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ACT Government

Building light rail for tomorrow's Canberra

A summary of Light Rail to Woden: Stage 2B and the Environmental Impact Statement

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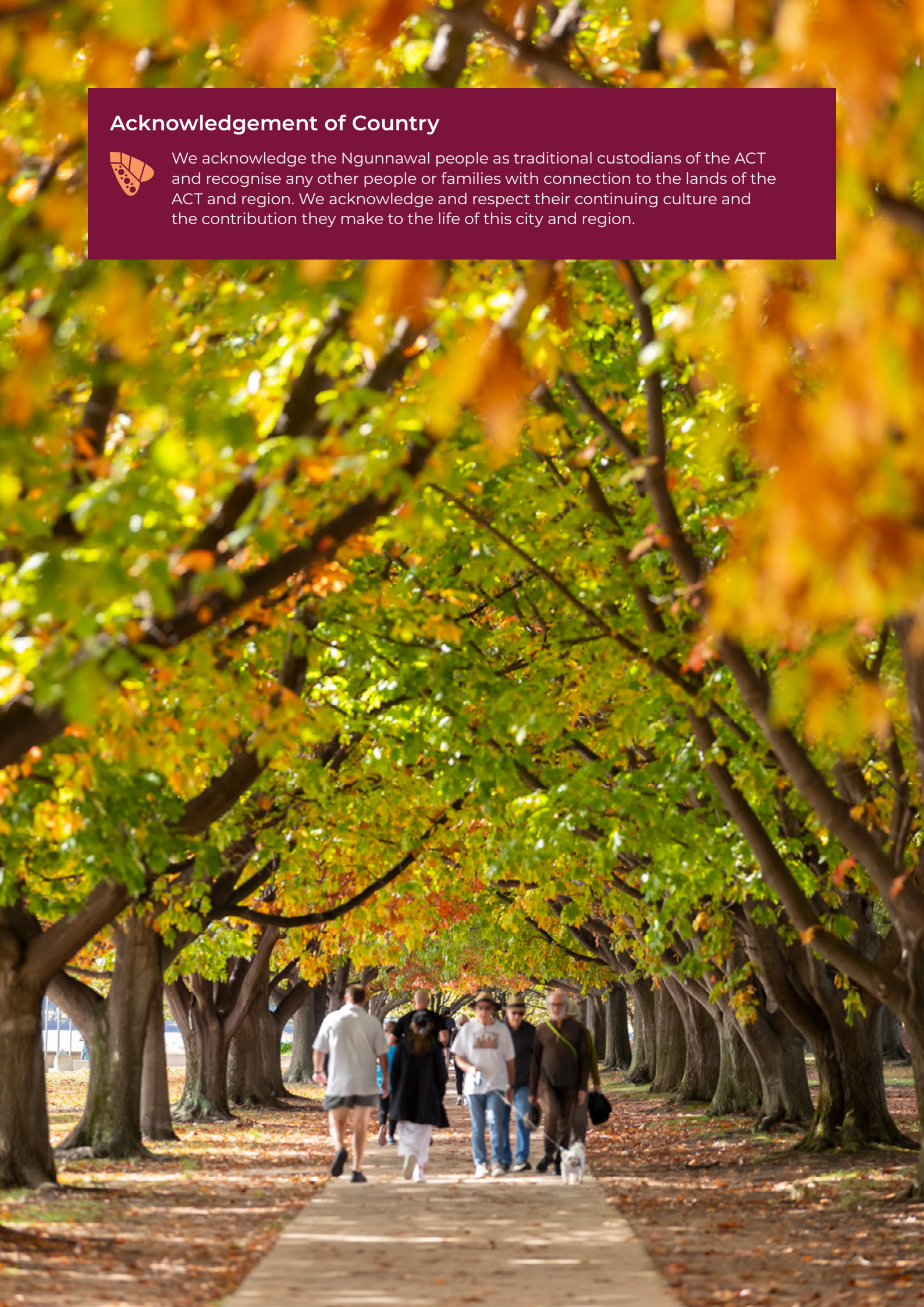
Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and region.



The purpose of this document

The ACT Government is investing in an integrated public transport system that provides flexible, reliable and sustainable transport options.

A key step to deliver Light Rail Stage 2B: Commonwealth Park to Woden (Stage 2B) is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This is needed before other approvals and construction can start.

A draft EIS is now available for public comment. The draft EIS assesses the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of the project and proposes management strategies in response.

This document provides background and context about why light rail to Woden is needed and the key findings of the draft EIS.

