that these developments have the amenities they need, such as nice green space and the town square? I note that the LiDAR data just released showed a drop in tree canopy coverage in the Phillip and Woden area, like across most of Canberra. How is the planning system going to make sure that, alongside whatever number of dwellings are approved, there is community space, there are community services, and there are the other facilities and amenities that people need?

Mr Steel: That is exactly the purpose of the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. It will establish the transport oriented development plan for this part of Canberra. That is in the process of development at the moment, and the purpose of that is to demonstrate design excellence and celebrate Canberra’s unique landscape character, including heritage in the corridor and placing more value on public spaces that prioritise pedestrian, cycling and public transport, as well as the provision of social infrastructure required for sustainable communities. That includes recreation. It may include housing, commercial activity, active travel, public transport connections, and improvements to landscapes, streets and public spaces.

THE CHAIR: Do you think an urban design guide for Woden town centre would help in the way an urban design guide for the city centre helped?

Mr Steel: We might go back to the original question around housing numbers, and then Mr Green can expand a bit further on that.

Mr Green: It is important that I read to you from the district policies in the Territory Plan, just as a point of reference for Woden. The kind of hierarchy that it presents through the Territory Plan goes to some general policy outcomes. They go to exploring opportunities for integration of Yarralumla Creek, developing Woden town centre as an educational commercial hub, and planning for the delivery of light rail. We know that we will have increased density.

Throughout that district policy and within the Territory Plan, there are also specific provisions that relate to assessment outcomes in the town centre. This is for the entire town centre, bound by Easty Street and Melrose Drive, and even down to the Phillip trades area. There is a series of outcomes that we want to see there, such as, when it comes to the urban structure, improving the provision of recreation, sport, cultural facilities within the town centre; providing clear and safe pedestrian connections between residential developments, particularly those fronting onto Melrose Drive; and providing a safe and vibrant night-time economy.

So a variety of considerations are built into the planning system right now that must be considered with development proposals. There is, of course, through the assessment process, the understanding of cumulative impacts associated with that. There are specific provisions that go to some of those cumulative impact issues. One of the key concerns that we are certainly aware of is in relation to solar access, particularly within the town square. We have a very specific provision in the Territory Plan that says “development proposals demonstrate no additional overshadowing in Woden town square”. Right through the current Territory Plan, there are controls, through assessment requirements or assessment outcomes, that need to be considered on a case-by-case basis but also cumulatively. That is in part driven by a compact and efficient city through the Planning Strategy, through how that is expressed in the Woden District Strategy and through the provisions in the Territory Plan.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: Have you all watched the hearings to date?

Mr Steel: I have not, but I will catch up at some point in time, through the transcripts.

MS CARRICK: I know you are busy. It is a pretty big ask. I am glad that you will catch up. Will everybody catch up and either watch them or read the transcripts to understand what people have been saying?

Mr Green: I have already read through a couple of the 103 submissions that Ms Clay was referring to.

MS CARRICK: That is good.

Mr Green: Absolutely, we will review them, and we will review the report that comes from the committee as well.

Mr Steel: Firstly, we are very interested in the views of the community that have been made in the submissions and also any findings and recommendations the committee

may make in their report. I note that, once we have developed the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework, including work in the town centre, we will also be going out for consultation with the community—we expect that will be next year—on the draft version of the framework. We will try to pick up, in the development of the framework, some of the ideas and recommendations from your committee to help inform that piece of work. Then we will go out again to the community and test some of the more detailed work that CED has been coming up with. Whilst this inquiry is happening a bit earlier than the work on the Southern Gateway framework, it will be useful to help inform that work. We are very interested in those ideas.

MS CARRICK: You have heard the saying: “The right infrastructure in the right place.” And there is urban policy. Is there any social element to ensure that we put the right infrastructure in the right place? We were just speaking with Ms Berry from the Property Council, who said that you need to get the vibe into the public spaces and into the town centre in order to attract people to come to the office to work and attract people to the apartments, because there is a high vacancy rate and empty apartments. Is there any consideration of putting the social infrastructure in the core where people are walking around, to attract people into the middle as opposed to our schools?

Mr Steel: Yes. That is part of the work that is being undertaken at the moment through a community needs analysis. That will help inform some of the work in the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework development. I will hand over to Freya to provide some further information.

Ms O’Brien: Thank you, Minister. We have undertaken a community recreation and needs assessment across the territory. As part of the Southern Gateway framework project, we are looking at what that means specifically for the corridor and will align that with future development that could potentially come forward as part of the Southern Gateway framework and stage 2B. That is looking at where the current facilities are and will then look at projected populations to understand where we might need to see more facilities in the future. As the minister mentioned, the next phase will be next year, to go out for further consultation and really understand from the community what they value in those community facilities and where they would like to see that sort of growth—looking at future facilities and the location of those facilities.

MS CARRICK: When we talk about community facilities, community facilities could be childcare or aged-care facilities. The sense from the community is that they want recreational facilities—an indoor sports stadium, a street theatre—where like-minded people can come together and form relationships and create community. In the concept of those, like a 50-metre pool, is there any thought about locating them in the town centre as opposed to schools?

Ms O’Brien: Yes. All possibilities are being considered. When we are looking at best practice for community and recreational facilities, having flexibility in the facilities and having them in a variety of locations and a variety of delivery modes is really important, so that we can make sure that we are meeting needs and the changing needs of the population through time.

Mr Green: The other thing to add—and it is very clear through the district strategies—is that page 46 of the Woden District Strategy talks about the activation component. We

have key sites within district strategies. The town centre is a key site—key site No 4. I will quote directly from the district strategy because it is relevant that this has been considered and is informing our future work. One of the points says:

Continued activation of the town square to be the central focal point for social and community activity, encouraging people to gather in the area, supporting active ground floor uses and providing a focus for entertainment, markets and other activation of the space.

And another point says:

Community, sport, recreation and retail facilities located prominently to create a destination and activity.

That goes to the point you are making, Ms Carrick. Certainly within our strategic planning, it is foreshadowed, and it is particularly foreshadowed for the town centre site and the key sites within the district strategies. The work that we are now doing, as Ms O'Brien described, is going to that next layer of detail.

