

CONNECT UP #2617: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND CO-DESIGN

REPORT

Outcomes of local community consultation and co-design workshops undertaken in the suburbs of Bruce and Belconnen, April - July 2024

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CONTENTS

Contents	2
Introduction	3
Rationale for pilot	4
Co-design Program	4
Stage 1: Establishment of Working Group	4
Stage 2: Community Consultation	5
Stage 3: Co-design workshops (x 2)	5
Consultation Findings	5
Working Group: Identification of issues	5
Consultation Themes: from interviews, survey and small discussion groups	6
Ideas/Opportunities	12
Co-design Workshop Outcomes	13
Agreed Problem Statement	13
Agreed High-level Concept	13
Agreed Top Activities	13
Agreed Participants and Partners	14
‘Community Connector’ duties, skills and behaviours (from consultations and co-design)	15
How can the community continue to be involved in the rollout?	15
How can the program support people to make their ideas a reality?	16
Conclusion	16
Attachment A: Stakeholder Engagement through Consultation	17
Attachment B: Consultation and co-design ideas for activities	19
Public/Commercial Space Activation	19
Events and activities	19
Clubs and groups	20
Whole of Program ideas – connective tissue	20
Communication suggestions	21

INTRODUCTION

Connect Up #2617 is a local initiative developed by and for Belconnen and Bruce communities to trial sustainable ways for residents aged between 18-30 to meaningfully connect, create and share experiences, and develop a sense of community belonging. The initiative is part of a research and evaluation program run by the University of Canberra's Health Research Institute (HRI).

The approach for *Connect Up #2617* was developed by local residents, stakeholders and community service providers in Bruce and Belconnen in April – July 2024, in a process run by the HRI project Team supported by local consultancy Communication Link. This collaborative process involved:

- *Appointment of a 12-person Working Group* that broadly represents the diverse community of people aged 18-30 in these suburbs; first workshop was held with this group in April 2024 to help frame the consultation process;
- *Community consultation* in May-June 2024, where over 140 Belconnen and Bruce residents and representatives of community organisations contributed through a survey, meetings, interviews and small discussion groups;
- *Two co-design workshops* involving the Working Group and selected consultation participants on 27 June and 5 July 2024. The design and delivery of these workshops was supported by Communication Link, who also assisted in consultation recruitment and facilitation.

This co-design process produced the outline of a multi-layered project that will run locally from August 2024 to August 2025 and will include:

- *Community-wide advocacy, stakeholder engagement, project oversight and communication*: to build sustainable partnerships and local changes to increase greater local promotion of events, programs and services and opportunities for connection for 18-30 year olds;
- *Community governance and oversight*: through a Project Working Group comprising residents aged 18-30 years; and a Community Reference/Advisory Group;
- *Community Connectors*: 6-8 part-time/casual 'Community Connectors' who will work with residents, with Community Governance and HRI project team to link and promote existing local programs and services for 18-30 year olds and initiate new activities; and
- *Community Initiators*: support of local residents who want to volunteer to initiate new clubs, regular activities or social gatherings.

Throughout the development and delivery of this pilot, the HRI team will evaluate the outcomes and success of its various components to contribute to knowledge about effective local interventions to address loneliness amongst 18–30-year-olds, and to embed sustainable approaches that will ensure long-term benefits to the local community.

This report outlines the rationale for the pilot, together with the purpose, process and outcomes of the consultation and co-design process that led to the creation of the *Connect Up #2617* model.

RATIONALE FOR PILOT

Connect Up #2617 is funded through the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF), as part of a larger grant around the social determinants of health in Australia.

The premise of the grant was to trial and evaluate interventions to address loneliness in specific cohorts. Loneliness and social isolation are international public health issues, recognised as significant threats to public health and as important areas of focus for the prevention of mental and physical ill-health. Despite extensive (and growing) research into loneliness, there is a shortage of research and evaluation into effective interventions.

This pilot is targeted to the cohorts and areas of greatest need and potential benefit. The [Living Well in the ACT Region Survey](#)¹, conducted annually for the ACT government by the HRI, has measured the incidence of loneliness amongst adults living in the ACT since 2019. This data shows that in the ACT, the highest rates of loneliness were reported by those aged 18-29 (13.6% in 2023) and those aged 30-40 (11.2% in 2023). Bruce and Belconnen have high populations of young people aged 18-30; for example, 38% and 33% of the populations of Belconnen and Bruce, respectively, were aged between 20-29 in the 2021 Census, whereas this age group only made up 16% of the population ACT-wide².

