

Living Streets Canberra



2019-20 BUDGET SUBMISSION

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About Living Streets Canberra

Living Streets Canberra works for everyone in Canberra to be able to enjoy public spaces and walk* easily, safely and conveniently.

We work for *everyone* – whether young or old; fast or slow; walking, sitting, commuting, shopping, between appointments, or out on the streets for exercise, for leisure or for pleasure.

We want to see:

1. walking as the natural choice for everyday local journeys
2. Canberra as an inviting, safe and comfortable place for people to be out and about, walking* and being in public spaces, full of walking-friendly communities
3. people being supported and encouraged to choose to walk

- Walking is natural...so walking should be a natural right.
- Every journey involves some walking.*
- Walking* is a legitimate use of public space.
- Walking* is an essential part of sustainable mobility.
- Walking* improves health and liveability of communities.
- Walking* is Australia's most common form of exercise, particularly for people over 35.
- Twice as many women walk* for recreation as men.

* We focus on people who get about without a vehicle. When we use the term 'walking' we include any form of human-powered mobility that is not a bicycle: walking; using a wheelchair or other personal mobility device, including those with motors that can travel up to 10 km/h); pushing a pram; wheeling luggage; riding a scooter, skateboard, tricycle or rollerblades. This is the definition used in the Australian Road Rules.

Context

The ACT Government has a policy of encouraging active travel, and wants to make Canberra Australia's most walkable city and an age-friendly city. This will be vital for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport, a key component of the ACT achieving its legislated target of zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. It is also vital for maintaining and improving the health of ACT residents.

In the last Budget, the ACT Government said its 'Our priority is to keep Canberra liveable' and that 'Canberra has a great reputation as a healthy, active and inclusive city'.¹

Walking is an essential component of all of these objectives.

A lot of people already walk in Canberra.

The ACT's resident population is some 420,000 people. This includes some 90,000 children and 19,000 people over 75.

The ACT Government is planning for a city which of 500,000 people by 2030. Each year there are 7,000 new Canberrans and 5,800 residents become seniors.

Each year our population is swelled by some 5 million visitors who come here to work, attend educational institutions or hospitals, for tourism or other reasons. Many of these are children, seniors and people with disabilities.

As each of these people move around our city and villages, at least part of their journey will involve walking. On census day 2016, over 9,000 ACT residents travelled to work by walking only, and nearly 13,000 walked to and from public transport to get to work.

People who travel by public transport, people who do not drive or cycle, and most visitors who arrive in Canberra by coach, train or plane all rely on walking for transport. Importantly, this includes some of our most vulnerable people, such as children, old older people, and people on very low incomes.

As well as a form of transport, walking* is also Australia's most common form of exercise, particularly for people over 35 and women. Twice as many women walk* for recreation as men.

Because of its car-oriented infrastructure and culture, there will, however, need to be big cultural changes to encourage more people to walk.

¹ Australian Capital Territory. 2018. Budget Paper 2: Budget in Brief, https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1206698/Budget-Paper-2-Budget-in-Brief-2018-19.pdf

Goals

Three goals will help achieve the ACT's goals of zero net emissions from transport, becoming Australia's most walkable city and improve the health and safety of people living and visiting Canberra:

1. walking being the natural choice for everyday local journeys - easy, safe (and perceived to be safe) and obvious
2. Canberra being an inviting, safe (and perceived to be safe) and comfortable place for people to be out and about, walking and being in public spaces, full of walking-friendly communities
3. people being supported and encouraged to choose to walk in Canberra

2019-20 Budget priorities

Cost-effective actions for 2019-20 to increase walking

1. Urgently develop a systematic approach to checking the condition of paths and undertaking maintenance as required.
2. Implement an Asset Protection Scheme to encourage building owners and people involved in the construction and demolition industries to not damage paths and to require them to pay for any damage they incur.
BUDGET SAVINGS!
3. Develop:
 - a plan during 2019-20 to deliver infrastructure that makes walking an obvious, safe and attractive choice for everyday local journeys for everyone
 - a publicly available map showing work to be done and as much of the work completed
4. Provide safe and convenient access to public transport:
 - A. Installation of safe road crossings at all places lacking them where people are expected to cross roads to change buses (eg at Narrabundah College on Goyer Street).
 - B. Ensuring that stops for Coverage and Frequent Local services are within 500m of households in each area of Canberra.
 - C. Ensuring that there are paths on all streets (both sides) and laneways within 1km of stops for Rapid bus services and within at least 500m of stops for other bus services, prioritising areas around schools, aged persons units, retirement villages, and areas with a high proportion of households that are transport and/or socially disadvantaged.
 - D. Ensuring that paths within 1km of stops for Rapid bus services and within at least 500m of stops for other bus services are in good condition.