MS CARRICK: Okay, but it has been a long time—many years; 15 or 20 years. Right now, there is a trust element—that it is going to work out. There is the Youth Foyer. We support the Youth Foyer, but there is a blank wall right in our public space, with an electrical substation. How do we address that? That is not helping to activate the place. I do not know what to say. The whole thing is very tough. There is Bowes Street. How did the Hellenic Club get that big car park? On the plan it says “Activate Bowes Street”, but they are not; they are activating the side next to the Hellenic Club. We are not getting a community centre. Now we are going to lease a space, with Scentre Group or the Hellenic Club. Are we going to put Woden Community Service and the vulnerable people they service next to the Hellenic Club—a big gaming club?

I do not know. Things are just not thought through or coordinated. While we put blank walls in place, we are going backwards. We are losing our facilities. We are selling our blocks and our car parks without identifying sites, and we are going backwards. People feel really unsafe in those areas. We walked around there yesterday morning and people talked about the drugs, the kids and the gangs, and people feel unsafe. There is graffiti everywhere.

THE CHAIR: Fiona, do you have a question?

MS CARRICK: No. That can be a statement,. We need proper planning. We need planning.

Mr Steel: Can I ask you a question?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Steel: What do you mean by that? This goes to what might be the next step in perhaps making a recommendation and so forth in your committee—something to consider. What is it that you think is missing at the moment in terms of planning—not in the Territory Plan, a district strategy, and the previous Woden Town Centre Master Plan? There is only so much level of detail that those things can go into whilst retaining

the flexibility that is needed to consider individual proposals.

MS CARRICK: I will go to what I think is missing. The city and the Gungahlin district policies identify entertainment precincts. We desperately need to identify our entertainment precinct before we continue to put high-rises with residents around them. We have to identify sites for community facilities, like an indoor sports stadium, an aquatic centre and a street theatre, so we do not keep selling areas. They are my primary things to—

Mr Steel: You were talking about active frontages before.

MS CARRICK: Yes.

Mr Steel: Not every frontage can be an active frontage, because then you are dispersing the activity that may not necessarily support an entertainment precinct or a particular precinct of activity. There will be streets that have a different function, whether that is access to a car park—

MS CARRICK: Agreed. So the—

Mr Steel: which I think is the area that you are talking about, next to the CIT and the Youth Foyer, for example. In other areas, there may be further opportunities for activation. That is what we hope to get out of the investment that we have made in the CIT—to see further investment, private investment, around it to see expansion of the wonderful improvements that we have made in terms of place-making as part of that project. But what is it in the planning that you think needs to change to address this issue around the blank wall?

MS CARRICK: Zoning. First of all, identify where our core is. Where is our entertainment precinct? Assumably, it is West Plaza and the town square. They are sort of co-located. It is the east-west link. Then you have north-south: Bradley Street and Bowes Street. Those are the primary areas, without scattering everywhere. You have to make sure there is solar access. If you say that you have controls in place to ensure there is solar access into those public spaces, why have 28 storeys in the zoning? Bring it down and make it clear to everybody that it is low so that the sun can come in. With W2, there are tiny frontages onto the town square which are empty. I inquired with W2: “Why is it so small? Why isn’t it open like Verity Lane? Why isn’t there a big foyer, like 220 or the new building for the planning directorate in Dickson? They have big foyers. Why do we have these tiny frontages?” They said that, because of the zoning, you are allowed only 250 square metres or something, so they made residents’ car parking on the ground floor. There are things to look at to ensure that we get proper active fronts that are commercially viable.

Mr Steel: In the places that you want them, presumably.

MS CARRICK: Yes, in the core areas.

Mr Steel: We can take that into consideration.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: I have a question about government engagement with residents of apartment blocks. There are quite a few already in Woden. They have been there for a while. And there is often construction going on around Woden: the CIT, the bus interchange and a few other things. What work is undertaken to engage some of the residents in those buildings? A lot of them are renters. They might not be engaged with the body corporate as such. They might be newer to the region, so maybe they are not as engaged with, say, the Community Council or some of those more established consultation bodies. What process is there for residents to engage when there are big disruptions happening around them?

Mr Green: In terms of disruption, particularly as a result of the government catalysing projects in the town centre, I am happy to take that on notice and get some advice from our colleagues in Infrastructure Canberra, as the delivery agency. With respect to other development that is led by the private sector, there are statutory provisions under the Planning Act with respect to the notification to not only homeowners but also occupiers. Where there are adjacent developments occurring, we would expect that they will receive notification of those developments through the statutory process. With any of the engagement that we will be undertaking in the future, particularly around the Southern Gateway, we would expect a large public campaign in and around those types of activities.

Mr Steel: There has been quite a lot of engagement recently around the CIT Woden campus project, mainly in relation to the traffic arrangements that have changed and continue to change through the construction program related to the bus interchange. Grand Central Towers has been particularly affected because vehicle movements have changed around the building. That has had an impact on residents. There has been quite close engagement with the body corporate, but it is sometimes difficult to contact some of the groups that you mentioned, so extra effort will be needed to engage with the broader community in Woden on that.

The other big engagement has been around light rail stage 2B and the draft EIS. There was very extensive engagement, particularly with some of the residents of the large multi-units in North Woden, on Irving Street, to engage them on the design of the future light rail stop. Because the line is coming directly adjacent to the Ivy apartment block, there was a lot of interest in the impacts and the mitigations that could be put in place to address them. There has been a fair bit of engagement through that, but further effort will be needed going forward.

Also, when we are planning for the potential of new homes in the town centre and in the corridor, it will be important to not just think of the new residents and their needs. We do not necessarily know who those new residents could be. They could be coming from other parts of Canberra. There will need to be engagement with existing residents so that they see a benefit from the potential transport oriented development—improvements to existing green spaces and access to recreation and community infrastructure as part of that, as well as active travel connections and, of course, the public transport infrastructure that will be put in place. There will be a need for quite extensive engagement on that, as there has been on light rail and other projects.

MS CARRICK: Regarding light rail, you mentioned Ivy. Is there potential for, say, the

government to hold consultation with specific apartment blocks or areas of apartment blocks? Often consultation is done with a community council about things, because that is a guaranteed way of talking to a bunch of people in the community. Is there a way of going to apartment blocks or groups of them and saying, “Light rail is coming past here. Let’s chat,” or, “At the bus interchange, things are happening. Let’s chat in the building”?