CO-DESIGN PROGRAM

Stage 1: Establishment of Working Group

A 12-person Working Group was formed to represent the diverse community and ensure the program aligns with the needs of young adults in the area.

The Working Group sought to establish local ownership of the program; ensure that the pilot is aligned to the needs and interests of young people aged 18-30 who live or work in Belconnen and Bruce; contribute local knowledge and lived experience of services and support networks and advocate for the project through personal and professional networks.

Members of the original Working Group are included in the list of consultation stakeholders at **Attachment A**.

¹ Schirmer, J. and Dale, M. (2024). Living well in the ACT region – User Guide February 2024. University of Canberra, Canberra. DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.20756.07045

² Bruce: 2021 Census All persons QuickStats. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/801011003>

² Belconnen: 2021 Census All persons QuickStats. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL80024>

Stage 2: Community Consultation

Over 140 residents and representatives participated in surveys, interviews, and discussion groups to share their experiences of social connection and disconnection.

Participants included domestic students and part-time workers; international students and part-time workers; full-time and part-time professionals; recent arrivals who are working or studying remotely; and users of youth services. They included residents living alone, with partners, or partners and children, and those living with parents and siblings; renters and owner-occupiers in apartments, townhouses and semi-detached houses. Participants included domestic and international residents from India, Bhutan, Vietnam, Uganda and Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Meetings were held with stakeholders including Belconnen Community Council, Belconnen Arts Centre, Belconnen Alliance of High-living Apartments (BAHA) and Mingle (Suburban land Agency).

Stage 3: Co-design workshops (x 2)

Two workshops were held with the Working Group and selected participants to design the pilot program. These workshops, held for two half days on 27 June and 5 July 2024, aimed to create a collaborative approach to improving social connections for young residents. 20 participants attended workshop A and 19 attended Workshop B.

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Working Group: Identification of issues

In the Working Group's inaugural workshop, participants identified several overarching causes of social isolation in Bruce and Belconnen:

Overarching Causes	Contributing Factors
Inadequate community assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of destination points in the area• Lack of spaces to gather• Mall is the main meeting place• Only the mall is accessible by public transport• Spaces are designed to exclude young people, prejudice about 'loitering' etc• Existing playgrounds not maintained well – and do not cater for young people• Weather a barrier for outdoor activities
Urban design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many high-density apartment blocks in Belconnen that can make it hard to connect with neighbours

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Bruce and new Bruce are very different places • Poor connectivity such as walking and cycling routes • Amenity in new Bruce caters for workers, not residents • UC and CIT accommodation services are problematic for loneliness
Lack of activities and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness about existing activities and services • Stigma about community services only designed for 'vulnerable' people • People age out of existing programs at 25 • Immigrant families and young people may be hard to reach due to cultural barriers • Lack of funding and resources for the community sector • Services are spread out and disconnected • Communication to students at UC/CIT is difficult and fragmented
Lack of 'social muscle' and social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges with emotional wellbeing and mental health • Fear of rejection • Fear of how others will respond to you • It takes courage to put yourself out there • Language barriers • Reliance on technology • Working from home reduces connection opportunities • Canberra is a hard place to make connections • Students don't talk to each other
Lack of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long working hours • Less free time for young people in the workforce after studying • Transport to nightlife places takes time and money • Working on weekends when social opportunities happen • Pressure on young people with study performance – too busy for socialising
Lack of money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going out costs money, especially if travel to the city is needed • Main local meeting place is the mall and that costs money
Life transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people lose connection with past friends from previous life stages such as school • Many young people move here for work or study • Transition into adulthood can be challenging, particularly for young people that have not developed skills for independence • Migrants from other parts of the world with upheaval, culture shock and cultural/language barriers

Consultation Themes: from interviews, survey and small discussion groups

'Cliques' Canberra

One common observation from interviews, groups, and the survey was the 'cliquey' nature of Canberra, making it hard to 'break in' even for lifelong residents. Participants noted that people often stuck to pre-determined groups and were reluctant to include others. Socializing was often limited to regular activities like

gym classes, and certain cultures, such as the APS, ACT Government, and universities, were seen as inward-looking and impenetrable. Knowing someone on the 'inside' was crucial for making connections. Additionally, 'not knowing what was going on' was a frequent complaint due to the fragmented and fast-paced communication channels in the community.

