



**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, 19 FEBRUARY 2026

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 9.32 am

JONES, MR DAVID, Executive Branch Manager, Facilities Operations and Campus Renewal, Canberra Institute of Technology

NICHOLS, MR SCOTT, Student Experience Lead and Academic Registrar, Canberra Institute of Technology

THE CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning for our inquiry into the role and future of Woden Town Centre in the Context of a Compact City. Today we are hearing from the Canberra Institute of Technology.

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 this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event or who may be watching from somewhere else.

This hearing is a legal proceeding of the Assembly and it has the same status as proceedings of the Assembly itself. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be treated as contempt of the Assembly. The evidence also attracts parliamentary privilege. We are recording and transcribing with Hansard and the transcript will be published. Our proceedings are also being broadcast and livestreamed.

Welcome, David Jones and Scott Nichols, from the Canberra Institute of Technology. Thanks for coming in. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Jones: Thank you to the committee for the invitation to CIT to participate in this inquiry. We believe we play a central role in the Woden Town Centre as a major public institution, anchor tenant and community hub. As part of the significant government investment that has been deliberately located within the town centre to support compact city outcomes, education, employment services and daily activity in a highly accessible location, we believe that we have a strong presence in that Woden Town Centre, both now and one that will grow into our future. It is a flagship project. It is a lovely, designed building and accessible building that we consider is a destination for both learning, work and community activity. It has been designed to be visible and accessible and to contribute to both economic and learning outcomes of the Woden Town Centre and the broader ACT community.

THE CHAIR: When we were out on site, the road behind CIT, now you have been there for a while, is that road being used much?

Mr Jones: That is the Bowes Street extension. As part of the ongoing works in finishing the stage 2 transport interchange, there are reroutes in place for the bus service. My understanding is when the interchange is finished that rerouting will be removed and we will have an ability to open that road.

THE CHAIR: And you will open it then for cars?

Mr Jones: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: Do you reckon it is a good area for cars or would it be a better area to pedestrianise?

Mr Jones: We expect it to be something similar to what the government has done in Civic with both vehicle and pedestrian access.

THE CHAIR: So the Bunda Street design.

Mr Jones: Similar to it.

THE CHAIR: That is much better where you have very slow traffic and it is designed to facilitate. I get different views from different people. I feel that that area works quite well. I feel quite safe walking and riding there, but there are different views. Again, do you think it is important to allow cars to go through there, or it would be better to pedestrianise the area and not have cars going through there?

Mr Jones: It was designed with the purpose of for vehicles being able to go through there.

MS CARRICK: It may have been designed for it, but that is different to whether it is a good outcome. It is different to Bunda Street because Bunda Street is an arterial road, whereas what we call west plaza, or CIT, is a public space. It is like putting cars through Garema Place and City Walk, so that is the difference. I note that you have had bands play in that area. So having cars and parking spots in the middle of the public space, how will that impact on the CIT's ability for their creative students, or any students, to integrate with the community with events and bands and stuff?

Mr Jones: I go back to my previous answer that it was designed. Those car spaces that you mentioned are accessible car spaces. As a part of the work that we are currently doing in understanding how we might be able to use that space we would look at how temporary traffic management plans would be put in place as a part of any usage of that roadway, the Bowes Street extension. Regarding the more technical aspects of your question about road movements, I would have to take that on notice and work with our Roads ACT colleagues to provide some information.

MS CARRICK: What other accessible car parks are under the building or around it? There are some on the south side of the CIT.

Mr Jones: That is right. There are a number of accessible car parks in that Bowes Street extension. Between CIT and Neptune Street car park there are also a number of accessible car parks. There are accessible car parks within the Neptune Street car park itself. And as a part of the CIT infrastructure itself, there are accessible car parks within our basement.

MS CARRICK: If you have them in the basement, to the south of the building and in the Neptune Street car park, is it necessary to have them in the public space?

Mr Jones: Certainly the advice that we have received as a part of the development is that accessible car parks in the precinct is a very important component of people being able to get into and around the precinct.

MS CARRICK: Do you have any concerns about the road going through there and the cars parking in the middle of public space when we are trying to create a destination?

Mr Jones: I have had no concerns raised with me on that and I am comfortable with the work we are doing around planning in terms of how we use that space that we will be able to operate that space safely using temporary traffic management approaches.

MR CAIN: You mentioned future growth. Is that a plan for future growth out there in the public domain?

Mr Jones: The CIT strategic plan talks about future growth for the organisation.

MR CAIN: Any details on where that would happen and how and when?

Mr Jones: The strategic plan would be the best position to talk about that growth for CIT and our plans across our campuses.