Mr Steel: I think there was some specific targeted engagement with Ivy in particular during that, but I can take on notice exactly what occurred in terms of meetings. There has been a variety of different approaches, such as larger town hall style meetings, but also pop-ups and those sorts of things to catch people at different points in the day and different cohorts of people, as well as a digital presence to make sure that people can engage through that means as well. It is always a challenge to get people to be involved in this. While we are hyper-interested in planning, some people are not so interested. Of course, there are very interested groups within the community. We need to make sure we have broad representation. I will come back on notice particularly in relation to light rail. We are working through the communications approach that we might take on an engagement regarding the Southern Gateway work. It is an active point of discussion.

MS TOUGH: Awesome. Thanks.

MR CAIN: Regarding the Woden District Strategy, Minister, in your submission, you responded. I make reference to the fifth term of reference: “Public spaces that encourage activity and in which people feel safe”. Minister, when was the last time you actually walked around the Woden town centre?

Mr Steel: In the last week.

MR CAIN: The committee spent a couple of hours yesterday morning walking around. I do not get there as often as, I am sure, someone like Ms Carrick. The public spaces were either dead or definitely felt unsafe. This has kind of been touched on by some of the questioners already: what is driving your planning for Woden town centre? It appears to simply be a parcel of land that has been allocated to the big developers to build towers, irrespective of the repercussions of those builds on community focused priorities, which you claim to be addressing, but the reality does not line up with the aspiration.

Mr Steel: I have lived in Canberra a long time. My family moved to Woden in 1988, and I remember what Woden was like back then. It was a sea of surface car parks surrounding a couple of large public service buildings and what was then the Woden Plaza. There was not a huge amount of activity, especially after hours, because people finished work and then went home. The mall would be closed. I appreciate that, in the past, there have been some nightclubs and so forth, which are fondly remembered, but it was largely a place to shop and to work, and not much else. Going back to the Woden Town Centre Master Plan in, I think, 2014, for the first time it set out the vision to make sure that it is a place that attracts people to live, because there were no residents in the town centre—no mixed-use development—and to make sure that it is a place to work and to socialise throughout the day and evenings.

MR CAIN: You think that is happening, do you?

Mr Steel: We have achieved part of the housing part of it. The living part has been added quite substantially over recent years, and the government has now gone further in the district strategy and the vision that we have set. The vision is set out on page 13. It says:

With the catalysing presence of light rail, the Woden town centre will be revitalised as a mixed residential and commercial hub—

that mixed use—

with an educational focus ...

We have added “educational focus” as another point of activity, through investment in the CIT. We have also said that the vision is about it being:

... a busy centre with more people living and working in and close to the town centre. There will be improved amenity through greater tree canopy cover, access to city parks and upgraded public spaces.

We have made substantial investments in that activity by bringing in education and by bringing in people living in the town centre. There is more work to do in that respect, and there is more work to do in terms of the investments that we have committed to and already funded around the new community centre, which will hopefully drive activities. And there are some private proposals for building recreational facilities in the centre which may come forward for consideration in the future as well. The government has also committed to some future plans around undertaking feasibility for indoor sports centres and the like.

MR CAIN: Apart from self-evaluating your success, what consultation are you doing to find out how people who live there and use the centre feel about how the town centre is taking shape?

Mr Steel: We will consult with them as part of the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework.

MR CAIN: Are you doing anything now, though?

Mr Green: Mr Cain, significant consultation occurred with the community on district strategies and the planning reforms. I appreciate we are talking about 2½ to three years ago. The district strategy, at page 7, talks about what the community values within that district. I will not read them all out, but one of the things they valued was the Woden town centre being a major hub for employment, community facilities and transport. Clearly, planning work is manifest through the district strategy and territory plans, and for confidence the private sector will want to put proposals and invest. Future change happening with the Southern Gateway is being communicated with the community. There has been steady engagement with the community for some time on these things. I appreciate there are many different views, but we have captured some of that feedback as part of those planning reforms recently.

Mr Steel: Part of it will be government investment in facilities like the CIT and the work that we are putting into the new community centre. It will be undertaken on leased land through proponent-initiated proposals that come through the planning system, and they will be evaluated against the district strategy and the planning strategy to try to achieve some of the outcomes that we have been talking about and the broader vision to get more activity in the town centre, with a mix of different uses.

MS CARRICK: You said that, when you arrived in 1988, it was a sea of car parks. I would like to give my experience for the *Hansard* record. I arrived in Woden in 1968 and lived in NCA's philosophy of a relatively self-contained city. We had a pitching park, bowling greens and a bowling alley. We had an indoor sports stadium. We had two 50-metre pools: one in Deakin and one in Phillip. There was nightlife everywhere. We used to catch the bus to Phillip, and we would go from nightlife to nightlife to nightlife and then catch the last bus home. We had Christmas carols in the town square. It was a regular thing every year.

THE CHAIR: Is there a question, Fiona?

MS CARRICK: Yes. You said there is a new CIT. You put in a new CIT, but there was already one there. We already had a CIT, so it is not new; it is a replacement.

Mr Steel: But not a major campus. It was located—

MS CARRICK: It was a CIT.

Mr Steel: It changed location multiple times.

MS CARRICK: The location changed—yes.

Mr Steel: This is now the major campus.

MS CARRICK: This is better. It went from the old Woden Valley High School site to the town centre—a much better location.

Mr Steel: It was a small satellite campus of the CIT.

MS CARRICK: Yes. It is a much better location, but there was one. A new community centre—well, we had one for Woden Community Service. It was not great. It was located behind Chemist Warehouse. Now it is scattered. There is not one. You mentioned building a new community centre, but we have heard that—

THE CHAIR: Fiona, is there a supplementary question?

MS CARRICK: you are looking at leasing one from the private sector. Are you going to lease one from the private sector or are you going to build one?

Mr Steel: That is in Minister Stephen-Smith's portfolio. Funding is there for a community centre, and a range of options are being explored for the delivery of that centre. I forgot to answer the question around passive surveillance.

THE CHAIR: Could you take on notice where it is up to?