Cultural Shifts

Ongoing COVID impacts

The profound and ongoing impact of COVID lockdowns arose spontaneously throughout many conversations. These impacts outlined by participants included changed behaviours about making the effort to go out, as *“even though it’s over, it’s never really over”*, and that it’s easier now to *“stay in, watch a movie, have your shopping delivered right to your door”*. It was felt by many that things hadn’t fully bounced back after COVID, and that places were closing or offering limited options with limited hours (which may also result from cost of living). The impact of Covid disrupting those crucial school and university years where friendships are usually made was also noted, all reflecting a profound shift in sociability.

Connection beyond – or without – alcohol

For a wide range of cultural, cost of living and health reasons, residents were not seeking more bars or pubs to drink alcohol – in fact if they were just *‘places to drink’* without being welcoming or having other activities, there was little interest in spending time or money there. Some residents highlighted they wanted to attend small or large-scale activities that were active (such as yoga), were more interested in daytime or brunch activities than late nights, and wanted activities or communal spaces and activities that were based on interests and connection, not alcohol.

Social media isn’t connection

Social media was noted in passing in some consultations, not as an obvious cause of loneliness but in the context of recognising that connection on social media did not necessarily mean friendship, and that connection was not always authentic.

Cost of Living

The cost of living, and the costs of ‘going out’ to meet others or attend events, was a constant theme throughout the consultations across the board, from young professionals to students. This was mentioned in relation to: costs of public transport; the appeal of free food and drink; the prohibitive costs of going out paying for event tickets or entry fees; membership fees for sports seasons or clubs, which was mentioned numerous times as a barrier to participation; and most importantly on the need to work multiple jobs to make ends meet, which impacted on the time, energy and capacity of people socialising or meeting new friends.

The Age of Transition

The transient nature of the years between school, university, and more unstructured lives was a common theme. Many consultation participants were new to Canberra, with 75% of the 76 survey respondents having lived in Belconnen or Bruce for less than three years and 11% for less than five years. Ages 24-30 were particularly noted as periods of great transition, with people moving in and out of Canberra for work and friendship groups changing due to partnering, having children, or shifting from university to professional life. Residents also discussed the loss of structured opportunities for socializing after school and the lack of similar scaffolding at universities. The transition from university to the workplace was significant, involving new responsibilities, full-time hours, and colleagues at different life stages.

Connection, Not Loneliness

There was almost universal consensus on the language of loneliness – that this program should not be about loneliness, it should be about connection. Residents thought the pilot should be framed positively, not negatively. The responses to loneliness, and to admitting to loneliness, were strong. These included that if you admitted to being lonely it was ‘depressing’; that going to an event to alleviate loneliness may be seen as ‘weird’ or ‘desperate’. It was also suggested by many participants that ‘connection’ should not be a reason or stated purpose in itself; that this should be a byproduct or ‘something that happened alongside’ activities clustered around common interests, fun or recreation. These activities give a reason for the connection.

Trying to Meet People Can Be Tough

Young professionals often spoke about the 'exhaustion' of trying to meet people at one-off events, fearing they'd be the only one attending or out of place due to age differences. They desired regular, low-pressure activities that built over time and justified their emotional investment. Knowing the target age group and expected attendance was important, as was the ability to join existing activities without pressure to return. Participants emphasized the importance of having at least one friend to go with or someone to meet up with. Many also felt the absence of simple gestures like friendly waves, nods, or smiles from neighbours.

Desire for Community

Residents expressed a desire for a friendlier, more connected community in Bruce and Belconnen. While some appreciated the quiet suburbs, they wondered where the people were, including their neighbours, noting the lack of activity and safety concerns at night. They found Westfield's shops useful but lacking a broader community purpose. Many residents wanted a community-oriented café or space for gatherings, such as book clubs or knitting groups, where they could meet friends without spending much money and stay open until 8:30 pm.

Urban design issues were highlighted, including structural disconnection and a lack of community meeting spaces. However, some appreciated the friendly atmosphere in areas with open front gardens and minimal fencing, allowing for neighbourly interactions. Others noted the absence of connection, only seeing neighbours as they entered their homes from their cars.