MR CAIN: Are you able to give us detail on that? We can look at it later, I guess, but does it actually go into some detail of where the growth will happen and by when?

Mr Jones: It talks about the priorities over the next 10 years. I am probably not best placed as the infrastructure manager to talk about what particular learning areas might be prioritised for growth in the context of ACT training priorities and national training course.

MR CAIN: I am thinking of the physical expansion. Where is that going to happen?

Mr Jones: So we have been open for six months and certainly we focused on our core business of learning and teaching over that six months.

MR CAIN: Yes, but I am talking about the growth you mentioned earlier.

Mr Jones: A part of that is understanding how we use the campus, the times we use the campus, how rooms are used and how education might change.

MR CAIN: That is fine. You talked about growth. Where is the growth going to happen? Expansion, where is that going to happen?

Mr Jones: I did not talk about growth in terms of expansion—growth in terms of CIT as an organisation and the delivery of education.

MR CAIN: But not growth physically in the facilities and infrastructure?

Mr Jones: There remains space within the infrastructure that has been designed as shell space for future expansion. We have focused on embedding ourselves in the organisation—in the building—understanding how we how we teach and learn in that

building and that will inform any future use of that expansion.

MR CAIN: Mostly within the current footprint?

Mr Jones: We have space within our current footprint for expansion.

MS CARRICK: We are trying to activate the area. The Chief Minister says that cities do not succeed by chance—they require design, good governance and great collaboration. I am curious to know what conversations you have had with, say, the Woden Town Centre Working Group, which is a cross-directorate working group about the future of Woden and how to activate it.

Mr Jones: I have had cross-directorate conversations about the approach that we propose to activate the part of the precinct that we have responsibility for.

MS CARRICK: And does that include conversations with the Woden Town Centre Working Group about west plaza, which we call the CIT plaza?

Mr Jones: The west plaza?

MS CARRICK: The one where the road is going through.

Mr Jones: I may not have had conversations specifically with the Woden working group, but I believe I have had conversations with representatives of that. I am a fairly new member to the Canberra Institute of Technology, so I could not talk to the conversations may have been had prior to my tenure.

MS CARRICK: CIT, as you said, is an anchor tenant in the core of Woden. Are you not a part of the Woden working group?

Mr Jones: I would have to take that on notice.

MS CARRICK: What about the Southern Gateway planning team? They are doing a big job on densification of the corridor. Have you had conversations with them?

Mr Jones: We have conversations with ACT's planners regarding our presence in Woden and around the territory.

MS CARRICK: Regarding your presence, what does that mean? What would a typical conversation with the planning directorate be about?

Mr Jones: A typical conversation might relate to how we use our spaces, how we might be refurbishing or planning to upgrade facilities, including at Bruce and Fyshwick as well.

MS CARRICK: You mentioned there is space in the Woden CIT at the moment. There are people that want to have markets in the west plaza. Are you able to provide space and storage for a weekly market where produce comes in from around the region to help such a market be viable?

Mr Jones: We have had an approach for a conversation with a market that is interested in working with us. We have agreed to meet with them early this year. A part of the work that we are currently doing, as I mentioned, is that we have been focusing on that core learning and teaching business for the organisation over the last six months. Sitting alongside that we are reviewing all our planning documentation and working with Access Canberra around how we can ensure that our processes to support markets and other events to happen in those areas are consistent with other government approaches.

We are also doing a piece of work on understanding with such a market in mind around the types of vehicles that we can drive on the pavements, the weights of those vehicles and what that might mean so that we can continue to ensure that it is a safe place and that there is no damage to those. So, yes, we have considered opportunities for those and we are going through that process now of documentation to support our ability to work with others to do it.

MS TOUGH: The campus has a restaurant cafe on the ground floor to help as part of student learning and training. It has fairly limited opening hours currently for the public to come in and get something to eat or have some drinks with friends. Is there work underway to expand those opening hours to help activate that part of the campus to bring in people from outside of CIT into the building and just integrate it a bit more?

Mr Jones: Certainly that first six months, as I mentioned before, we focused on embedding ourselves, relocating some of those services we are in and understanding also how they might be able to work differently. The responsibility for those for those restaurants sits within our hospitality area because it is integral to our students' learning. I will have to take that question on notice about any future expansion opportunities that we see.

MS TOUGH: I know the old Reid campus had a venue on site where someone could book to have a breakfast and the hospitality students would then cater the breakfast. That was often a cheaper way for organisations to hold functions and fundraisers. Does the Woden campus have a similar type of venue where that could happen?

Mr Jones: The restaurant is set up as that type of venue. I would have to take the question on notice about the outside-of-hours approach to being able to deliver those events.