Mr Steel: I can take that on notice—

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Steel: and ask Minister Stephen-Smith for a response. In relation to the safety issues, one of the key reasons the government chose to invest in a new CIT campus on the particular block that it has been built on, which was the old public transport interchange, which was over 50 years old, is that it was considered unsafe for people using public transport. We wanted to build a new public transport interchange that has better passive surveillance and better solar access—access to sunlight there—and is not hidden away, tucked away from view. We are achieving that through the redesign of Callum Street and the old public transport interchange block, where CIT Woden has been built.

The other element of CIT Woden is to try to improve the public spaces so there is better passive surveillance and also active surveillance, with CCTV and the like. That has been put in place to monitor what is happening in the area. With 6½ thousand students and staff using the campus each day, more activity means more eyes on the street, seeing what is happening. That generally makes people feel safer, but there are always opportunities to look at how we can improve safety around the centre.

I remember, as a school student, being part of a survey on safety. I walked around the town centre when I was a teenager, filling out a survey about where I felt safe in different parts of the Woden town centre. So it has been looked at at various points in time, and I am sure there will be further opportunities, on leased land around the town centre, to improve activity and improve safety outcomes.

Mr Green: The only other thing I would add, going back to Mr Cain's original question, is that the Territory Plan also raises safety as an important consideration. There are specific assessment requirements for the town centre. I mentioned earlier the connections with residential developments fronting Melrose Drive. There are also provisions relating to how that interacts with Eddison Park and making sure that, as new developments come online, there are clear, safe pedestrian linkages. It also points to providing a safe environment and night-time economy. The government has already committed to work that needs to be done around entertainment precincts.

MR CAIN: It is fine to have those aspirations, but the reality is that there are some areas that are not safe, and they are connecting public areas. That is the reality. That is what I saw. It is fine to have what you have on paper, but it is not lining up with reality.

THE CHAIR: I am going to remind everyone that this hearing is for us to ask questions rather than make statements. We have lots of opportunities to make statements in other forums, so let's stick to asking questions. Thanks, team. I will go back to the beginning. Minister, we had a lot of submissions about activation, and we have had a lot of witnesses. We spoke this morning to the Southside Farmers Market. They had a really great vision. When we asked them who they would talk to, they did not seem to know. Who is in charge? If people have ideas about activation in the town square, given there is no renewal authority, who do they go to? Who is responsible? Who helps them?

Mr Steel: They would come to the City and Environment Directorate—Access Canberra is now part of the City and Environment Directorate—to manage any licences that may be needed to undertake markets, if they want to do that. They are engaged with the Education Directorate, in terms of the use of the school where they are currently located. They would have to engage with them directly. I would say they currently have a very successful location, but there are opportunities to potentially host that in other areas, and the government is willing to work with them and consider those options. West Plaza of the CIT was designed to potentially accommodate that type of activation, and there are also other locations in the town centre where that might be possible.

THE CHAIR: Would they call Access Canberra?

Mr Steel: Yes, they would engage with Access Canberra, certainly as a front door to the ACT government, and they would be able to potentially also talk with the team within CED that deals with public unleased land.

THE CHAIR: We have had a lot of different ideas and requests for activation, including more greenspace there. It is very hot. Our tree canopy has dropped. Who would be in charge of delivering it? If that was going to be done—it is public space—who would do that? How would somebody get that done?

Mr Steel: There is a variety of means. In terms of the planning system, part of the Woden District Strategy is that, in the town centre, there will be improved amenity through greater tree canopy cover. That is something that will be taken into account when we are assessing proposals and when the Territory Planning Authority looks at assessing proposals. When the government is investing in its own projects in the town centre, we will try to uplift the canopy cover as part of that. CIT is a good example. Woden town centre was previously largely devoid of tree. More recently, some have been put in the square. The square did not originally have any trees, as far as I am aware. We put that extra tree canopy cover in the Western Plaza and in the new North Plaza of the CIT campus to try to uplift the canopy cover in an area that was previously a concrete jungle.

Further opportunities have been examined through Callum Street, but we are looking at where the government is investing and making those decisions. Of course, we will see proponent-initiated proposals coming forward. We have already seen that implemented on Bradley Street, in the dining precinct. Scentre Group previously upgraded one part of Bradley Street, which uplifted the canopy cover there through improved landscaping, which I think has been very successful.

THE CHAIR: We saw that.

Mr Steel: There will be further opportunities in the centre to do the same thing.

THE CHAIR: When you talk about public spaces through government, who is that in government? Is it CED?

Mr Steel: It is now CED, but previously it was Infrastructure Canberra. When they were delivering the CIT Woden campus project, they engaged heavily with what was

then Transport Canberra and City Services and their Urban Treescapes team to make sure they were going to achieve their canopy objectives. Some really good outcomes were achieved there, with species selection and so forth. It is important to note, though, that the government does not own a significant portion of the land in Woden town centre. A lot of it is lease land. The opportunities that will come up for improved canopy cover and the like will come through proposals on leased land. They would be considered. When we have released land—and this is probably an opportunity for the Suburban Land Agency—we have sought to achieve certain objectives. The proposal at Woden Village will provide some improved canopy cover. It will be leased land, now that it has been released.

THE CHAIR: That is probably enough detail. Thank you. When people talk about activation, they talk about pedestrianisation. Quite a lot of the small streets there could probably be closed off. There are lots of pocket parks. They are separated. If government wanted to pedestrianise an area, who in government would do that? Is that CED? Is that TCCS?

Mr Steel: Yes.

Mr Green: Yes, it is. Going to the point the minister made, what may appear as public space is actually on private land. Yes, as a principle, but we need to be conscious of what sits on private sector land and what sits on government land.

THE CHAIR: There have been a few bitsy events and some of them have been quite successful, but there is not an ongoing program in those outdoor areas. Who in government is responsible for a program of events that activates that space?

Mr Steel: I think we outlined in the submission the funding that has been provided to the Tuggeranong Arts Centre and Woden Community Service to deliver programmed activities in the Woden area. They have often chosen to deliver that in the Woden town centre and Woden Town Square.

THE CHAIR: An ongoing, permanently funded program?

Mr Steel: Yes.

THE CHAIR: How long is that program running for?

Mr Steel: I would have to take that notice. It is not directly in my portfolio. I am happy to take that on notice and come back on that. I would imagine it would be through community development funding, and, with the arts funding to the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, there is an expectation they will deliver it to the Woden area as well.