Strengths

Belconnen and Bruce assets

Community asset mapping will be undertaken at a more granular level by the UC *Connect Up #2617* team and Connect Workers. However initial assets identified by consultation participants included the below:

- Community/associations
 - Belconnen Community Council
 - Belconnen Alliance of High-living Apartments
 - Capital Region Community Services, including Belconnen Youth Centre
- Institutions
 - University of Canberra (specifically UC Food Pantry, UC Bar, sports grounds, UC events, Library, Esports Gaming Lounge, UC Gym, on-campus activities if they're held)
 - Canberra Institute of Technology
 - Belconnen Library

- Australian Government and ACT Government departments (Belconnen)
- Churches
- Physical (natural and built environments)

The walkability, access to bushland, Lake Ginninderra and good cycle paths were noted by some as strengths of Belconnen and Bruce that supported outdoor recreation and exercise. Other assets included:

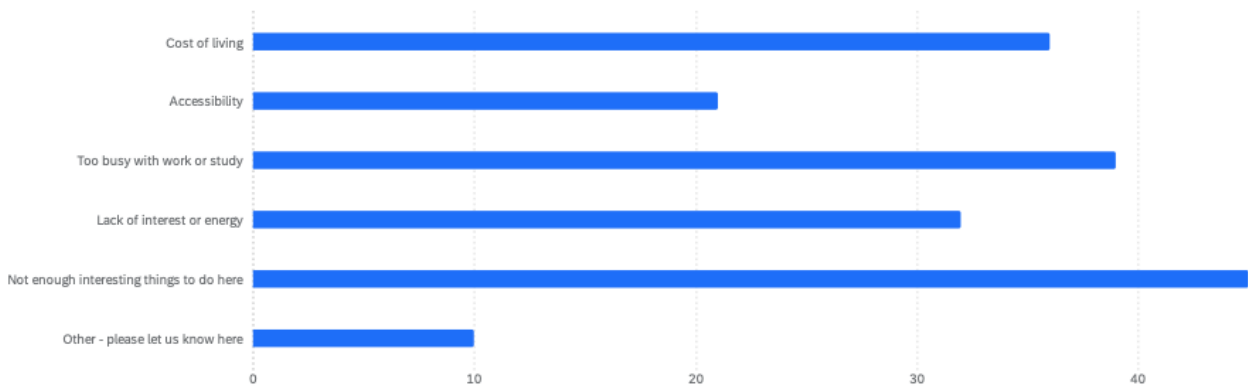
 - Lake Ginninderra (which many residents suggested was under-utilised), including ParkRun
 - Spider playground
 - Walkability of the suburbs
 - Great bike paths and good footpaths
 - Access to the bush
 - Easy access to facilities and services (Belconnen)
 - Margaret Timson Park, around Belconnen Library
 - GIO Stadium
 - AIS
 - John Knight Park
 - Belconnen Skatepark
 - High-rise apartments – Oracle, Dusk/Republic, Sentinel, Wayfarer, Linq, Altitude, Cirrus, High Society
 - Netball courts behind Lake Ginninderra school
 - CISAC
- Economic
 - Westfield Belconnen (including free parking)
 - Capital Region Markets
 - Retailers and hospitality outlets in Bruce and Belconnen (details to come)
 - Café Momo (Bruce) – this was mentioned as the ‘only place’ to gather in Bruce
 - Live music venues in Belconnen (PotBelly, the Basement)
 - Labor Club
 - Lasertag, Bowling
 - The Lighthouse Pub
- Cultural
 - Belco Arts
 - Hoyts (in Westfield)
 - Lots of good multicultural food options in Belconnen

Survey respondents believed that being free or low cost, fun, accessible by car or public transport and being non-judgmental were the elements that made places or activities effective in helping young people connect with others.

Challenges

Responses to the challenges to connection in these suburbs were consistent across the consultations and the survey, with busy schedules, lack of things to do, cost of living and accessibility (including poor transport options) frequently mentioned and ranking high in survey responses. These issues combined may also impact on the ‘lack of interest or energy’ option ticked by over 50% of survey respondents. These issues are explored in more depth below.

What do you think are the barriers to young people aged 18-30 connecting with others in Bruce or Belconnen? (tick as many as apply) 61 ⓘ



Connect Up #2617 Survey Table 1

Time, money and energy in short supply

Consultations revealed that busy lives and full schedules, combined with a lack of welcoming places, high cost of living, and accessibility issues, made socialising difficult. Graduates and early career professionals found balancing full-time jobs and adjusting to adult life exhausting, with conflicting schedules adding to the challenge. Meeting new people often felt like another chore. International students, in particular, struggled to connect due to working multiple jobs while studying, making it hard to align schedules with friends. This was seen as a barrier to meeting domestic students, who were perceived to have fewer work pressures.

Public Transport

Public transport was mentioned by those without cars as a challenge in getting out and about. Bruce particularly was not well served by public transport, with residents noting that catching multiple buses to get to work or take part in activities added hours to the day. This reinforces the need for activities 'in-place'.