- E. Ensuring that bus stops and paths within 1km of stops for Rapid bus services and within at least 500m of stops for other bus services are well lit.**
- F. Funding for implementation of actions 1-5 as a matter of priority, with a publicly available map showing work to be done and as much of the work completed before the new bus network starts.**
- G. Funding for ongoing maintenance of the publicly available map showing work completed and maintenance required.**

5. Develop and implement (with the community and construction and transport industries) campaigns to take care to ensure that people can walk safely and conveniently on paths and off streets. This should target:

- **Parking across paths**
- **Placement of fences, gates, signs, fences, skips etc across paths without safe (and perceived to be safe), accessible and convenient alternatives**
- **Builders and construction projects occupying paths with project, fences and/or signs without providing safe and convenient access to path users at the same location**

6. Work with community to develop and implement a plan to ensure full tree cover of paths.

7. Redirect efforts at path cleaning, so that only the actual paths are cleaned and verges are mulched (i.e. stop removing leaves and other mulch from the verges of mid-block laneway paths). **BUDGET SAVINGS!**

8. Develop and implement (with the community) a campaign to take away the social licence of parking on verges, including:

- **actively promoting the legal responsibilities and desirable behaviour of about people's responsibilities for (and the benefits of) keeping off verges and median strips**
- **0.25 Ranger to randomly inspect verges for parking on verges and respond to community complaints about such parking**

- educate people about how parking on nature strips damages trees, is unsightly and creates line-of-sight hazards
- create a culture that it is not 'cool' to park on road verges and median strips

9. Develop and implement joint ACT-Government and community projects to actively encourage active travel, including:

- Car-free day(s)
- Walk to Work day(s)
- Walk to School Month
- Walk to Shop days

10. Improve the law and compliance for different types of road users

- Work with active travel, road safety, law organisations and the broader ACT community to review of ACT legislation to ensure that it is clear, consistent, and prioritises active travel and vulnerable road users over travel in motor vehicles
- Actively promote the legal responsibilities and desirable behaviour of:
 - people driving motor vehicles or cycling toward pedestrians
 - people cycling, including toward people walking and people driving motor vehicles.

11. Have only one Output Class for 'transport' in all Budget documentation and decision-making.

12. Make the accountability indicators in Budget Statements reflect publicly-stated Government priorities and goals, especially in regard to Transport, from the 2019-20 onwards. In particular, include concrete measures for:

- the state of infrastructure for active travel
- the availability and suitability of paths for active travel

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- **improvements in the active travel network infrastructure**
 - **maintenance of the infrastructure for active travel**

Good infrastructure for walking is vital

Key to achieving these goals is infrastructure that makes walking safe (and perceived to be safe), convenient and comfortable.

The 2018 ACT Budget went some way to recognising this, for commuters: 'We are ... making major investments to improve footpath and cycling links so that more Canberrans can get active and healthy during their daily commute.'²

However, infrastructure must make it safe, convenient and comfortable for everyone to walk.

Currently:

- most streets and crossings in Canberra favour motor vehicles and people driving over people walking or using other forms of active travel
- much of Canberra's transport infrastructure is inadequate for encouraging people to walk and/or is in poor condition; many streets lack paths
- maintenance of paths is ad hoc
- rules to protect paths, verges, and their use and amenity are not enforced,

Furthermore, the ACT Government Infrastructure Plan 2011-2021 noted that:

Much of Canberra's transport infrastructure was built in the 1970s and 1980s and will require increased maintenance as it reaches the end of its operational life.

This consideration is increasingly relevant as these assets are being used more frequently, particularly arterial roads and community path networks.³

Remedying this - and maintenance in particular - currently relies on reports from members of the public. These issues are dealt with separately, job by job.

Funding arrangements reflect this. Financial funding for footpaths has typically been determined through indexation on previous budgets rather than based upon the investment need derived from condition assessments.

This is all very inefficient for members of the public, for the staff processing reports and allocating jobs, for the people and contractors undertaking the work (with all the

²

https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1206698/Budget-Paper-2-Budget-in-Brief-2018-19.pdf

³ Australian Capital Territory. 2011. ACT Government Infrastructure Plan 2011-2021, p30, http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/220306/infrastructureplan2011.pdf

greenhouse gases involved in repeated travel to the same streets) and for the ACT's Budget. As well as being inefficient, the current funding system is not sustainable.