THE CHAIR: We can take that on notice. A lot of people have looked at all these bits and said, “There’s the City Renewal Authority in Civic that’s funded and pools all this together.” That is the central coordination point. I will not tell you what one of witnesses said about dealing with government on Woden town centre. It was not very flattering. Has there been consideration about whether you need a renewal authority, a governance body that is funded, that is actually in charge of delivering this—not with more brochures and not with more plans but is actually in charge of delivering all these small

pieces so they work together?

Mr Steel: The government is going to consider whether there should be an authority designated for the Woden town centre and the broader corridor in the future, but the first step will be to develop the Southern Gateway Framework. I think what you are going to is not necessarily planning but place making, which is one component of, for example, the City Renewal Authority's work, but it is not the only component.

THE CHAIR: Place making and activation, absolutely—not big picture planning but place making and activation. That is right.

Mr Steel: Yes. Sometimes that is undertaken and associated with land release. Obviously, the city is a different situation. A levy is charged of businesses in the city area. It is administered by the City Renewal Authority and it funds some of those improvements and activations.

THE CHAIR: I believe the levy is about \$2½ million, and I believe the government puts in an additional \$10 million, so there is quite a significant chunk of government funding in addition to that quite small levy.

Mr Steel: Yes. There is no levy in place in Woden, so there is no source of recurrent funding for some of those events. In the past, we have undertaken some place making improvements. In our submission, we outlined the previous work on the Woden Experiment, which was both an upgrade and an activation of the Woden Town Square. It was evaluated. There was a quite interesting set of findings from that. There may be further opportunities for place making. We are interested in the community and the committee's views on that.

THE CHAIR: Is the government considering recurrent funding for that?

Mr Steel: I would not be able to comment on cabinet processes. But we have made a significant investment in the CIT Woden campus which will deliver quite substantial activations of the Woden town centre—it is not the square, but it is very close by—particularly with the restaurant and cafe. It spills out onto the new east-west pedestrian boulevard, which is a vision of the original Woden Town Centre Master Plan that has been delivered in part by that project. There are other opportunities for activation as part of that CIT project as well. That includes creating spaces for markets and those sorts of things to occur. We think that there are further opportunities, and we will consider whether an authority should potentially be involved in that.

THE CHAIR: Great. Thank you.

MS CARRICK: The CIT cafe and restaurant is open about eight hours a week during the school term, so how does it activate the area outside of those eight hours and when the school term is not on, for 12 weeks of the year?

Mr Steel: The students need to have time to study. They cannot serve the community all the time. Another example would be the barber shop. It faces onto Callum Street. The design has tried to activate the spaces around the CIT as much as possible.

MS CARRICK: I will go back to what Ms Clay was talking about in her first question. If people come forward with proposals that lead to 50,000 apartments, how do you know where to draw the line? How do you know what is an appropriate number of people and dwellings for the area, to balance it with green spaces and community facilities for the liveability component? Where is the plan to outline what is needed and what is appropriate?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Ben Green to provide some information.

Mr Green: Reflecting that we have shifted to an outcome-focused planning system, and what I might think, what you might think and what the next person might think is a good outcome can be very different things, the way that the government has foreshadowed what it expects is by having policy outcomes very clearly articulated within district strategies and within the Territory Plan. Those outcomes and assessment requirements, which go into a bit more detail—and I will not dive into all of them individually—along with technical specifications, set a bit of an expectation and understanding for not only community but also industry around what is acceptable or not. Depending on the context, the service ability, the social infrastructure that is within an area and the physical infrastructure, such as stormwater, water, electricity, a variety of things come together in being able to establish whether that is the right thing at the right place at the right time.

What the strategic planning does is try to set up an expectation of what is achievable now and what may well be achievable in the future. That is why the planning strategy and the district strategies are forward focused. But, primarily, it is achieved through the Territory Plan, policy outcomes, the assessment outcomes and the assessment requirements.

MS CARRICK: Given they are done block by block and they just keep accumulating, there is still the old trash and treasure carparks, Corinna Street and around there and Phillip, which are all zoned for towers. So there is plenty of space that is still going to be developed. How does something like the Scentre Group proposal and the size of it fit into what was planned for the number of people in dwellings? Assumably, with all the other areas, that blows it out of the water.

Mr Green: The zoning is set. So we are very clear around the zoning. Yes, CZ1 can have multi-unit residential towers but it can also have a variety of different uses. When it comes to the carpark sites, if they are released, for arguments sake, for future development, there is a process that is undertaken to understand what we want to do there. When the Suburban Land Agency sell—and I am happy for Mr Davey to jump in—will articulate through the sales documentation what some of that expectation looks like. You are sold a lease. You are not sold an idea through a zoning in the Territory Plan; you are sold a lease that is very specific around what you can do on that parcel of land. That is one way of controlling.

The other part is that, everyone is open to varying a lease. As we know, that is permitted. We have to consider applications that come forward and we have to consider proponent initiated major plan amendments as well. We have set the zoning in the context of not only the town centre and what it means to deliver from the vision that the minister mentioned earlier but also, for a community, what is needed in a commercial zone in a

town centre.

There are a variety of different mechanisms to get that point. I refer back to my earlier answer around these things are not assessed in isolation; they are assessed in their context, and we need to understand the cumulative impact. A 55—I think it was—unit development could be feasible in a location somewhere, but we can only assess what is in front of us at a point in time against the Territory Plan, which seeks to balance and get the right outcomes for community. I do not know if Mr Davey wants to talk to some of that land release side of things that you were referring to in terms of car parks.

MS CARRICK: When you say you assess it at a point in time, does that point in time acknowledge that there are other undeveloped areas that are zoned to be developed? With the 55 storeys and the 17 new towers around Scentre Group, at that point in time when you assess it, will you say, “We are also going to have a number of towers and people on this undeveloped land, because that will come forward in the future”?

Mr Green: There is consideration around that. The government lever around when it brings land to market is through the Housing Supply Land Release Program. Where there are private sector proposals that are actually in development application phase—not an idea or a concept—certainly government can look at that and weigh that up against its Land Release Program. But, equally, proponents have a right to make application. We have to consider those things.