It was also noted that new arrivals to Canberra living in Belconnen, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, often found public transport the biggest challenge - the cost of transport is prohibitive and the system is hard to navigate without mentorship or support from a caseworker. This contributed to greater social isolation for this cohort.

Cultural Barriers

International students and new arrivals felt Canberra's 'cliqueyness' acutely, facing cultural barriers that alienated them from making local friends, such as:

- Fear of not understanding social cues or Australian accents.
- Moving from densely populated cities with strong social ties to quiet suburbs with unwelcoming neighbours.
- Lack of religious, spiritual, or cultural events, which are frequent in home countries like India.

Participants noted the stark contrast between their home countries' community-oriented cultures and Australia's 'time is money' approach, finding it alienating. Loneliness was intensified by families back home expecting them to have exciting experiences. Those in refugee support linked low English skills to social

isolation for asylum seekers and refugees, worsened by lack of money for public transport and poor knowledge of the system.

Safety

Safety was not an issue raised consistently in the consultations but some participants observed that Belconnen and Bruce were very quiet suburbs, especially at night, and although the peace was appreciated (access to the bush, walkability) the lack of people and activity at night (in Belconnen particularly) was unsettling for some and a deterrent from getting out and about.

Those living in apartments did not raise safety as a concern, although one participant noted that she was wary of being too friendly with neighbours, because *“if they’re weird I’m gonna have to see them all the time. That’s my worst nightmare”* (Belconnen resident). A few residents talked, unprompted, about their desire to at least know their close neighbours so that they could feel safer and know they could call on them in an emergency.

Identified Gaps

- Shortage of events, activities and things to do in Belconnen and Bruce
- No social run club in Belconnen or Bruce that caters to younger demographic
- No bushwalking clubs that caters for younger people
- Not enough events, including cultural fairs and festivals, markets
- A shortage of places to go – restaurants, cafes, activities – and very few places that open after 7.30, 8pm. Residents go to Braddon or Civic for things to do after work or after study. Many participants asked – *what is there to do here?*
- Participants noted the lack of cafes or venues that are open later, have a community feel, are community-focussed and don’t rotate around alcohol. They wanted more than just ‘places to drink’. Gang Gang café in Downer was mentioned in some groups and interviews as the ideal, neighbourly, community-focussed café/restaurant that would be a great community asset in Belconnen, as would a Belconnen version of the 24/7 café in Narrabundah (Kita).
- No community hall or central hub for free or low-cost activities
- No oval that facilitates dog playing, near café
- The Boardwalk café and Flazeda Hub were both inclusive spaces for the gender diverse/drag community. Now both closed, it was noted that no similar venues existed locally for this community.

Service gaps:

- Lack of services (ie youth centres) for people 25-30 years. It was noted by some that youth centres tended to attract people closer to 12 than 25.
- Lack of services for the ‘maintenance middle’ to maintain regular mental health for young people – they’re either for those at the start of the journey seeking mental health support (which may take many months to commence) or there are crisis services.
- Belconnen Library was mentioned by many as a place they wanted to be, but that they wanted it to be more of a community hub with bookclubs for their age group, boardgame nights or ‘Dungeons and Dragons’ nights.

Ideas/Opportunities

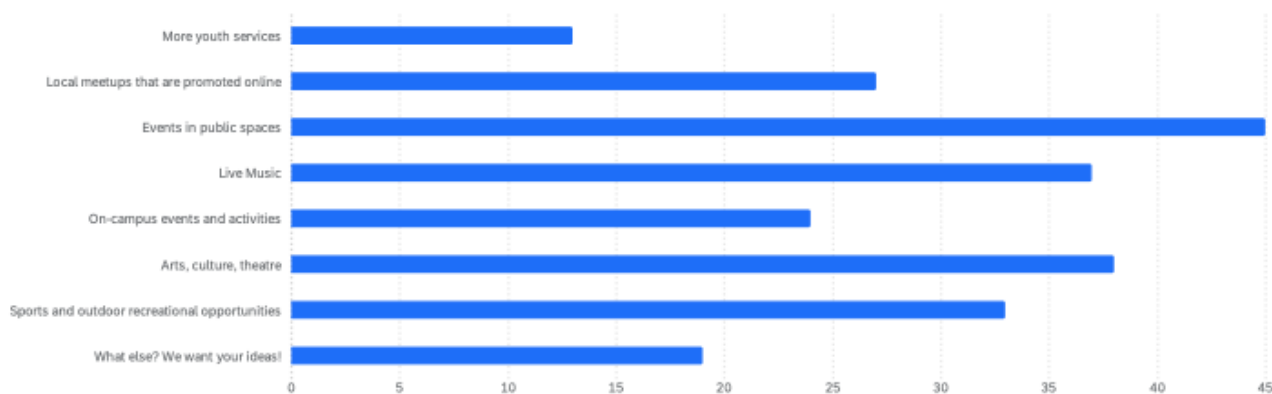
Diverse communities need diverse, layered approaches

It was noted by a number of older participants (28-30) that they feel very different to 18- or 19-year-olds, and that events and activities will need to be targeted to different cohorts of 18-24 and 25-30 year olds.