Mr Nicholls: I was just going to jump in there and add a little bit more context. So I think that is definitely the plan. As David said, like the first six months was really around the move away from the previous campus, resettling the teaching and learning space and establishing the requirements of the kitchen from a teaching kitchen perspective. But, yes, the plans are very much about how do we continue to activate that space, what does it look like to be able to offer that space as a meal space, if you like, for other functions going forward.

Again, probably the point to make is the first six or 12 months have been foundational. It has been about lifting and shifting and settling things down, but we are very much in the planning phase now as things have started to settle, what does it look like to potentially activate some of those core spaces as part of the community to a greater extent than maybe what we have done in the first six months.

MR CAIN: How dependent is the fulfilment of your strategic plan upon light rail getting to Woden?

Mr Jones: The CIT strategic plan is delivered in the context of current government priorities around training, national priorities around training, and we are operating successfully in that location and our other locations based on the existing transport network of the territory.

MR CAIN: On the existing transport network?

Mr Jones: And any changes to the transport network of the territory, CIT would respond to. That could be in terms of training that might be delivered for changes in the way that the territory's transport system operates.

MR CAIN: What would be the implication on your strategic plan if light rail were not delivered to Woden?

Mr Jones: The current transport interchange that is being delivered will provide for the current bus network and for future tram operations as well. Our network participates with and is supported by the public transport network and enables people from the region and across Canberra to get to our organisation, but it is not dependent on the light rail.

MR CAIN: So if the light rail does not happen, there will be no impact on your strategic plan being fulfilled?

Mr Jones: The strategic plan for the organisation is based on national and ACT training priorities.

MR CAIN: If the light rail does not get delivered to Woden, how will that affect your strategic plan?

Mr Jones: I will have to take that question on notice. Our strategic plan is based on national and territory training priorities.

MR CAIN: So it is dependent at the moment on light rail getting to Woden, is that correct?

THE CHAIR: I do not think that is what the witnesses said. I think the witness has said—

MR CAIN: No, I have asked a question. Does the fulfillment of your strategic plan in its current form depend on light rail getting to Woden?

Mr Jones: I will take that question on notice.

THE CHAIR: Have you had chats with Scentre Group given their proposal in the area?

Mr Jones: We do have conversations regularly with Scentre Group. Scott may be able

to add some more information around our relationship with Scentre group and the opportunities they provide for our students.

Mr Nichols: We actually have launched into a formal partnership with the Westfield Scentre Group because not only is there an opportunity for our students to benefit from engagement with that centre but there are lots of ancillary opportunities for our community as well. What I mean by that is we have talked to them, perhaps obviously, about discounts and support for students and staff in terms of the retailers that are in the centre. But more expansively, we have also had discussions about how can we showcase CIT student work and CIT student activities in the centre as well so it truly becomes a part of the broader community, not just a couple of buildings that are tacked on at arm's length. We are really having active conversations with them about the blurring of the lines, how can we showcase the work that CIT students are doing in the centre. And that has been really positively received so far.

THE CHAIR: Are there other ways that you can activate CIT by engaging more with the people who are in that town centre?

Mr Nichols: Absolutely. I think there are some obvious things around, as I said, some of the retailers in the area offering discounts and incentives for people to come into their organisations. I think it goes to one of the earlier points about activating some of the external space in terms of markets and community engagements and those sorts of things. I refer to my earlier point where I said the first six months has been a bit of a settlement at the campus, but there is a huge opportunity for us to play a really important part in activating the whole region and bringing that community together in lots of ways.

MS CARRICK: The Neptune Street car park will be demolished under Scentre Group's plan. Have you spoken to them about where CIT students will park?

Mr Nichols: Scentre has been very supportive in terms of offering discounted parking to staff and students in that Neptune Street car park. We are aware of the plans for that car park and we have had very early conversations with Scentre about what that would mean for CIT staff and students parking. But they have been very open and been willing to continue that conversation as to what alternative arrangements may be possible once those physical changes happen.

MS CARRICK: They are going to have podiums with towers coming out of the podiums. There are no sporting facilities around there so we are keen to get some indoor sports facilities, gymnasiums, in the podiums. Would you be supportive of having some recreational facilities in the podiums?

Mr Jones: Certainly we find the students who attend our site would access the facilities in Woden Town Centre, for example, our relationship with Scentre. If other facilities were to be opened in the region as a part of any future Woden development, we would expect that our students would access those facilities.

MS CARRICK: I just want to come back to what I think is officially the west plaza but what we call it the CIT plaza where the road is going through. We want to activate that space. I am very concerned about the road and cars parking in there because we

want to get some basketball hoops in there and make it a place where students can just hang out during the day and have lunch and relax and lie around, and the community can too. Would you be open to helping to activate it as a place like a civic square for the students and having basketball hoops and a bit of activity there?