The current system also places an unfair burden on members of the public who are tasked with a vital component of the system for maintaining and improving Canberra's infrastructure.

It also places people at risk, particularly our most vulnerable people, who are most likely to use walking extensively for transport.

Infrastructure for safe walking is vital because safety of the community is paramount.

1. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-20 Budget to include urgent development of a systematic approach to checking the condition of paths and undertaking maintenance as required.

This would be a first step and would bring the ACT up to the standard of other councils who take a systematic approach to assessing and managing their infrastructure for walking - because it is efficient and effective. (They also respond to ad hoc reports.)

Technology can help with assessing and maintaining path assets and improving efficiencies and effectiveness in activities asset management activities. Clever data technologies are commercially available and being used to 'capture', speed up, simplify and reduce costs of managing infrastructure assets.⁴ As just one example, a council in New Zealand recently deployed inspectors on motor scooters equipped with cameras, GPS and tablets, to plot and grade every hazard and defect.⁵

Regular, smart routine inspection such as this provides information both on hazards needing urgent attention, and about deteriorating lengths of footpath coming up for total renewal. It can also help with identifying where upgrades to a higher design standard are required, due to changes in usage. This in turn allows for efficient planning and execution of works.

Unnecessary maintenance can also be avoided, with savings to the Budget.

⁴ See, for example, Pitney Bowes' offering

<https://www.pitneybowes.com/au/location-intelligence/infrastructure-asset-management.html>

⁵ Rankin, J. 2018. 'Scooters inspect Palmerston North's footpaths', Manuwatu Standard, Stuff, 2 August 2018,

https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/105912739/scooters-inspect-palmerston-norths-footpaths?fbclid=IwAR0bbEGHASq2sa4YwsqbOnYs-fAzPL_DwuWlv0CPM-SYjGm53zaEliB9l3Q

Currently, construction works sometimes damage paths and verges, and the ACT Government ends up organising and paying for the repairs while path users are inconvenienced. In other words, there is little incentive for people involved in construction to take care of paths and other ACT assets.

This needs to change, so that our public realm assets and access are valued and looked after and anyone who damages them is responsible for repairing or replacing them.

Other councils have asset protection schemes to help them ensure that public assets and infrastructure are not damaged as a result of building work (including demolition work) being carried out.⁶ These may include legislation, a permit with conditions and bond.

The ACT would benefit from implementing a scheme to encourage building owners and people involved in the construction and demolition industries to not damage paths or other infrastructure and to require them to pay for any damage they incur. Desirable elements of such a scheme include:

- Before building approval is given, require:
 - geo-tagged photos of adjacent paths
 - a deposit equivalent to path replacement cost
- Before certificate of occupancy is issued, require geo-tagged and date-stamped photo of adjacent paths:
 - if path(s) undamaged, the deposit is returned
 - if the path(s) damage, the deposit is retained to pay for repair/replacement

This measure will result in **Budget savings**.

2. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-20 Budget to include an Asset Protection Scheme to encourage building owners and people involved in the construction and demolition industries to not damage paths and to require them to pay for any damage they incur.

⁶ See, for example, Glen Eira City Council's Asset Protection Permit scheme, <https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/Council/Forms-and-permits/Asset-Protection-Permit>

The ACT Infrastructure Plan 2011-21 announced that ‘the extensive network of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure – including ... suburban community paths – will be expanded and improved to make active transport an easier and healthier travel choice for Canberrans’.⁷

Yet there does not seem to be a plan for delivering that and ensuring that walking is the natural obvious, safe (and perceived to be safe) and attractive choice for everyday local journeys for everyone, including children, older people, and people with disabilities. This needs to include:

- continuity of the network for walking
- paths on both sides of streets
- fully accessible and standardised ramps
- road crossings that are convenient and safe for all users
- shelter and other amenity to provide comfort in our warming and more variable and extreme climate

The users’ requirements need to be understood. This includes not only the people walking alone, but people being able to walk side by side and with accompaniments such as dogs on leashes, shopping trolleys and prams, or using mobility scooters and wheelchairs.

3. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-20 Budget to include development of:

- **a plan during 2019-20 to deliver infrastructure that makes walking an obvious, safe and attractive choice for everyday local journeys for everyone**
- **a publicly available map showing work to be done and as much of the work completed**

⁷ Australian Capital Territory. 2011. ACT Government Infrastructure Plan 2011-2021, p31, http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/220306/infrastructureplan2011.pdf

Walking infrastructure to support use of Canberra's public transport

Changes planned for Canberra's bus services will mean more walking to buses, many of which will be more frequent and direct (but others will not).