Certainly with zoning, there are many facets that go into the planning of the city, as you are aware. We need to make sure that, one, we can service what is being proposed, not only from the physical but also the social infrastructure. That is a really key component. One of the key components for us with the Southern Gateway work is not just understanding the current state of social infrastructure and community facility need, and the benchmarks but also hearing from community around these things. What we do not want to see is a community of another 10,000 people potentially coming into the town centre over the next 30 years not having the facilities or the services they need. So it is not a simple answer, necessarily, but it is an answer that considers the cumulative impacts of development but also the cumulative need of the future and current community.

MS CARRICK: Minister Berry, at one point, was in the paper as saying there was no sites left in Woden because they are all getting sold. How are you ensuring that you are not overdeveloping the tower side of things and underdoing social infrastructure and green spaces in the core where it is needed?

Mr Steel: I think part of what we are looking at with the Southern Gateway work is looking at what the potential opportunities are for more housing, because, at the end of the day, the foundation of a liveable city is actually having a place to live—which is a real problem.

MS CARRICK: Yes, we get that.

Mr Steel: But also matching both the needs of the future residents and the existing residents with the community facilities. That is exactly what the community needs assessment is about: identifying not only what the gaps are currently but also at what

stage you need a certain level of community and recreational infrastructure to support that population; and retaining the greenspaces but also enhancing the greenspaces that we that we have. Many of them are underutilised and could have improved utilisation through a range of initiatives. So there are things that we can do to try and improve the landscape as part of this as well for everyone.

That is part of the work that is going on at the moment that will inform the framework. Then we will go out for community consultation and test it. Then, if there are major plan amendments that are brought forward, whether government initiated or proponent initiated, they have to go out for a consultation. They also have to come to you, the planning committee, of course, where you may undertake inquiry and also test some of those ideas and the proposal. Then, of course, it comes to the Assembly. I think there is quite a few different points where those things can be raised in trying to get the balance right.

MS CARRICK: You said you did a recreational needs assessment for across Canberra. Will that be released publicly?

Mr Green: The recreational needs assessment was a data exercise of trying to understand what the existing facilities are and a benchmarking exercise. Separately, the professional planners within our directorate are looking at that and making sure that it is relevant for further discussion with community around the Southern Gateway site.

Mr Steel: It will be going out for consultation on the plan next year.

THE CHAIR: Mr Green, can you table that document you just referenced?

Mr Green: I think that is a document that will be considered by cabinet. Let me just seek some advice on—

THE CHAIR: Yes, seek some advice, please.

Mr Green: Yes, I will seek some advice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: I still have questions about accessibility in Woden, particularly the town centre. We have heard some witnesses talk about the lift that connects the lower plaza with the town square. I understand it is big enough for bikes. So people who are travelling through by bike are able to use that lift to go from one level down to the next. But some people have also raised concerns that the location of it is quite inaccessible for people who might have limited mobility needs, because of its distance from car parks and the ability to get to it and, also, it is not in, I guess, a user-friendly place. If you are not quite used to the area you would not know where to find it at first.

Other people have also given us evidence around the lack of connection or just the not so useful connection between areas north of Launceston Street into the town centre and then onto the south of Hindmarsh Drive at the trade's precinct. Even though that is kind of all the town centre, it is three distinct areas. I am just wondering what plan or thought is going into accessibility in the town centre.

Mr Steel: Up until recently, Launceston Street did not have a set of traffic lights at Irving Street, which has provided that pedestrian amenity of a controlled crossing—that has been really important—as well as providing improved vehicle movements out of Irving Street. Obviously a lot of residential development has occurred over recent years.

That has improved pedestrian amenity considerably. I think there are still further improvements to be made. There are obviously planning proposals from the Hellenic Club around that area and directly onto Launceston Street. I would imagine that those will be matters that will be considered through the planning process around access. Mr Green, I do not know whether you want to talk to that further.

Mr Green: Yes.

Mr Steel: The lift is something I am happy to consider. Obviously, the town centre is on a gradient and so there is a need for a step down in levels. There is obviously a set of stairs. It is an award-winning set of stairs.

MS CARRICK: It is a good set of stairs.

Mr Steel: The steps won an architectural award, I think, many years ago when they were built. The lift is there as a point of access for people. But I appreciate it is frustrating, particularly when it has been out of order from time to time. The way that buildings have been built in decades past in that area means that there are not a range of other access points into the square that are easy. Through the buildings on Bow Street, in particular, can be a little bit challenging. That is something that the planners can have a think about, I think. If those buildings are ever redeveloped then there may be potential opportunities to try and make sure that there is better east-west connections through the centre.

MR CAIN: We had a business leader of the Phillip business district with us today. As you would be aware, the zoning on that district was changed probably two years ago now—plus. Originally, there was a residential option for some of that district, which led some people to actually buy land in the Phillip district and some to lodge DAs ready for a residential development. Then, under the previous planning minister, that residential zoning was withdrawn with really no real reason behind it, even though I scrutinized the minister myself. What plans do you have to re-allow residential options in the Phillip business district?

Mr Steel: This is a discussion that we have been having with the Phillip business community. I think there has been several round tables held earlier this year with members of the Phillip business community—and the Woden Community Council were in attendance as well—to discuss a variety of issues, but mainly relating to land use in the Phillip business district. I do not agree that there was no rationale for the change that was made in the Territory Plan, which ultimately was adopted by the Legislative Assembly.

MR CAIN: And what was that?

Mr Steel: That was a concern around losing valuable businesses from the Phillip

business district if residential development occurred on a large scale in that area. Given what has been happening in the town centre—

MR CAIN: Why was residential approved in the first place?

Mr Steel: That was under the old Territory Plan. But it was only in a certain part of the Phillip business district. It was not the entire district. There was a concern, given the level of residential development that we have seen in the town centre core, that that sort of development might spill over into the Phillip business district and we might then see residential built in an area where there are businesses that create some noise—a lot of automotive businesses. I go down there to get my tyres changes at Jax Tyre and Auto every now and then. When they are putting those on, it creates noise. When you have incompatible land uses, it can create a problem. When you have sensitive noise receivers living in residential, close to those businesses, it may see some of those businesses eventually pushed out further and further away from the people who are living in the surrounding suburbs that wish to access those services.

MR CAIN: But that is hypothetical. The residential option was provided to some of those locations.

Mr Steel: Previously. That is undisputed.

MR CAIN: Not all of them were noisy—and, obviously, business hours means they are not operating during the evenings and early mornings, in most cases.