This document is designed to be read alongside:

- the draft EIS
- the interactive EIS map
- Environmental Impact Statement Submissions Guide

Visit **act.gov.au/builtforcbr**

Contents

Light Rail Stage 2B:
Commonwealth Park to Woden

The ACT Government is proposing to extend Canberra's light rail network to Woden, linking Gungahlin to Woden and transforming the way people move around Canberra.

The proposed 10-kilometre alignment will cross Lake Burley Griffin over a new bridge on Commonwealth Avenue, and add nine new stops in the National Triangle, along Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen and in Woden.

Following extensive community and stakeholder engagement in 2024, a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is now on public exhibition.

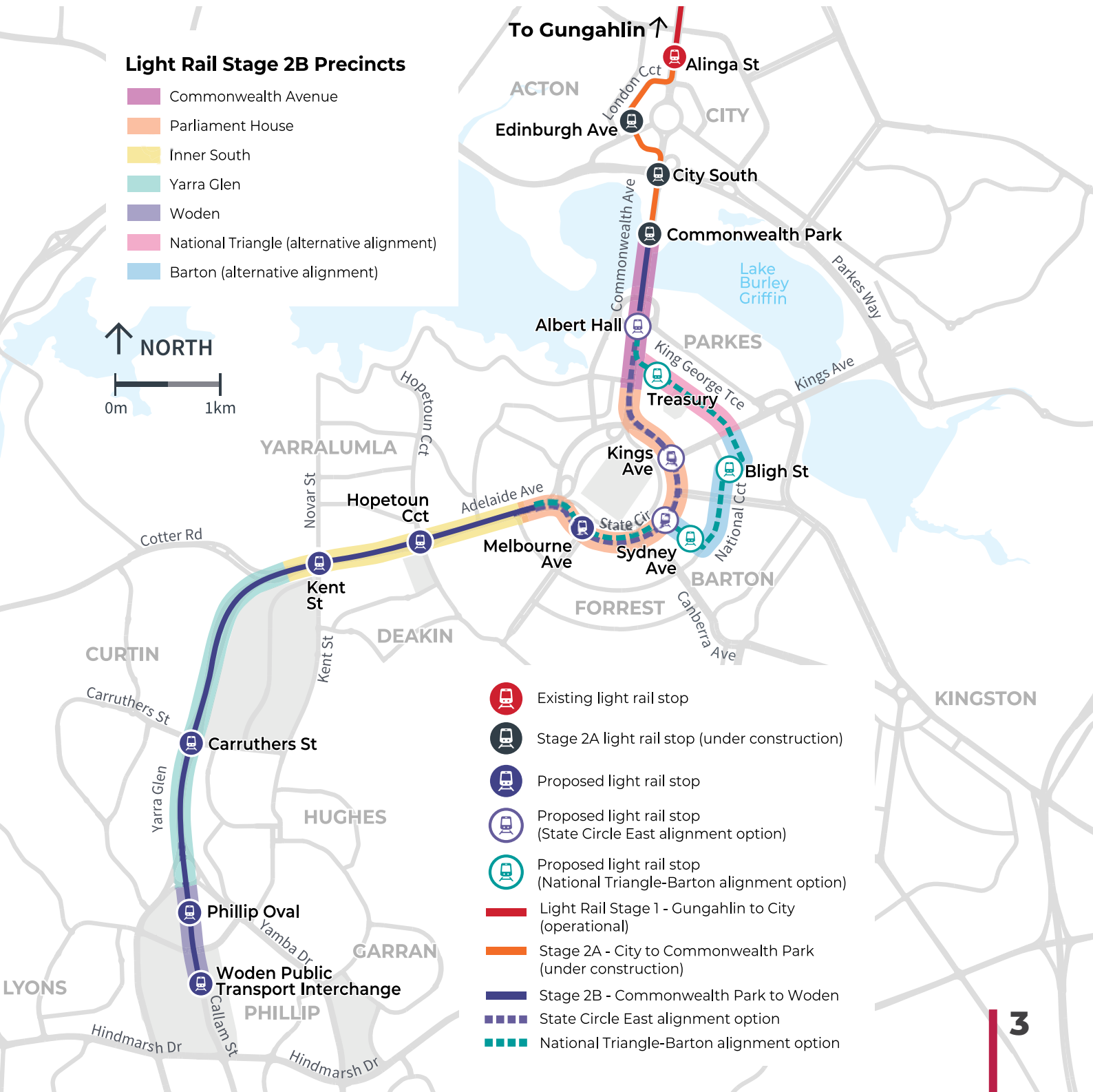
Benefits of Light Rail Stage 2B

- Increased public transport capacity
- Greater public transport choice
- Supports Canberra's south, enhancing housing supply and opportunities for growth, more services and amenities
- Lower carbon emissions
- Consistent journey time regardless of road congestion
- Bringing public transport closer to where people live and work
- Improvements to the pedestrian and cycle network to encourage active travel
- More bike and scooter storage
- More accessible public transport options with features like level boarding, hearing loops and spaces for wheelchairs, prams and bikes
- Turn up and go services during peak periods
- Reduced congestion
- Revitalisation of urban areas, meaning more vibrant precincts and public places, and greener streets
- Creation of community hubs including North Woden and West Deakin.

