

Submission for the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan – A Better Belconnen

My name is Kim Fischer and I live in Florey, Belconnen. I have a number of ideas that I believe should be incorporated into the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan.

Emu Bank – College St “promenade”

YouTube video link – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ixnGu8M8rs>

Bruce is the education hub of Belconnen, with over 20,000 students attending the University of Canberra, UC Senior Secondary College, Radford College, the Australian Institute of Sport, and the Canberra Institute of Technology.

While thousands of these students live on-campus or in nearby suburbs, there is no way for students to easily and safely cycle or walk to the main Belconnen shopping district or Lake Ginninderra.

The Draft Master Plan indicated that strengthening the links between the Town Centre and the University of Canberra was an important issue under consideration. Building a “promenade” exclusively for cyclists and pedestrians which links Emu Bank through to College St would encourage greater movement between these areas, increase commercial opportunities and community vibrancy.

Margaret Timpson Park and the Belconnen Library

YouTube video link – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1SrcMLT_ws

Margaret Timpson Park and the Belconnen Library need to be opened up, better lit, and made into a safe place to congregate day or night. These spaces need to be clean, friendly, modern and welcoming.

Fixing this should be a top priority.

Margaret Timpson should be a mixed use space that would suit outdoor lunch and picnics for nearby workers and families. The space should be able to facilitate festivals and public performances, and have an all-abilities playground to encourage more families (particularly those living in nearby apartments) to make better use of the space.

Better physical and sound separation, such as a hedge or additional trees, should be planted to increase the separation from Benjamin Way and make it safer for kids to play. There are 2 grass pyramids which were intended to have flowers planted on it at selected times of the year, but this doesn't happen. These pyramids make it difficult for the space to be used for large gatherings, and should be removed.

The Belconnen library exterior is run down, uninviting and unsafe. It should be either moved to where the remand centre is, or be completely redeveloped and opened up as part of a broader Swanson Plaza revamp.

Lake Ginninderra

Lake Ginninderra is a well utilised lake, but it could be improved. It is important that the walk around Lake Ginninderra is well-lit and clean, with more drainage work done to minimise muddy puddles during rain.

Much as part of the walk around Lake Burley Griffin is named after former Prime Minister Robert Menzies, I think it would be fitting for a part of the Lake Ginninderra Walk to be named the “Gough and Margaret Whitlam Walk”.

Former Remand Centre and Police Station

Given its proximity to the Belconnen Bus Interchange, the former remand centre and police station should be redeveloped as a community services hub. These facilities should be designed to benefit everyone in our Belconnen community, but particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged. As noted above, this could be the site for a new Belconnen library as well as other community support services.

One option which should be considered is the provision of a space similar to the Early Morning Centre (EMC) in Civic, which provides support for people who are homeless. The EMC offers free breakfast and has shower facilities as well as providing support and referral services to help people access the services they need.

Height Restrictions

I am in favour of increased residential density in the Town Centre, while avoiding the cautionary example of the Woden tower buildings which stand out like a sore thumb in the landscape. Buildings should be integrated with the landscape and avoid impeding the views of already constructed buildings. As a general principle, taller buildings should be constructed in land areas which are lower than their immediate surrounds, with stricter height limits on apartments built on ridges.

Emu Bank

Emu Bank needs to continue its evolution into an entertainment precinct for Belconnen, with a diverse mix of restaurants, bars, and other entertainment.

Currently a lack of transport options is a major restriction – for example, there is no Taxi Rank or dedicated taxi pick up points. Businesses at Emu Bank should be approached about the possibility of subsidising a free weekend/evening shuttle service that runs between the Belconnen Mall, along Emu Bank and then to the University of Canberra. This would provide a safe, attractive option for transport for those who wish to consume alcohol and/or cannot drive.

Additionally, there should be an increased focus on events that utilise Lake Ginninderra and particularly the lakefront. Possible events include powered or unpowered water sports events, night-time cinema, and/or fireworks displays.

Parking

There have been a lot of complaints about parking in the Belconnen Town Centre. It will only get worse as new buildings are built and parking on spaces which are currently used for parking. Ensuring that a dedicated, multi-storey underground carpark is included in the plans for upcoming residential development in Belconnen is critical to encourage people to take advantage of our businesses, restaurants, cultural, and community facilities.

The lack of adequate, nearby parking hinders attendance at events held at the Belconnen Arts Centre, a problem which will only get more pronounced when Stage 2 with a theatre is constructed.

Oatley court

Noting the \$3m capital investment in a 'Grant for Development of a New Basketball Centre and Player Amenities', it would be appropriate for the Oatley Court region of Belconnen to become a hub for indoor sports and recreation hub. This might include table tennis, a kids' indoor play area, snooker/billiards, rock climbing, and/or hobby games such as chess.

Joynton Smith busway

The disused Joynton Smith busway should be redeveloped, preferably for residential purposes such as apartments. However, residents in that part of Belconnen should be separately consulted about their needs to ensure that any changes are appropriate to the area and support their requirements.

Coulter Drive

There should be a greatly improved bike lane on Coulter Drive from Ginninderra Drive to Belconnen Way, which also integrates the existing cycleways and walking tracks in Page and Belconnen.