Mr Steel: But there are shift workers and there are a range of different people who may wish to enjoy peace in their residence and so forth.

MR CAIN: Who probably love to be able to live in the area they work.

THE CHAIR: Peter and Minister, we are going to talk one at a time. Peter, do you have a question?

MR CAIN: Are there plans to restore the residential option to that district?

Mr Steel: What I have articulated is the rationale around some of the concerns about change in the area. We recognised that, as part of the Territory Plan, we needed to do further work consulting with the community and consulting with the businesses in and around the Phillip business district to discuss what potential future change could look like in that area before residential was further permitted. In particular, there were other land users outside of the current zones, which I think are mainly services zoned. What we heard from some of the businesses and peak bodies that attended was that there was an appetite to change the Territory Plan. The government will now consider that further and, through the Southern Gateway planning and design framework—which has the Phillip business district as part of the designated corridor as part of that piece of work—we will consider whether there are further opportunities for change and what impact that may have and then test that with the community.

MR CAIN: What recompense are you planning to provide those landowners, who relied on the residential option being a real one and who either bought on that

assumption or actually spent a lot of money on DAs?

Mr Green: That is kind of asking for a legal opinion about recompense. So I do not think it is a question I can necessarily answer. What I would—

MR CAIN: No; is the government planning to recompense them because of what they relied upon to their detriment with no gain?

Mr Green: What was provisioned was in the Territory Plan. It was not a Crown lease that authorised that use.

Mr Steel: It is an option to develop; it is not necessarily—

MR CAIN: Which the government provided.

Mr Green: The government did not provide a decision to allow for a lease variation on a specific parcel of land. What it provided—

MR CAIN: But it provided for residential options, did it not?

Mr Green: What was provided was a Territory Plan with multiple land use opportunities that could have been exercised.

MR CAIN: Including residential? Is that correct?

Mr Green: That is my understanding—correct.

MR CAIN: And then that was withdrawn.

Mr Steel: Through the processes instituted in the Territory Plan—

MR CAIN: To the detriment of those who relied upon it.

THE CHAIR: Peter, can you please ask the question and let the answer come?

MR CAIN: I am not sure I have had an answer. Are you planning to compensate those who rely—

Mr Steel: No, is the answer.

MR CAIN: You are not?

Mr Steel: No.

THE CHAIR: Do you have more questions, Peter? We will not get a transcript if everyone just talks. It is not productive. Minister, yesterday we had a really great panel with a range of sports groups and Woden Community Services. Woden Community Services are operating out of four different buildings scattered all across, at the moment. Are they going to get a building, and where will it be?

Mr Steel: That is the question I have taken on notice for Rachel Stephen-Smith, because the government has funded a new building for them, which will be the Woden Community Centre, which will incorporate their staff but also the publicly accessible community spaces, a large multi-purpose hall and those sorts of functional requirements that have been outlined for the project. We absolutely recognise that they are dispersed. I have met with them, when I had responsibility for the project, over many years and since about that. Obviously, they are quite happy with a lot of their staff currently being located on a temporary basis in the Phillip trading area, very close by, in the interim until the new community centre is built.

THE CHAIR: But the new community centre was tendered and the tender came back that it was too expensive for government. Has the government committed that they definitely will get a building and we are just going through the process now? Is that where we are up to?

Mr Steel: I will come back on those.

THE CHAIR: That is fine.

Mr Steel: It is a matter that is in Minister Stephen-Smith's portfolio, and she can clarify where the project is up to. But the intent is to bring together their staff. Obviously, they will still have the Woden Youth Centre, which is well located and provides an opportunity for young people to get together for various activities. The intent is that they will be largely located in one location with a new community centre.

THE CHAIR: Great. We also heard from basketball, volleyball, the Warehouse—which would be a great arts/sports crossover activation—and Phillip pool. I think we understand that the Phillip pool site has been sold. Unless something different happens there, that is going in a certain direction. Which of these sporting groups will be offered something and which of them will be told to just go and talk to a private developer and see what they can get? Who is pulling that work together to make sure that we get that?

Mr Steel: The idea of having Woden Community Services as an anchor tenant to manage the bookings of the large community spaces is that they can arrange for that facilitation of activity. So that you do not just—

THE CHAIR: Sorry; I was talking about basketball, volleyball, Warehouse Circus and the Phillip pool—

MS CARRICK: Stadium.

Mr Steel: Oh, you were talking about the Scentre Group proposal?

THE CHAIR: No; what I am talking about is that we heard from the Volleyball Association, the Basketball Association and the Warehouse Circus, all of whom think they would be a great fit in the town centre to offer some kind of sport. Some of these might be multi-sports. We also had Phillip pool—and we know where that is up to at the moment. Who in government is working out which of these sporting and recreational facilities will get in the Woden town centre? Or are these organisations just being told, “Go off and see if you can find space in a school somewhere,” or “Go off

and have a chat to Scentre or Geocon and see if you can wrangle something”? Who is pulling that piece of work together?

Mr Steel: Obviously, the Woden Community Centre will deliver a space for other groups to come in and be able to use those multifunctional, multipurpose spaces for a variety of different activities. Some of that may be in the recreational space, not just sort of community service-type organisations. There are opportunities to look at the existing sites not too far away from the town centre. The Warehouse Circus currently occupies the hall at the former Melrose Primary School, but I appreciate that they may have some further ideas around expansion and the like.

The future planning and feasibility that the government is committed to on an indoor sports facility, will look at what the opportunities are there. We have heard from the Dodgers about their needs around basketball. That has been picked up, it looks like, by the Scentre Group proposal. But that is obviously at a very early stage for consideration. The government would need to consider the needs in terms of developing up a feasibility and a business case for an indoor sports facility, and that could include a variety of different groups. I note that, in the case of basketball, I understand they have three seasons a year and they are pretty much using it the entire time at all hours of the day, but there are still maybe opportunities for other groups to come in.

THE CHAIR: Great. What is the timeframe on that indoor sports facility piece of work? When will that—

Mr Steel: This term.

THE CHAIR: So the thinking work will be delivered and published this term and then, maybe next term, the facilities might come through.