The alignment

The draft EIS looks at the project as a whole and as seven unique precincts and the Mitchell Depot. Due to complex planning approvals, two alignment options through the National Triangle and around Parliament House are outlined in the draft EIS.
This ensures the impacts and benefits of each option are understood before a decision is made on the final alignment.

1. **State Circle East** is the preferred alignment from Commonwealth Avenue along State Circle to Adelaide Avenue.
2. **National Triangle–Barton** will take light rail from Commonwealth Avenue along King George Terrace, Macquarie Street, Bligh Street, National Circuit and Sydney Avenue, before connecting State Circle to Adelaide Avenue.



The liveable city

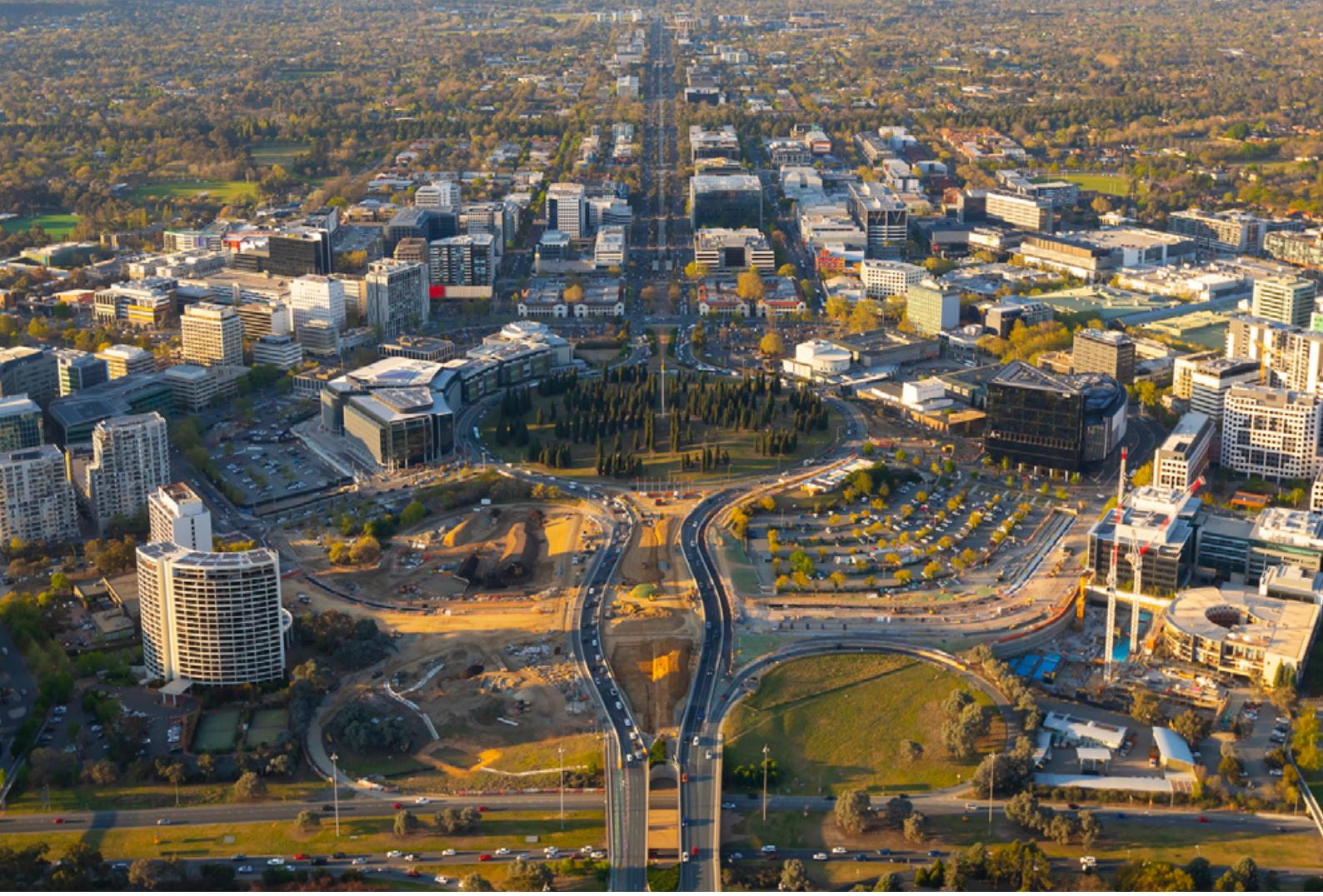
Canberra's population is growing and with this population growth comes greater demand for housing, jobs, facilities, services and transport. The ACT Government is investing in an integrated public transport system that provides flexible, reliable and sustainable transport options.