Mr Jones: We would be happy to participate in any conversations that the community was interested in for that space. Certainly, there is a cross-generational aspect to the type of students that we have at Woden campus; it is not necessarily younger students who may be, for example, interested in basketball hoops. But we would be interested in participating in that conversation about what can be delivered. Certainly, there are spaces now for laying around, having lunch, quiet spaces and future shaded spaces that have been built into both on the campus and within that plaza area. We are happy to participate, as I mentioned, in conversations on what other options there might be.

Mr Nichols: I just ask that we also consider that there is a significant number of CIT staff that are on the campus on a regular basis as well. I think you are right in saying there is a really great opportunity to activate a space that is staff-friendly. We have a very diverse student group in terms of the people who come to CIT, but we also have a diverse staffing cohort who are very keen to be part of that community as well. I think there are a lot of opportunities for us in that space.

MS CARRICK: Do you concerns about the boulevard and the overshadowing in the cold and that that space is not desirable as we come into winter. I guess it will be the first full winter we experience with the boulevard and the overshadowing, the cold and the wind. Do you have any concerns about the students in that space?

Mr Jones: We did receive the tail end of winter last year. Our infrastructure has been designed as six star, green star, so it is a very efficient and sustainable building. I have worked in Woden on and off over many years and like any part of Canberra, it can be cold. We have not experienced any specific overshadowing issues in that area, or the issues have not been raised with us.

MS TOUGH: You have been there for around six months now. How is it going for staff and students with shifting into a new campus, getting used to the new area and integrating into the town centre?

Mr Jones: We learned a lot in that first six months about how we use the classrooms because it has also been designed differently in terms of the way that we deliver education. It is a smart building with much more technology in it that students and teachers are going to be able to access. So we have learned a lot. There is always a challenge in when you move from one location to another. During that period, we worked with staff to make sure that there were care periods, to make sure that they understood how to use the technology and how to incorporate that technology into learning. We also worked with students and used tools like BindiMaps to help people get around the facility. We have embedded ourselves. We have been learning. We have been using the facility. We continue to work through that process and learn more about it and how we can use it differently to support both our staff and students.

Mr Nichols: We have also actively been engaging with our student body. So we have taken a very clear mantra of “You’ve told us; we’ve listened.” So in the first six months

we have already changed some of the operations of the campus as students have used it and realised that the way it was designed was not quite working for them so we have tweaked around the edges. There are some really good examples around how the lockers are being used. They are now much more how the students wanted to use the lockers rather than how they were planned.

It is in our DNA—we are there for the students. The building and the campus were designed to work a certain way, and we are very conscious of that, but we also want to make sure it is the most effective and efficient experience for our students. We are very comfortable in listening and adapting where we can and, to David's point, making sure we are taking into consideration any safety and structural concerns as we are thinking about future use of the campus and its surrounds as well.

MR CAIN: Have you got any responses to your questions taken on notice?

Mr Jones: No.

MR CAIN: So you are not aware of the workings of the Woden Planning Working Group and whether you are participating in it?

Mr Jones: I am aware of the Woden Town Centre Working Group. I am not aware of our previous participation in that.

MR CAIN: That is quite a surprise.

MS CARRICK: I am curious to know if you are working on a place plan for the precinct around you, including the CIT plaza, so we can plan for the activation of it rather than just hoping it happens?

Mr Jones: There is documentation of the pieces of work we are doing together now. I mentioned work on how we use that space—noting that there's residential adjacent to us as well—how we use and understand what we might have to do with any temporary traffic management changes that might be required, how do we support a market or something like that to come—acknowledging that there might be different sized trucks that are going to be a part of that and may need to park somewhere—and how we make sure that the way community engages with us is consistent with the way they engage with other parts of government to run those types of things.

MS CARRICK: So will a document come out of that?

Mr Jones: We are documenting that process.

MS CARRICK: To produce a document a place plan.

Mr Jones: About the types of activities that might be appropriate for those spaces and how the community would engage with us to then access those spaces.

THE CHAIR: Will that be publicly released?

Mr Jones: Yes, that is something we would develop for public release so that the

community can participate in that and understand how they might choose to work with us and work on that site.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any sense of the timeline on that?

Mr Jones: We have looked at that for the first half of this year. We have that in our business plan.

THE CHAIR: That has brought us to the end of our time today. Thank you, David and Scott, for your evidence today. We have had a few questions on notice. If you can provide those within five business days to our secretariat, they will assist you with that. Any members with further questions on notice, you can lodge those within five business days. We are now adjourning our hearing.

The committee adjourned at 10.03 am