Similarly, participants highlighted the range of different interests and passions they would find appealing, from Dungeons and Dragons clubs to running clubs, sport watching parties, late night shopping events, bookclubs, picnics and movie nights. Although residents welcomed community-wide events such as markets on the Lake and activation of public spaces, they also detailed their unique and varied niche interests that would prompt them to connect with others.

The feedback suggested that a combination of hyperlocal (ie street activities; local park activations) and broader (ie Lake Ginninderra markets) activities were needed, together with more systemic program approaches such as advocacy, activation of volunteering bases and communications.

What programs, activities or resources would you want to see in these suburbs to encourage people aged 18-30 to connect with others? 58



Connect Up #2617 Survey Table 2

Space activation

Residents suggested a range of ways the physical environs of Belconnen, in particular, could be enlivened. The emphasis for all these activations, as with all the activities suggested at a more niche level, was on: regularity; consistency; and scaffolded development of activities over time. It was noted that the suburbs had some great green areas, and empty spaces that could be turned into more welcoming places. Spaces such as foyers or communal areas in apartment buildings in Belconnen were also raised as possibilities for regular gatherings for residents.

Ideas from the consultation regarding public space activation, events, activities and programs are detailed at **Attachment B**.

CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Over two weeks, in two separate workshops of a half day each, the co-design participants built on the consultation findings to scope out the core concepts and framework of the *Connect Up #2617* program, prioritise events and activities and agree on the desired characteristics of the Community Connectors. The outcomes of these workshops are below.

Agreed Problem Statement

Lack of meaningful social connection and a sense of belonging in community can contribute to loneliness. This is a significant global and local public health challenge, impacting individual and community wellbeing.

Research shows that people aged 18-30 experience the highest levels of loneliness in the ACT. Research also shows Bruce and Belconnen are the suburbs with high levels of social fragmentation in Canberra.

Agreed High-level Concept

Connect Up #2617 is a local initiative developed by and for Belconnen and Bruce communities to trial sustainable ways for residents aged between 18-30 to meaningfully connect, create and share experiences, and develop a sense of community belonging.

Agreed Top Activities

In the co-design workshops, lists of project ideas generated by the consultation were placed on the wall of the workshop space and placed into themes, with new ideas added as the workshops progressed. The group then voted on their top activities per theme.

The agreed top ideas for activities are listed below; the detailed list of ideas for activities that arose during the consultations are listed in full at **Attachment B**.

Health and fitness activities

- Nature walks
- Mindfulness
- Community games and sports
- Running clubs
- Yoga
- Work with AIS for cheap sports options
- Cycling club

Events

- Collective Belco open night plus night markets
- Movie nights at various locations
- Art in the park by Belco arts
- Community cooking events
- Cultural fairs
- Multicultural movie nights
- Theatre activities
- Hold a Connect Up market stall to learn about and sign up for activities

Groups

- Intergenerational groups for younger people to interact with older generations

Workshops and classes

- How to adult classes
- Handy works
-

- Board games
- Dog walking / play groups
- Book clubs

Places and spaces

- Illustrated Belconnen map of Connect up partners and spaces
- Lake Ginninderra
- Advocate for community spaces to be activated
- Community gathering spaces
- Community oriented café

Connect worker supports

- Buddy to go to activities with you and for coffee catch ups
- Motivational coaching
- Connect worker mobile outreach
- Connect workers embedded into every activity as a friendly face/host to welcome people

Volunteering

- Mentoring
- Build volunteering into Connect Up activities
- Volunteer to help run/facilitate classes and workshops

Cross program initiatives

- Build partnerships (universities, workplaces, community organisations, social activity providers, resident groups, sporting organisations, venues and more).