Stage 2B will support urban renewal and development in Canberra's south, enhancing housing supply and opportunities for growth, services and amenities.

Central to the Territory's vision is the importance of encouraging more people to choose public transport and other modes of active travel. Stage 2B will support Canberrans and visitors alike to access workplaces, schools, and visit national attractions and events. Improved access to public transport promotes social inclusion and allows for greater connections with family, friends and the community.

A key part of the ACT Government's plan is the concept of the '30-minute city'. This allows people to have all their daily needs met, including work, education, shopping, health, social or culture, within 30-minutes of their home. A reliable public transport network means less time travelling and more time for living, contributing to a happy and healthy community.

Light Rail will ensure Canberra remains one of the world's most liveable and competitive cities, building a prosperous, vibrant and sustainable future for all Canberrans.



Canberra's population is predicted to hit

750,000

by 2060

The number of Canberrans using public transport daily is expected to

double

by 2030

In 2031, the cost of congestion will be around

$1.5m

per day

Stage 2B will provide extra capacity for

2,400 people

per hour in each direction in the corridor

Canberra light rail operates on

100% renewable energy

Each light rail vehicle can carry the passengers of

3 buses or **150 cars**

In the morning peak, the Gungahlin to City light rail service runs every

5 minutes

Sources:

ACT Government, *ACT Population Projections 2022 to 2060.*
ACT Government, *ACT Transport Strategy 2020.*
CBR Canberra, Welcome to Canberra.
ACT Government, *Light Rail Stage 2B Draft Environmental Impact Statement – Executive Summary 2025.*
ACT Government, *Light Rail to Woden: Stage 2A City to Commonwealth Park.*
ACT Government, *Travel Overview.*

The story so far

Stage 1: **Operational**

Gungahlin to Alinga Street: Around 12 kilometres and 14 stops

Construction of light rail started in Canberra in July 2016, with Stage 1 of the project – the Gungahlin to the City route – launched in April 2019.

Raising London Circuit: **Main works complete**

Raising London Circuit to an at-grade intersection with Commonwealth Avenue

This project helps connect the city with the lake and provides an important base for the extension of light rail to Woden.

Stage 1 delivering for the community

100%
renewable energy

16.5 million
passenger trips

99.98%
of services run on time

6,100
new homes along light rail corridor

95%
passenger satisfaction rating

43%
of light rail passengers have never used buses in Canberra

Source:
ACT Government, *Light Rail Five Years On: Benefits Realisation Report 2024.*

Stage 2A:
Under construction

Alinga Street to Commonwealth Park: Around 1.7 kilometres and 3 stops

Stage 2A construction started in February 2025. This will extend light rail from the City to Commonwealth Park, with services starting in 2028.

Stage 2B:
Planning and assessment

Commonwealth Park to Woden: Around 10 kilometres and 9 stops

Construction of Stage 2B will start after environmental and planning approvals are obtained and procurement is complete. It will complete the route from Commonwealth Park to Woden, with light rail services from Gungahlin to Woden expected to start in 2034.

A sustainable future

Stage 2B is being designed to minimise and avoid potential environmental impacts and be resilient to climate change. Canberra's landscape is central to all design plans and the city's natural, historic, cultural and First Nations heritage values will be prioritised throughout the development of the project.

The draft EIS considers greenhouse gas emissions and how future climate impacts such as extreme rainfall, flooding and heat events would affect construction schedules, worker safety and light rail operations.

Sustainability features:

- Zero electricity-related emissions
- 100% renewable energy operation
- Strategic tree planting to integrate light rail with the landscape
- 'Green tracks', that use a bed of grass or other low-lying plants to absorb rainwater and heat and blend into the landscape
- Battery powered light rail vehicles that enable wire-free sections in the National Triangle to the Hopetoun Circuit Stop.

The approvals journey

The ACT Government is progressing plans, designs and approvals for Stage 2B. As part of this process, a draft EIS has been prepared for public exhibition and consideration under Australian and ACT government legislation.