The success of this approach relies on people being able walk to bus stops - and change buses - easily, safely and conveniently (and people being able to walk the distance!). We know this is often not the case, particularly for older people and children and given the increasing numbers of motor vehicles on the road.

Ensuring infrastructure that facilitates easy, safe and convenient walking (including crossing roads to change services) needs to be a high priority and implemented as part of the changes to our bus services. Our ageing population and the focus on getting and keeping more people active underscores this need.

In this regard, we note:

- the ACT Government policy of 95% of households being within 500m of a stop for a Coverage and Frequent Local services and 1km for Rapid services;⁸
- the ability of people to walk (or travel by wheelchair) to bus stops depends on:
 - their health;
 - the availability and condition of paths and pram ramps, including lighting;
 - topography of the area; and
 - the design and condition of any roads that need to be crossed, including traffic levels and speed.

4. Living Streets Canberra therefore calls for the 2019-20 ACT Budget to include:

- A. Installation of safe road crossings at all places lacking them where people are expected to cross roads to change buses (eg at Narrabundah College on Goyer Street).**
- B. Ensuring that stops for Coverage and Frequent Local services are within 500m of households in each area of Canberra.**

⁸ ACT Government. 2012. *Transport for Canberra*, p.19.

- C. Ensuring that there are paths on all streets (both sides) and laneways within 1km of stops for Rapid bus services and within at least 500m of stops for other bus services, prioritising areas around schools, aged persons units, retirement villages, and areas with a high proportion of households that are transport and/or socially disadvantaged.**
- D. Ensuring that paths within 1km of stops for Rapid bus services and within at least 500m of stops for other bus services are in good condition.**
- E. Ensuring that bus stops and paths within 1km of stops for Rapid bus services and within at least 500m of stops for other bus services are well lit.**
- F. Funding for implementation of actions 1-5 as a matter of priority, with a publicly available map showing work to be done and as much of the work completed before the new bus network starts.**
- G. Funding for ongoing maintenance of the publicly available map showing work completed and maintenance required.**

Maintaining convenient access to active travel infrastructure

Infrastructure is only useful if it can be used.

Our car-oriented travel culture means that drivers are often thoughtless about how their parking affects other users. This is particularly noticeable in parking across paths and placement of fences and other equipment used for construction.

People also want walking and using public transport to be convenient.

In Canberra when paths are closed because of construction works, path users are usually diverted onto verges, roads or to the other side of the street. Where traffic lights are involved, this means that people may have to cross three streets (with associated waiting times) just to cross one street.

In other cities, safe and accessible alternatives are provided, particularly in high use areas. A local example of good practice is 39 London Circuit, Civic.

5. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-2020 ACT Budget to include the ACT Government developing and implementing (with the community and construction and transport industries) campaigns to take care to ensure that people can walk safely and conveniently on paths and off streets. This should target:

- **Parking across paths**
- **Placement of fences, gates, signs, fences, skips etc across paths without safe (and perceived to be safe), accessible and convenient alternatives**
- **Builders and construction projects occupying paths with project, fences and/or signs without providing safe and convenient access to path users at the same location**

Urban public realm needs to encourage active travel

Comfort, aesthetics, safety and social aspects of walking and being in the public realm need to be increased in the ACT's urban areas in order to to encourage such activity.

An important way of doing this, particularly in our warming climate, is by increasing urban forest and improving the resilience of ACT's urban trees. This was raised numerous times during the consultation for the strategy to zero net greenhouse gas emission and is consistent with the ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. Trees reduce the urban heat island effect and provide shelter for path users, making it safer and more pleasant for people to walk.

6. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-20 ACT Budget to include funding for the ACT Government to work with community to develop and implement a plan to ensure full tree cover of paths.

The state of the ground is vital for healthy trees.

Leaves can provide valuable mulch and nutrients to adjacent vegetation, particularly trees that form part of the urban forest. This is needed to increase rain infiltration and resilience of the vegetation, particularly with increasing climate change.

However, currently rangers scour the verges of mid-block laneways every autumn, removing leaves and other mulch. As well as making it more difficult for trees to grow

(particularly with our warming climate and drying soils), this often increases trip hazards and runoff (including silt and gravel) to storm water. Surplus mulch could be moved to where there is insufficient mulch for healthy tree growth. As long as the actual path is clear, there should be no increase in hazard to path users.

Ceasing this practice (while still keeping actual paths clean) will save costs for labor, fuel and tree maintenance/removal - with consequent **Budget savings**.

7. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-20 ACT Budget to redirect efforts at path cleaning, so that only the actual paths are cleaned and verges are mulched (i.e. stop removing leaves and other mulch from the verges of mid-block laneway paths).

Air and water access to roots is also vital. Parking on verges and median strips is not only illegal it compresses the soil, making it hard for water to infiltrate and plant roots to have air.

A community campaign and enforcement of the law could take away the social licence for parking on verges and median strips.

8. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-20 ACT Budget to include funding to develop and implement (with the community) a campaign to take away the social licence of parking on verges, including:

- **actively promoting the legal responsibilities and desirable behaviour of about people's responsibilities for (and the benefits of) keeping off verges and median strips**
- **0.25 Ranger to randomly inspect verges for parking on verges and respond to community complaints about such parking**
- **educate people about how parking on nature strips damages trees, is unsightly and creates line-of-sight hazards**
- **create a culture that it is not 'cool' to park on road verges and median strips**

Actively encouraging active travel

Many people living in the ACT have little or no (local) experience of active travel or people-friendly streets.

Specific projects to give people those experiences are a proven way to actively encourage active travel. These typically involve government working with community groups and include:

- Car-free day(s)
- Walk to Work day(s)
- Walk to School Month
- Walk to Shop days

These initiatives have been recommended for the ACT in the consultation process for the strategy to zero net greenhouse gas emissions and in the Active Travel Advisory Group. Walk to School Month is international and occurs in October; Living Streets Canberra has been promoting it via social media. Local shopping centres and residents groups can also help with Walk to Shop days.

9. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-20 ACT Budget to include funding for joint ACT-Government and community projects to actively encourage active travel, including:

- **Car-free day(s)**
- **Walk to Work day(s)**
- **Walk to School Month**
- **Walk to Shop days**

Ensuring legislation supports walking

Currently, legislation contains inconsistencies with regard to how people walking, cycling and driving are prioritised and are to behave in relation to each other.

For walking and other active travel to be attractive and safe, the legislation needs to be clear and consistently prioritise active travel - and the rules widely known and understood.

10. Living Streets Canberra calls for the 2019-2020 ACT Budget to include funding for:

- **the ACT Government to work with active travel, road safety, law organisations and the broader ACT community to review of ACT legislation to ensure that it is clear, consistent, and prioritises active travel and vulnerable road users over travel in motor vehicles**
- **actively promotion of the legal responsibilities and desirable behaviour of:**
 - **people driving motor vehicles or cycling toward pedestrians**
 - **people cycling, including toward people walking and people driving motor vehicles.**

Budget planning and documentation must reflect shifting priorities

The ACT's Budget planning and documentation is evolving slowly to reflect shifting priorities. There is still a long way to go, though, particularly regarding transport.

As long as there 'roads and infrastructure' is separated from the rest of transport for planning and budgeting, the ACT will continue to have transport dominated by private motor vehicles.

To facilitate the changes needed to meet the ACT's goals, as outlined above under Context, all transport budgeting needs to be brought together under one heading.

11. Living Streets Canberra calls for only one Output Class for 'transport' in all Budget documentation and decision-making.

Accountability indicators need to be more meaningful and reflect the Government's published priorities and goals, such as those outlined above under Context. The 2018-19 transport accountability indicators do not do this.

Additional transport accountability indicators would show more meaningful progress toward facilitating modal shift, and walking and other active travel in particular.

Examples of suitable indicators include:

- Percentage of territorial paths repaired or replaced
- Percentage of municipal paths repaired or replaced
- Percentage of territorial path ramps that meet AGRD06A-17 (Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A 2017)
- Percentage of territorial roads with shared or foot path on one side
- Percentage of territorial roads with shared or foot path on both sides
- Percentage of territorial shared and foot paths in good condition
- Percentage of municipal shared and foot paths in good condition
- Percentage of municipal shared and foot paths with dead-end
- Percentage of customers satisfied with the active travel network
- Percentage of bus interchange points with a safe, pedestrian-priority crossing
- Percentage of households within 500m of a stop for a Coverage and Frequent Local bus services and 1km for light rail or Rapid bus services

12. Living Streets Canberra calls for the accountability indicators in Budget Statements to reflect publicly-stated Government priorities and goals, especially in regard to Transport, from the 2019-20 onwards. In particular, these need to include concrete measures for:

- **the state of infrastructure for active travel**
- **the availability and suitability of paths for active travel**
- **improvements in the active travel network infrastructure**
- **maintenance of the infrastructure for active travel**

