

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH

4 August 2021

Woden Town Centre developments

Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, and Minister Steel.

I share the Minister's excitement about the range of infrastructure improvements occurring across the Woden Town Centre. It's a time of significant change.

With change, often comes uncertainty and a period of disruption, as well as great opportunity.

I commend the ACT Government on the extensive community consultation that is being undertaken to:

- initially, inform these important changes and make sure they reflect the needs and desires of the community;
- And, also, the communications that are being delivered to keep the community updated about what's happening.

With so much underway, it's great to see it all brought together in one central portal on the Woden Renewal website. For anyone who's not yet visited that site, or hasn't done so recently, I encourage you to check it out. It provides an excellent overview as well as information about consultation opportunities.

And it's a great example of using digital technology to good effect, with interactive features which clearly map the various projects underway, provides an intuitive reference point, and easy-to-understand information.

The new CIT campus and transport interchange are the current priorities and areas of focus, together with, of course, works being undertaken for the Hospital Expansion.

As part of its commitment to these projects, and to the people of Canberra, I'm pleased to see the ACT Government taking seriously the integrated elements of activating underutilised parts of the town centre and improving accessibility.

This will benefit the community, local businesses and the area's large-scale employers.

It's also great to see long term planning and vision by the government, with future-proofing of these works through the inclusion of a light rail terminus; noting that this will be utilised as a bus stop until light rail to Woden becomes operational.

These investments reinforce Woden's ongoing development as a business, transport, educational and residential centre. It's great to see a people-centred approach being taken, with streetscape, movement corridors and connectivity at the forefront of planning and design considerations.

The new, purpose-built CIT campus at Woden will help transform and rejuvenate the area, with a sense of vibrancy to be achieved through the steady and constant stream of foot traffic and pedestrian and other movement in the area.

Woden is an excellent choice for the location of this important education facility and will attract a broad demographic and diversity to the area.

The sustainable design of the CIT Woden campus reflects ACT Government policies and provides a positive contribution toward modernising our city, utilising best-practice design solutions.

I'm really pleased that the final design for the campus will see a number of small buildings spread over a larger footprint, rather than one very tall building. I believe this will contribute to a sense of vibrancy in the area, and will provide better place-making outcomes.

The 650 jobs created by this project are also very welcome, especially as the ACT, together with all states and territories, continues to suffer the effects of the pandemic.

I also welcome the new transport interchange which will make it easier, more convenient and more inviting for Canberrans travelling to and from the CIT campus, as well as to other key Woden destinations including the Canberra Hospital, the Woden library, a range of office buildings, the Westfield shopping centre and other facilities in the area.

The interchange will provide links with existing cycling routes and bike parking facilities, allowing people to seamlessly travel between bus services and active travel, providing easy connections and integration between home, work and play.

The existing bus interchange was built in the mid-1970s and is showing effects of its age. The enhancements underway will increase its appeal and should attract more people to make better use of our public transport network.

Public consultation on various aspects of the CIT campus and transport interchange at Woden remains open until Friday 20 August.

I encourage all Canberrans to have their say. While the projects are located southside, and in my electorate of Murrumbidgee, they will be used and accessed by all Canberrans as staff, students and visitors to the world-class facilities being constructed, and to the area more broadly.

I look forward to the revitalisation of the Woden Town Centre and the improved public realm which will be achieved through a pedestrian boulevard and the new Bowes and Bradley Street connections.

These are an important thoroughfares and it's critical that our community feels safe moving through the area at all times of the day and night, especially given the interchange's role in transporting people to and from the Canberra Hospital and CIT.

Community feedback that has already been received has highlighted the need for improved safety and connectivity in the area including clear lines of sight, improved wayfinding signage, lighting and appropriate shelters.

I want to help Canberrans – those living in my electorate, and those visiting the area – to be able to preference public transport as a primary mode of travel.

If we provide the right infrastructure, the right services, the right connections and the right amenities, I believe we will choose to use public transport more.

It's important not just that our transport system supports this approach, but also that the associated amenities and facilities – things like lighting, passive surveillance, welcoming and attractive spaces – also support the approach.

There are many benefits to using public transport and I look forward to a time when all Canberrans embrace our public transport and active travel options to greater effect.

This will transform our lives, our city, our interactions with each other and our health and wellbeing.

Among the benefits of greater use of public transport are, of course, reduced emissions as we move away from private vehicles (often with only a single passenger); and also community benefits – more vibrant town centres and neighbourhoods as people move about within these areas, and the physical and mental health benefits brought about by walking, cycling and scooting, as well as interacting with others in public spaces, our neighbourhoods, town centres and on public transport.

By its very nature, public transport includes physical movement elements through the ‘first-mile/last-mile’ benefits of needing to walk, ride or scoot to and from a bus stop or interchange.

It’s important that these first/last mile connections are easy, safe and efficient. The public realm must be designed in this manner and with place-making principles in mind.

I know that Minister Steel, and the hard-working staff in the relevant Directorates of the ACT Government will carefully consider the comments made by the community, paired with their professional expertise, to deliver some great outcomes for the development of CIT Woden and the transport interchange.

In closing, I welcome the update provided by Minister Steel on CIT Woden and the Woden transport interchange. I look forward to continuing to work with the ACT Government and with members of the community to achieve the best possible outcomes for this important area.

Thank you.