The draft EIS examines the environmental, social and economic impacts the project may have on its surroundings and suggests ways to manage them. The draft EIS:

- describes the current environment of the project area
- details the features of the project and describes how it may be built and operated
- looks at the anticipated impacts of the project
- outlines how positive outcomes may be achieved or enhanced
- outlines how potentially adverse impacts can be avoided or reduced
- provides a conclusion about whether the impacts are acceptable and justified.

The revised, final EIS will propose one alignment which will be chosen based on factors including:

- place outcomes such as improved safety and wellbeing, enhanced access, improved landscaping and community cohesion
- community and stakeholder feedback
- potential environmental and social benefits and impacts.

Stage 2B will require the following statutory environmental and planning approvals from both the Australian and ACT governments:

- Approval of environmental impacts under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth)
- Planning and environmental approval under the *Planning Act 2023* (ACT)
- Works approval from the National Capital Authority (NCA) under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* (Cth)
- Approval for elements in the Parliamentary Zone under the *Parliament Act 1974* (Cth).

Environmental approvals pathway

Ongoing community and stakeholder engagement

Environmental Assessment applications lodged

A Preliminary Assessment of potential project impacts is submitted to the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and Territory Planning Authority (TPA).

Environmental assessment requirements

DCCEEW issues a decision on whether an EIS is required, and TPA issues the EIS scoping requirements to guide what needs to be included in the EIS.

Site surveys and investigations

Undertake field surveys and investigations to inform the development of the EIS technical reports, design development and construction planning.

Prepare Draft EIS

Finalise technical reports and prepare EIS for lodgement with DCCEEW and TPA.

WE ARE HERE

Public exhibition of Draft EIS

An opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the Light Rail 2B project EIS in a formal submission to DCCEEW and TPA.

Review and respond

Submissions reviewed and responded to by Infrastructure Canberra.

Prepare revised, final EIS with one alignment, that includes updates to address concerns and suggestions in submissions.

Assessment and determination

Final assessment of the EIS by DCCEEW and TPA.

Completion of EIS process

The Australian and ACT governments will determine if the project can proceed and if so, under what conditions. The final EIS will also be made publicly available.

Following completion of the EIS process, the project will progress to Development Application approval, Parliamentary approval and Works Approval.

EIS findings

Heritage

Construction will occur in a highly sensitive landscape recognised for its cultural, heritage and social values. While the project isn't expected to directly impact any known First Nations heritage sites, the region has many important elements of Aboriginal cultural heritage. These include the Molonglo River, the geology of the State Circle Cutting, Kurrajong (Capital) Hill, and the site of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy which is noted as important due to its political significance to First Nations people.

There are more than 30 heritage sites across the project area, including historic buildings, landscapes and natural heritage associated with establishing Canberra as Australia's capital city, such as Old Parliament House, Lake Burley Griffin and the Parliament House vista.

Significant heritage places and attributes include the underlying geometry and symbolism of the Griffin Plan for Canberra, connections and relationships between places, landscape design elements such as the Weston Plantings, the lake, trees, topography, road layouts, vistas, significant buildings and memorials and structures.

Expected change

Construction

- Indirect impacts to First Nations and cultural heritage values for the Molonglo River are expected due to the construction of the light rail bridge over the heritage-listed Lake Burley Griffin.
- There are potential impacts to the heritage-listed Parliament House vista, including the placement of light rail infrastructure, loss of the historic road section and tree removal.
- Trees will be removed across the project area, including at the heritage-listed Canberra Croquet Clubhouse and Lawns, and along Commonwealth Avenue.
- Mature oak trees would be removed and driveways reconfigured at the heritage-listed Hotel Kurrajong (National Triangle–Barton alignment only).

Operation

- Light rail vehicles and infrastructure would create a direct impact to the Parliament House vista and Hotel Kurrajong (National Triangle-Barton alignment only).
- Light rail infrastructure would directly impact Lake Burley Griffin and the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge.

Management approaches

- Workers would undergo cultural awareness training, so they know what to do if they find items significant to First Nations people.
- Heritage specialists will guide:
  - The development of initiatives that will manage the impact on national heritage sites, including heritage-sensitive landscaping, interpretive signage and operational lighting.
  - Conservation management plans that protect heritage values during construction.
  - The use of protective buffers and demarcation around heritage areas, items and trees during construction.
- Oak trees will be retained or replanted. The National Triangle-Barton alignment will be designed to fit with the heritage landscape and reduce the permanent visual impact on Old Parliament House.
- Parking bays (and parked cars and buses which impact the view) will be removed from in front of Old Parliament House to make way for light rail vehicles.

Landscape character and visual impact

As a world-renowned planned city, Canberra's landmarks are instantly recognisable. Stage 2B has been designed to minimise potential visual impact on the city's views, landscape and planned geometry, particularly around Lake Burley Griffin and the National Triangle.

