



A new Statement of Planning Intent: Let's talk about planning priorities for Canberra



Minister's message

As Minister for Planning, I am preparing a Statement of Planning Intent that will establish key planning priorities for the ACT Government over the next three to five years. It's very important to me that the statement reflects the

community's opinions and is relevant to the community as our city continues to mature.

I am preparing the statement under the *Planning and Development Act 2007*, which says the responsible Minister for Planning may set out the main principles that are to govern planning and land development in the ACT through a written statement.

The statement will build on current ACT Government policies and strategies and recognise the key challenges for our city. Within these parameters, I am asking Canberrans to help me determine the priorities the government should focus on. I am consulting widely to capture the different views of the many public and stakeholder interest groups across all sectors of the ACT community, and any individuals who would like to contribute their thoughts.

Please consider the focus questions on page one and think how you would like the Government to address them within the context outlined in this document.

The new Statement of Planning Intent is an important document for Canberra. It is an opportunity to underscore what has been achieved to date and highlight planning priorities to maintain momentum and shared commitment to the desired future of our city.

Given that, these priorities and other challenges cannot be addressed by government alone. Community leaders, business owners, research bodies and decision makers all have a role to play in setting priorities for creating a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable city in which we can live. Choices and actions made by each of us today will have a lasting impact.

Mick Gentleman, MLA
Minister for Planning

The Minister for Planning, Mick Gentleman, is consulting the community about his planning priorities. As Canberra grows and transitions into a major city, it faces challenges common to most Australian and international cities.

Governments and communities everywhere are looking to balance issues such as managing urban growth, reducing traffic congestion, accommodating a changing population, improving economic productivity and social inclusion, and addressing the implications of climate change and limited natural resources.

The ACT will tackle these issues in a way that respects and responds to the unique characteristics of the local community and business attitudes.

Focus questions

The following questions will help guide the discussion:

1. **How do we achieve a more compact city that is inclusive, vibrant, connected, prosperous and environmentally responsible whilst maintaining the attributes that make Canberra a great place to live, work and play?**
2. **How can we encourage innovation and flexibility in the planning system and within industry and maintain certainty related to planning and design outcomes on the ground?**
3. **What do you think should be the top focus for planning in the ACT and surrounding region in the next 3–5 years?**





Setting the scene

The ACT Government set down core elements of its plan for the future in 2012 in the ACT Planning Strategy, Transport for Canberra and the climate change strategy and action plan for the Territory (AP2). While this strategic framework sets the foundation for a new Statement of Planning Intent, current challenges and initiatives mean we need to reflect more on our short-term planning priorities.

Recent down-sizing of the Commonwealth public service and consequently the reduced business confidence have affected Canberra's economic growth and employment base. At the same time, transformative projects such as Capital Metro light rail, urban renewal initiatives and large-scale renewable energy facilities are attracting new investment to diversify and drive the Territory's economy.

Minister Gentleman sees the new Statement of Planning Intent as an opportunity to address some of the recent changes and create pathways for innovation to establish Canberra as a city widely acknowledged for its liveability, sustainability and prosperity. This will facilitate the flow of new investment and jobs to Canberra to support a new wave of prosperity underpinned by a more diverse economy resilient to Commonwealth decision-making.

Key messages from recent community engagement on ACT planning

Limiting urban sprawl and growing into a more compact city while maintaining the bush capital character has been a consistent message from the community since Time to Talk community-wide consultations in 2010. Canberrans want to protect the Territory's limited land resources for biodiversity and recreation by limiting our urban footprint.

The community has also set clear parameters on how they want to see a more compact city unfold. Canberrans want to see:

- housing choice and affordability addressed
- the quality of urban design improved
- sustainability in new developments showcased
- traffic congestion controlled
- public transport improved, and
- friendly urban environments for people to walk, cycle and socialise.

These community messages reflect many principles for the 'smart growth' of our city and informed the development of the ACT Planning Strategy and Transport for Canberra.

How can we manage Canberra's urban growth effectively?

Over the next 15 years Canberra's population is forecast to increase by 100,000. As our city grows, the efficient use of land becomes more important. Recent trends show that the development of dwelling types other than detached houses is increasing.

