

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **A space for the community and a community with lots of space – there’s more land for community facilities in Canberra than you thought**

New research has identified over 960 hectares of underutilised community facility zoned (CFZ) land across Canberra that if developed to just 50 per cent of the footprint of each block, would unlock an area the size of O’Connor for community use.

Demand for CFZ land in Canberra significantly exceeds supply. A new report, delivered by the Centre For A Better Canberra at the University of Canberra, shows that simple policy changes can improve this, benefiting local not-for-profits (NFP), community groups, elderly citizens and more.

“Our research has uncovered widespread underutilisation of already allocated CFZ land. Through adjustments to policy settings, those lands could host new and better facilities and cater to a broader range of users,” said Professor Chris Wallace, Academic Director of the Centre For A Better Canberra.

Every year, the ACT Government releases only a small amount of land for community use – this year, around 2.3 hectares – through an expression of interest (EOI) process.

At the same time underutilised CFZ sites – often a small building in poor repair with a modest carpark attached – are commonplace.

“The lack of CFZ land has adverse community consequences. Not-for-profit (NFP) aged care providers, for example, can’t compete with commercial purchasers for land, pricing out the delivery of new community facilities,” said Professor Wallace.

Affordable community spaces are vital to connection and wellbeing. Currently, the needs of emerging ethnic and cultural groups are not met and the development of indoor sporting and other community facilities is constrained.

As housing affordability continues to be a national issue, younger Canberrans are growing increasingly isolated. There are also aged care and supported housing needs to be met and a need for more places of shelter and security in the face of increasing extreme weather events.

The Centre identified 10 key recommendations to enhance community outcomes including:

- The facilitation of partnerships between CFZ leaseholders and NFPs, to better develop and manage community facilities.
- Open, productive discussions around tax incentives, to understand whether the current tax settings are fit for purpose.

- Integration of different community uses on single CFZ sites, including combining childcare centres with aged care facilities, incorporating community gardens and recreational areas, supportive housing, sporting facilities and climate shelters.

What would this look like in practice? The Centre has also reimagined what contemporary community facilities could look like:

- Youth social isolation could be reduced, and neighbourhood vitality increased by turning the site of a long-derelict building in Ainslie into a 'community front room'.
- Quality of life for an ageing community in Kambah was transformed by looking at community facilities collectively rather than as individual blocks with a dementia village.
- A 'social mixed-use precinct' at the Salvation Army site in Braddon could provide social enterprise space in a high-rent commercial neighbourhood.

The report, including the full list of recommendations, is available for [review](#).

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