To evaluate the project's potential impacts, views to and from 29 key locations have been assessed, including those of Commonwealth Avenue, Parliament House and Barton.

Expected change	Management approaches
Construction ■ Of the trees assessed as part of the EIS, the State Circle East alignment option would see around 700 removed while the alternative option could result in some additional trees removed. ■ The views and landscape would be temporarily impacted during construction work. **Operation** ■ Light rail would change the views around Parliament House, Lake Burley Griffin, the National Triangle, Old Parliament House and Albert Hall. ■ The new bridge across Lake Burley Griffin will change the view.	■ To ensure Canberra's favourite views have substantial foliage as soon as possible, seedlings are already growing in a nursery offsite and will be replanted as advanced trees (as was the case on Light Rail Stage 1). ■ Light rail has been planned to integrate with the landscape (e.g. 'green tracks' laid with grass or other low-lying plants) and minimise the change to the view. ■ Existing transport corridors along Commonwealth Avenue and Adelaide Avenue will be used to minimise changes to the landscape. ■ Light rail stop locations have been planned to minimise impact to landscape and visual heritage. ■ Light rail will be wire-free between Commonwealth Park to Hopetoun Circuit. This will help minimise the change in view within the National Triangle and Parliamentary Precinct.

Biodiversity

Many areas of native and non-native vegetation exist on the alignment, particularly along Commonwealth Avenue, State Circle, Adelaide Avenue and Yarra Glen. The project area includes five broad types of vegetation, including:

- Tablelands dry tussock grassland
- non-local native plantings
- local native plantings
- exotic landscape plantings
- grassland

Vegetation and habitat surveys have been completed, as well as targeted surveys for protected and threatened animals. Surveys have not identified any threatened plant species or endangered ecological communities in areas likely to be disturbed by the project.

Expected change

Construction

- Both alignment options would require the removal of around 21.2 hectares of exotic grassland, less than a hectare of non-local native ground cover and around nine hectares of native and exotic landscaping.
- Up to 126 mature native trees would be lost (up to 19 of which contain tree hollows potentially used by wildlife).
- The habitats of the following threatened species would be damaged:
  - **Golden Sun Moth:** Up to 9.64 hectares likely resulting in a significant impact on the species.
  - **Gang-gang Cockatoo:** Up to 5.64 hectares. Around 5 or 6 breeding trees would be removed, significantly affecting the species.
  - **Superb Parrot:** Up to 5.64 hectares, potentially interfering with the species' recovery.
  - **Diamond Firetail:** Up to 5.64 hectares, mostly used as transitory or connecting habitat.
  - **Swift Parrot:** One critical tree (a mature Mugga ironbark) in the Parliament House precinct may be removed, but due to the species' low visitation to the ACT, this is unlikely to significantly impact the species.
  - **Grey-headed Flying Fox:** The colony at Commonwealth Park may be disturbed during construction due to noise, vibration and lighting, but significant impacts are unlikely.
- Field surveys indicate that habitats for the Perunga Grasshopper and Striped Legless Lizard won't be affected.

Management approaches

- A Biodiversity Management Plan will be prepared to minimise native biodiversity impact.
- A Biodiversity Offset Strategy has been developed to minimise biodiversity impacts through ongoing design development.
- Approximately 8.5 hectares of Golden Sun Moth habitat and approximately 15 hectares of Gang-gang Cockatoo and Superb Parrot foraging habitat have been avoided during design development.
- Clearance footprints and biodiversity values will be mapped and biodiversity-sensitive areas marked.
- Ecologists and animal spotters will be on-site to provide advice and take corrective actions during activities that could affect protected species.
- Tree clearing near Gang-gang Cockatoo breeding trees will be limited to non-breeding periods, unless guided by an ecologist.
- Indirect impacts caused by noise, vibration, surface water runoff, lighting and animals hitting light rail vehicles will be managed to minimise overall biodiversity impact.
- Habitat and connectivity will be enhanced through landscaping, with local native plant species used that are suitable for the Golden Sun Moth, Superb Parrot and Gang-gang Cockatoo.
- Vegetation clearance impacts during construction will be managed and potentially reduced to avoid harm to species including the Golden Sun Moth, Gang-gang Cockatoo and Superb Parrot.
- Mature native trees, especially those with hollows, will be retained and protected, where possible.
- Lower impact areas like car parks will be used for construction rather than undisturbed habitats.