Table 1: Population projections (ACT Government 2014)

Population	Projections
June 2013	386,000
June 2021	430,400
June 2031	493,500
June 2041	553,500

Table 2: Number of dwellings projections (ABS Census 2011 and EPD projections 2015)

Number of dwellings	Total 2011	Increase 2021	Total 2021
Detached houses	72%	12,178	65%
Row/terrace houses	15%	7,307	17%
Apartments	13%	10,960	18%
Overall dwellings	145,229	30,445	175,674

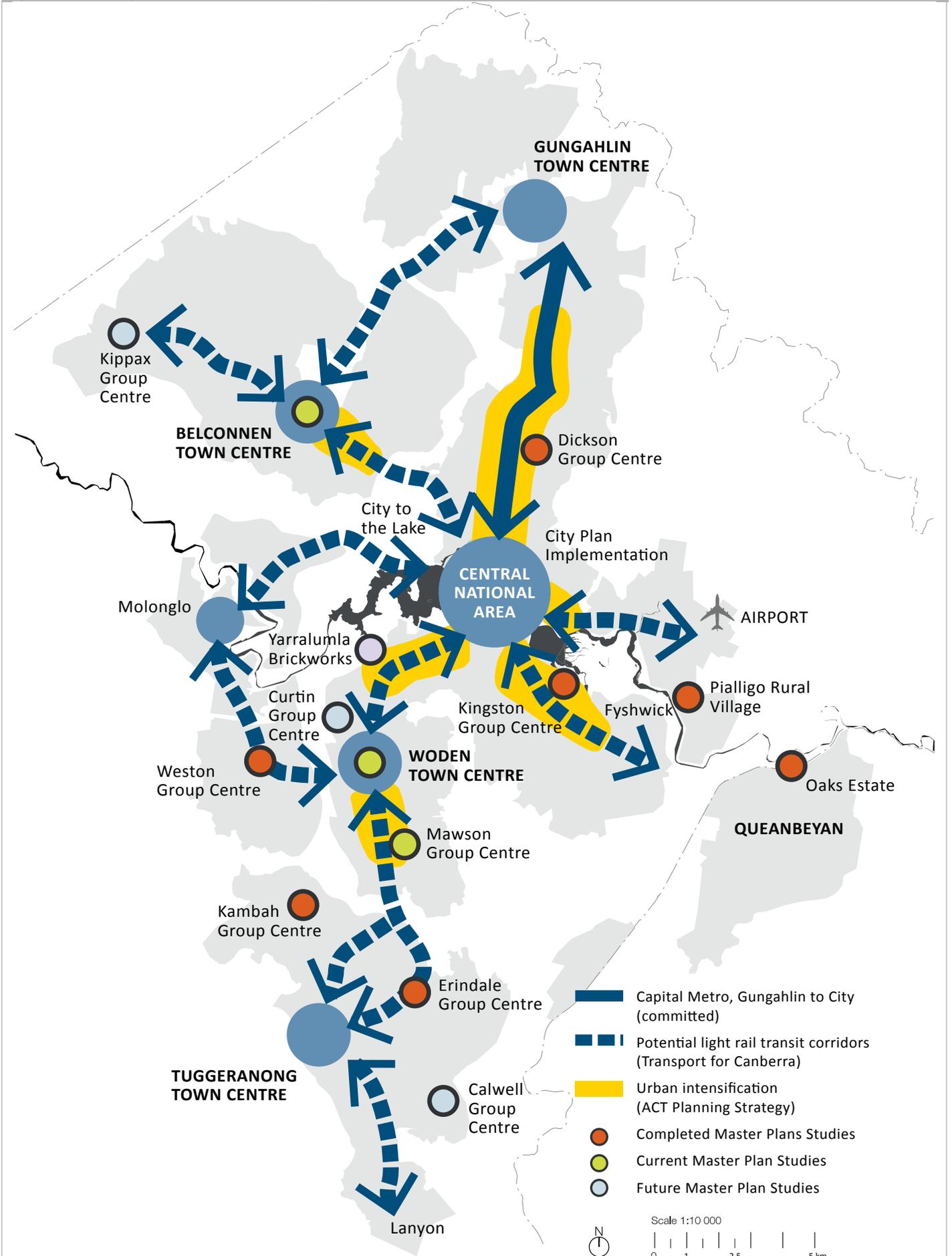
The ACT Planning Strategy sets a target of 50% of new development to be urban infill with growth focussed around existing commercial centres and along 'rapid' transport corridors. Strategic locations for accommodating the predicted urban growth are shown in Figure 1.