Mr Steel: Yes; the intent is to do the feasibility this term. It was associated originally with the opportunity for a potential future high school to meet the growing needs of the population. The high school is not required right at the moment, but it may be at a certain point in the future. So, as part of that, the opportunity was looking at whether there could be a larger set of indoor sports facilities as part of the school that could also service a range of groups. But, of course, now we have another proponent-initiated proposal for potential consideration in the town centre, led by Scentre Group, to deliver what would probably be an even larger indoor sports facility.

THE CHAIR: How is the government making sure that individuals or associations with a sporting or recreational vision for Woden town centre get involved in this piece of work that the government is doing?

Mr Steel: I imagine it would be Infrastructure Canberra who would be leading that work on the feasibility, and they would be engaging in that. On the community needs assessment, when we go out in the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework, that is the opportunity for some of these groups to come forward and say, “We need something; there is a real gap for us in terms of the provision of certain recreational facilities that we would like to do more in.”

Mr Green: The other pathway that I am aware of is through CMTEDD, Sport and

Recreation. I know there is a recent inquiry into sport and recreation.

Mr Steel: Obviously, they will work closely with the peak bodies to try and prioritise the needs of particular sports and are looking at the regional focus as well. They also provide input into various different government projects that may relate to recreational facilities.

MR CAIN: You said that there was a sports and recreation needs analysis—right?

THE CHAIR: Can you table that?

Mr Steel: That is the one that we have taken on notice.

Mr Green: Yes, that was the one that I have taken on notice to provide some advice. It is a full territory-wide community—

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Steel: Cabinet and government have not yet considered the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. It is still in development. We still need to consider that before we go out publicly.

MR CAIN: Sorry, if I missed it, but have you done a sports and recreation needs analysis?

Mr Steel: It is a community needs analysis, which includes recreational facilities. It has been done—

MR CAIN: And that had been completed?

Ms O'Brien: It has not been completed.

MR CAIN: Has not been completed?

Mr Steel: Yes.

Ms O'Brien: We have not finalised.

MR CAIN: When is that going to be completed?

Ms O'Brien: I anticipate before the end of this year.

MR CAIN: Before the end of this year?

Mr Steel: Correct.

Ms O'Brien: Yes; correct.

MR CAIN: So in the next few weeks, in other words?

Ms O'Brien: Hopefully, yes.

MR CAIN: Will you be releasing that to interested parties?

Mr Steel: That is the discussion we were having before. It is a piece of work that is informing the development of a cabinet document, which is this Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. It is directly informing that piece of work. We have taken that on notice. But we will be going out for community consultation on the framework next year. So there will be an opportunity for the community to understand what has come through that piece of work and what is being planned in terms of future facilities and test some of the assumptions and understanding around those facilities. That is the opportunity for some of those community groups to come forward and really explain whether there are further opportunities that we have missed or that they would like to seize to get more space to do whatever they are doing.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We promised the last question to Fiona Carrick and we must follow through on that.

MS CARRICK: Thank you. The concern is that the private sector is running what our facilities will be. Geocon is giving us a 25-metre pool—and we are all shattered that we have lost our 50-metre pool—and it looks like Scentre Group can put four basketball courts on the fourth floor of a building and, “Tick the box; you are done.” What we want from the government is a plan that says what our needs are and what the best sites are for the people—for example, something that is on the ground floor in the town centre, like, where the CIT is; and I know it is the Scentre Group—and to negotiate with them to have the ground floor of that three-structured car park south of the CIT, the Neptune Street car park?

Mr Steel: Right.

MS CARRICK: Have that as, like, a basketball stadium on the ground floor so it is like honey to the kids and draws them in and creates a vibe—and not just leave it to the private sector to put it on the fourth floor. Can we pick what is a good outcome for the people, to look after everybody, and then negotiate with the private sector about how we might deliver it?

Mr Steel: Firstly, there is a plan. We are developing that Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. We are also developing further work in government, which the Chief Minister has alluded to in public statements, around wanting to make sure that when there are large developments proposed they are actually contributing back properly to community and actually meeting the needs of the community. I think we have seen quite a bit of development in the ACT, where there are some examples, the Griffin Centre being one—a contributed asset from a developer handed back to government. That has been absolutely well used over the couple of decades that it has been established. It was the old Griffin Centre before it, of course. There are further opportunities, I think, for developers to contribute more to the community. They obviously contribute some LVC, but there are further opportunities for them to contribute community and recreational facilities, not decided by them but actually decided by government—

MS CARRICK: Yes, that is what we want.

Mr Steel: and potential for more affordable and social housing as well. That is a further piece of work that we are doing around inclusionary zoning policy and also looking at LVC around opportunities there to incentivise that type of housing. We are currently developing a framework to be able to consider those proposals—and New South Wales in terms of contributed assets, community assets and recreational facilities.

I recently visited City of Canada Bay around their development of Wentworth Point, across in another LGA, and Rhodes, where there has been a formal voluntary developer agreement struck with the City of Canada Bay to provide them with basketball courts, gymnastics facilities and a community centre, hand it back to the City of Canada Bay under that agreement, which does include multi-unit housing development and shopping centre facilities. So there are models in New South Wales. We are looking closely at that.

But, yes, the government, in the end, will be involved in discussing whatever Scentre Group comes forward with and working out whether that is in the best interests of the ACT to be able to support that. We will also be considering that as part of the planning strategy refresh in the future as well. I understand why they are proposing basketball courts on the top level, because there is currently a large, empty void and when you have basketball courts you need a high ceiling. They have a very large void—obviously their roof structure, attic—that provides that. So that is why they have done that. But, if they are asking us for a contribution—whether it is through LVC remission—the government will need to work out whether that is in the best interests of the public, and we will need to go back to them.

MS CARRICK: And whether it is the best spot. The Neptune Street car park would be better.

Mr Steel: It is a complex planning proposal. It involves not only direct sale proposals but also major plan amendments and then also potential LVC remissions, and we will need to consider what those contributed assets should be. We are working on a robust framework that we can use to consider those kinds of proposals in the future, because I think we are going to see more of it as we see larger precinct-scale development come forward in the ACT. We want to make sure that there is also adequate provision of social and affordable housing as well.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you for your time and your expertise today. We have had a few questions taken on notice. We will need the answers back within five days of you receiving the proof. Thank you, broadcasting and Hansard. That is a wrap.

The committee adjourned at 5.25 pm