Traffic and transport

Canberra is often praised for its clear roads and smooth-flowing traffic but expected population growth will result in future congestion-related delays if nothing is done. The ACT Government has used the city's projected population growth figures and traffic modelling for 2031 and 2041 to assess the road network. The modelled traffic without Light Rail Stage 2B shows a significant increase in peak-hour traffic congestion across Canberra, as well as longer car and bus travel times. Stage 2B would provide Canberrans with more public transport choice, helping to reduce traffic congestion into the future.

Expected change

Construction

- Areas such as Commonwealth Avenue, State Circle and Adelaide Avenue would experience temporary disruption, speed limit changes and road closures.
- Alternative routes such as King Edward Terrace and Bowen Drive would see increased traffic.
- Car travel times during peak hours could increase by more than five minutes on the most affected routes.
- Some parking spaces would be temporarily unavailable.

Operation

- The road network, including affected roads, lanes, intersections and car parking spaces, may be permanently changed.

Management approaches

- Traffic, transport and active travel impacts will be minimised, with details outlined in a Transport Management Plan.
- A multi-agency Traffic and Transport Liaison Group will oversee and review traffic changes during construction.
- Access to properties would change but will be maintained at all times.
- Additional parking measures will be considered, such as limiting construction worker parking to specified areas parks.
- Once operational, Stage 2B will offer rides for an additional 2,400 people every hour in each direction in the City to Woden corridor, with services every five minutes during the morning peak.
- The project would assist in reducing traffic congestion along the corridor by offering a transport choice that is not affected by road-based congestion.
- The project will improve active travel connections for Canberrans which is known to improve wellbeing.

Socioeconomic

Construction of city-shaping infrastructure can create major social and economic outcomes. The EIS looks at the possible socioeconomic benefits and impacts of the project in areas along and around the proposed alignments, including those on employment and community wellbeing.

Engagement with businesses through surveys and one-on-one discussions has identified potential business opportunities and concerns.

Expected change

Construction

- Local residents and businesses would be temporarily disrupted due to traffic network changes and environmental impacts (like noise, vibration, and air pollution) during construction, impacting health and wellbeing.
- Changes to the landscape and heritage could impact the overall experience and sense of belonging for people in the area.
- Temporary changes in access to cultural events in the area was identified as a potential impact due to the surrounding construction.
- Employment resources may be strained due to increased demand for skilled labour. However, the local economy would benefit from the employment and training opportunities.

Operation

- Offering an efficient and reliable transport option would support health and wellbeing outcomes and provide benefits to the community through increased connectivity.
- Access to social, cultural, educational and recreational activities and places would be improved.
- Community safety would be enhanced by including safety features in the design such as Gender Sensitive Urban Design initiatives.
- The project would facilitate urban development and enable key government projects.

Management approaches

- A Community Engagement and Social Management Plan, including a Business and Labour Strategy will be developed to manage socioeconomic impacts for those living and working along the proposed light rail alignment routes.
- Project outcomes will be improved with guidance from the project's Community Reference Group.
- Tailored measures will be developed in consultation with event organisers to minimise construction impacts to major events.

Water

Stage 2B spans four sub-catchments that drain through Lake Burley Griffin into the Molonglo River and eventually into the Murrumbidgee River.

The Mitchell Depot site drains separately via Sullivans Creek into Lake Burley Griffin.

Flood modelling conducted includes an assessment on the effects of climate change on the project, drainage issues and any potential changes in flooding characteristics. Modelling has not identified any significant changes to flood levels and, in some areas, improvements are predicted due to improved drainage.

Expected change

Construction

- Released groundwater may affect large excavation works, such as those between Commonwealth Avenue and State Circle (State Circle East alignment only). This could lead to rainwater or groundwater, which could contain pollutants filling the excavated areas. These impacts, if experienced, would be temporary and localised.
- Construction activities such as earthworks, bridge construction and vegetation removal could lead to surface water pollution.
- Water quality in Lake Burley Griffin may be affected due to sediment disturbance and accidental spills caused by construction.
- Construction sites like compounds and material storage areas could change flood flow paths, potentially causing erosion, waterlogging in public spaces and changes to water flow characteristics.

Operation

- The project would increase hard surfaces, leading to higher surface water pollutant loads, an estimated 5% to 6% increase in pollutants for the State Circle East alignment and a 3% increase for the National Triangle–Barton alignment.
- The project is designed to minimise changes to hydrology and flooding. Most changes in flood depths are expected to be minimal and within the conservative estimates of flood modelling.

Management approaches

Groundwater

- Groundwater intercepted during excavation would be collected, managed and transported offsite for treatment and reuse or disposal.