The ACT Government recognises the need to identify priority locations for infrastructure upgrades and development to adequately respond to the likely demand in the short term.

Several planning and design studies currently underway focus on renewing our town centres, group centres and transit corridors. These studies aim to make Canberra a more compact and efficient city while responding to the local context and redevelopment opportunities. Some of this work will be transformative for our city, such as the urban design framework for the Northbourne Avenue light rail corridor, Capital Metro and the City to the Lake project.



Figure 1: Strategic locations for urban growth and future development





What are Canberra's key directions for growing into a more compact city?

Additional development in and around existing centres and near major transport stops has multiple benefits. It helps to better utilise existing infrastructure, defers the need for new infrastructure on the fringe, increases the viability of public transport and provides for greater housing choice and higher amenity.

Increase density to reduce our urban footprint

A new metropolitan look for our growing city will showcase innovative compact design, liveable neighbourhoods, great place-making and efficient transport infrastructure. In that way, more people can enjoy Canberra's network of centres, open spaces and modes of travel. This will contribute to a greater sense of wellbeing and belonging in a unique city with a vibrant civic and cultural life.

With more compact housing and higher density development in Canberra's centres, the design and quality requirements for public spaces and mixed-use developments becomes more critical. The design of buildings, places and streets are key elements of an attractive and vibrant city as they form an important platform for increased public life and commercial activity.

A growing and more urbanised Canberra can also provide greater housing choice to address the diverse needs of changing socio-demographics, household structures and lifestyles. Providing affordable living close to services is a key challenge for many cities, including Canberra, and the ACT Government recognises this as a high priority.

Create active streets and great public spaces

Great places and active streets in many cities around the world have one thing in common; they focus on inviting people to interact and linger. The great art of place-making creates streets and urban places full of life that prioritise people. There is the opportunity to improve the place-making of streets and public spaces in Canberra to better connect people to services, transport and amenity.

Manage traffic and parking

Canberra's transport future is diversifying. Rapid public transport, including light rail, will offer convenient travel choices between town and group centres along with local bus services and improved urban environments for pedestrians and cyclists. There is significant opportunity to expand catchments for public transport by improving access to bus stops and future light rail stops. Development along transport corridors will place people next to travel choices and multiple services.



In more compact urban areas of Canberra, people are already shifting to walking, cycling and public transport. In the two years to 2014, there was a 46% increase in the number of people walking and cycling into and out of the five major town centres, with highest numbers recorded for the city centre. In 2011, nearly 11,200 people caught a bus to work daily. Travel to work data shows most public transport users live near or along the frequent 'rapid' bus corridors from the city to Gungahlin, Belconnen and Woden.

Adapt to a changing climate

The latest projections for the Canberra region are for a hotter and drier climate with more intense heatwaves, more severe and damaging droughts and storms, and more frequent bushfires that present a significant risk to life and property. The ACT Government is taking decisive action in mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Mitigation reduces greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming, while adaptation focuses on how to live with the changing climate now and into the future.

AP2 responds to the 2010 legislated targets to support the 2060 vision for a fair society in a low carbon economy adapting to climate change. With large-scale solar farms and wind energy powering 90% of all Canberra households with renewable energy by 2020, much has already been achieved in mitigation.

Adapting our city to a hotter and drier climate requires changes in the design and built form of our city. The next steps for adaptation are being considered in preparing the ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, due for completion at the end of 2015.

Our climate affects everyone, so our city has to prepare and adapt to maintain the quality of life for generations to come. Some people are more vulnerable to shocks or stressors and will be more affected by extreme weather events, such as the very young or old, the sick or disadvantaged. A resilient city with a fair and caring community builds and plans to look after all community members.