Water quality

- Common erosion and sedimentation control measures typically applied to major construction sites would be used during construction. To protect Lake Burley Griffin, the surface water quality-management approach would include detailed measures to monitor and manage water quality.
- Water-sensitive urban design will be used to reduce impact to water quality and flood levels and minimise the release of pollutants.

Flooding

- A Surface Water and Groundwater Plan will be developed to minimise flooding risks during construction.
- Ongoing project design will seek to minimise material adverse changes in flood characteristics along and around the Project.

Noise and vibration

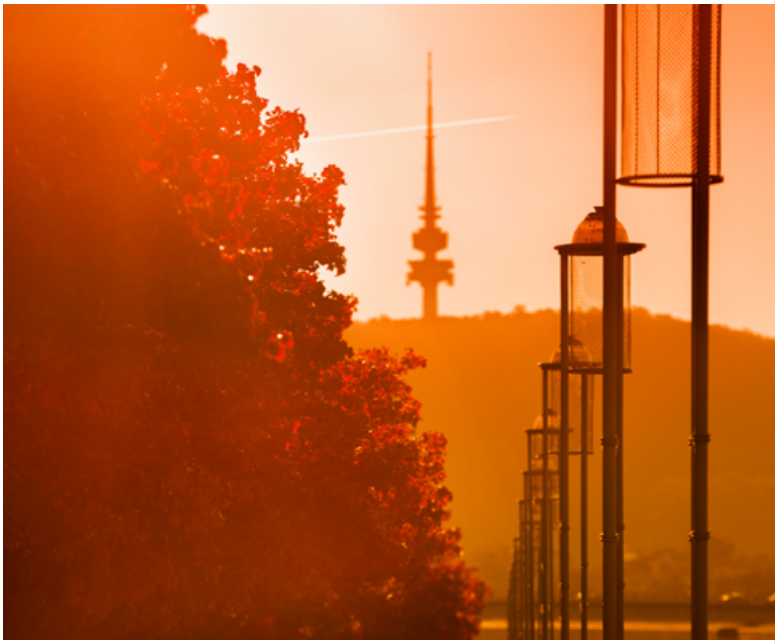
When building infrastructure in a city, it's difficult to avoid construction noise and vibration completely. Worst-case noise and vibration from light rail vehicles, construction activities, and the light rail depot in Mitchell have been modelled. This includes evaluations of expected variations in road traffic noise due to road network changes.

Expected change	Management approaches
Construction ■ Nearby residents and businesses may experience construction noise. ■ Important heritage areas such as Old Parliament House, Albert Hall and sites in the National Triangle may experience indirect vibration. ■ Construction traffic would temporarily increase existing road traffic noise. ■ Animals like Gang-gang Cockatoos and Grey-headed Flying Foxes in Commonwealth Park may be affected by major construction noise and vibration impacts.	■ A Noise and Vibration Management Plan will be created. ■ Work will be scheduled during standard construction hours, where possible. ■ Particularly noisy activities will be scheduled outside of noise-sensitive periods where possible and will include breaks. ■ Minimum separation distances will be enforced to protect from construction vibration, with monitoring and construction methods chosen to minimise impacts. ■ Measures will be implemented to manage construction vibration, including condition surveys, vibration testing and monitoring.

Other environmental assessments

Other assessments completed as part of the draft EIS include:

- Soil and contamination
- Land use and property
- Air quality
- Materials, waste and resources
- Climate change risk
- Greenhouse gas
- Hazards and risk.



Public exhibition of the draft EIS

How to have your say

The community is invited to review the draft EIS and make a submission. The EIS will then be revised to consider all matters raised.

Read the Environmental Impact Statement Submissions Guide or visit **act.gov.au/builtforcbr** to find out how to make a submission.

Where can I view the draft EIS?

Printed draft EIS documents

The draft EIS is available to view until the close of the public exhibition period at:

- Civic Library (Civic Square, London Circuit, Canberra City)
- Dickson Library (Antill Street, Dickson)
- Gungahlin Library (Corner of Hibberson and Gozzard Streets, Gungahlin)
- Tuggeranong Library (Cowlishaw Street, Greenway)
- Woden Library (Corinna Street, Phillip).

Online

Under the EPBC Act, Infrastructure Canberra has published the draft EIS. You can view the draft EIS at **act.gov.au/builtforcbr**.

Under the Planning Act, the draft EIS is displayed on the TPA's website at **planning.act.gov.au**

Visit the digital EIS platform

- Watch videos
- See the schedule of drop-in information sessions where you can speak to a member of the project team
- Explore the interactive map
- Read the EIS Submission Guide

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Contact us

For more information about the Light Rail to Woden Project, you can visit our website or contact the project team:

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To speak to someone in a language other than English, telephone the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) **13 14 50**. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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