Place activations

- Markets on Lake Ginninderra
- Cafes/restaurants/bars/pubs
- Grazier Lane

Agreed Participants and Partners

Participants	Potential Partners
Belconnen and Bruce residents (existing) New residents of Belconnen and Bruce Migrant and refugee families International students People with disability, neurodiversity, mental ill health Families and parents Interest based segments – art, music, sports, books, computer games, board games etc People living in apartments and townhouses	Community clubs, interest groups, churches, playgroups etc Education providers – CIT, Navitas, Universities etc Cultural and migrant services Community services Local businesses Belco Arts

‘Community Connector’ duties, skills and behaviours (from consultations and co-design)

Participants identified the following as important characteristics for the roles and attributes of Community Connectors:

- Understand the community’s needs and aspirations. Connect people to each other, to the right spaces, to things they need; refer to services when needed. One-stop shops of local information
- Create safe, inclusive, welcoming spaces and culture; facilitate conversations, act as personal buddies or connectors, be friendly, engaging, non-judgmental
- Constant stakeholder development and engagement, develop and maintain partnerships, explore ideas and work to make program sustainable
- Facilitate access to the community; link volunteers and the wider community; have an active presence in events and activities
- Create ‘how to guides’ to help people run their own activities; build capacity for communities and individuals; undertake community asset mapping.
- Different connect workers for different roles, with different skills; located in different places throughout the week but consistent days and hours. Get out and about where people aged 18-30 are, and available after hours (5.30-7.30pm) or on weekends
- Highly organised with strong attention to detail; problem solving skills safety and competency training;
- Excellent communication skills; good time/ project management and coordination skills.
- Have cultural awareness, speak other languages; manage diverse groups and views and be sensitive to diverse perspectives
- Have high local knowledge, with understanding of referral networks and understanding of community development
- Undertake mental health awareness training; be aware of unsafe or illegal behaviours of others

How can the community continue to be involved in the rollout?

Accessible and ongoing feedback mechanisms	Good dissemination of information from different channels	WhatsApp group moderated for security and privacy
Ongoing working group meetings	Collaborations that are consistent and permanent	All community members can support delivery of events and gatherings
Build local ownership	Have small groups in universities/organisations/apartments who serve as a ‘link’ between people and Connect Workers (Connect groups)	

How can the program support people to make their ideas a reality?

Money	Mobile outreach and support – weekly spots	Roadmap of resources on how to host an event
Wiki How for Belconnen and Bruce	Advocating for people’s aspirations, supporting the development of ideas	Provide insurance coverage
Small grants, centralised promotion, logistics and support	Have website where people can create and join groups	Asset based community development, including asset mapping

CONCLUSION

The consultation and co-design process for *Connect Up #2617* yielded rich, honest and practical feedback that have been incorporated into the project design for the pilot which will commence delivery in Bruce and Belconnen in August 2024. The process aimed to ensure the model is aligned to the needs and interests of young people aged 18-30 who live in Belconnen and Bruce and is sustainable into the future.

Attachment A: Stakeholder Engagement through Consultation

ACT Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance	Working Group Member
ACT Office for Disability	Inclusion of content in newsletter promoting consultations
ACT Youth Advisory Council	Group consultation to come
Australian Government Department of Home Affairs	Central distribution of email to all graduates in graduate program
Belconnen Community Council	Working Group Member Presentation 21/5/24 Distribution of website link through newsletter
Belconnen Alliance of High-living Apartments (BAHA)	Discussion with Executive 5/6/24 Distribution of promotional material through member resident networks (Dusk/Republic, Wayfarer, Altitude, Linq, Sentinel, Oracle, Cirrus)
Belco Arts	Co-design workshop participation Meeting with CEO 28/5/24 Face to face discussion group at Belco Arts 7/6/24; promotion of consultation through Belco Arts social media
Capital Region Community Services Youth Centre	Working Group Member Consultation promotion through centre; first discussion group held at Youth Centre 20/5/24
Carers ACT	Working Group participation
CIT	Working Group members (CITSA and CIT Student Support) Engagement with Student Accommodation and Student Assistance; distribution of flyers on Bruce campus; promotion of consultation through student newsletter
Companion House	Working Group Member
Community Services Directorate (Nature Conservation House, Belconnen)	Central distribution of email promoting consultation to all staff

Migrant and Refugee Settlement Service (MARSS)	Consultation participation
Mingle (Suburban Land Agency)	Meeting Co-design participation
Multicultural Youth Reference Group	Distribution of information promoting consultations through Red Cross
North Canberra Hospital	Distribution of consultation information to staff through Media Office
University of Canberra	Working Group members (Student Equity, student) Social media promotion (facebook and Instagram) 24/5/24. Promotion through unit canvas sites, UC Chat (informal staff email); Uc Wellbeing.
Youth Coalition	Working Group Member Promotion of consultation through ebulletins from Youth Coalition and ACT Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance

Attachment B: Consultation and co-design ideas for activities

Public/Commercial Space Activation

Suggestions included:

- Markets on Lake Ginninderra or in Margaret Timson Park
- Activation of Margaret Timson Park – coffee vans, events
- Events with free or low cost food and drink
- Activation of Grazier Lane and areas outside apartment buildings. (The Lunar New Year celebrations in Grazier Lane in 2021 were mentioned as being popular, well attended, but only held once)
- Regular gatherings in communal areas or foyers of apartment buildings
- Activation of small (unloved) parks in Bruce
- Activation of spaces such as Wayfarer foyer (in consultation with BAHA and residents)
- Collective 'Belco Open Night' at Belco Arts, Library, Westfield – plus night markets. Held every 6-12 months
- Focus on apartment buildings as a discrete community or sets of communities
- Areas outside Belconnen Library
- 'Play' was highlighted by one participant as something to remember in activations.

Events and activities

Events in public spaces were suggested by nearly all participants and was the top suggestion by 78% of survey respondents (followed by ideas for more arts, culture and theatre at 66%; live music at 64%; and sports and outdoor recreational activities at 57%). Food was mentioned often – in the context of free food offered at events, gatherings at potluck dinners, BBQs, etc.

Suggestions also included greater connectivity between UC, Belconnen Town Centre and Bruce for key events, using transport such as shuttle buses. It was highlighted by a number of residents that events or activities, or venues if they could be opened up, needed to be suitable for all seasons – to accommodate very cold winters and hot summers in Canberra. (Hobart's Winter Mofo was suggested as an example of an activation that made cold weather a rationale and driver for getting people outside and enjoying themselves in winter).

Ideas included:

- Lake Ginninderra:
 - o Regular markets
 - o Outdoor movies
 - o Outdoor yoga or exercise classes
 - o Community picnics
 - o More cafes or spaces to gather
- Movie nights inside – these were often mentioned as a family-friendly, inclusive and low-risk activity. Multicultural movie nights were also suggested – where communities choose movies for showing as an entertaining way to build cultural understanding
 - o Identifying community halls or spaces where movies such as this can be shown (ie UC theatrette)

- Community gardens
- Focussed days such as 'Neighbour Day'
- Promotion of community sports such as rugby clubs, netball
- Nature walks
- Craft/creative workshops (pottery, woodworking, sewing)
- Live music
- On-campus events (CIT and UC)
- Involvement in CIT outreach events for particular cohorts, ie Health Tradies Month (August)
- Better activities such as clubs and activities put on by UC for the broader community (like ANU does).
- Adult nights at institutions (like Questacon, Portrait Gallery adult-only cabarets and entertainment nights)
- Sports – outdoor watch parties for big sporting events outside Gio Stadium, sponsored by a local beer or other companies. Food vans or beer stalls (as nowhere around there for crowd to gather, buy food or drink). Cricket, NRL, tennis, Formula One
- International food, religious festivals or cultural showcases
- Street gatherings/parties, supported by local WhatsApp groups
- Weekly soccer games
- Cooking classes, potluck food nights
- Playgroup at Capital Region Food Markets (perhaps involve UC occupational therapy or CIT early childcare students)
- Special late night shopping 'events' put on by some Westfield retailers (ie cosmetic shops)
- Day trips for young people, international students and locals to parts of Canberra and surrounds they would not see as they don't have cars
- Gaming cafes
- 'How to adult' classes/workshops - cooking, submitting tax returns, starting a business, what's involved in buying a house and other financial milestones/advice, car maintenance, career support/development, etc.
- Having small cooking or craft/art classes for a few neighbours to teach each other skills; create organising committee/s for these activities and events with representatives from the various demographics to plan the Connect Up #2617 activities
- Local meetups that are promoted online.

Clubs and groups

- Running club
- Walking Club
- Orienteering Club
- Promotion of existing sports clubs

Whole of Program ideas – connective tissue

Participants had a range of suggestions for *Connect Up #2617* which were more than events or activities and which could be characterised as program ideas or cross-cutting approaches managed by the UC 'Connect Up #2617' team. These included:

- Volunteering by and for this age group was noted by organisational representatives as an area of weakness. Residents also noted that volunteering is a way for young people to connect whilst benefiting the community, and that opportunities could be promoted through institutions like CIT, UC and local Government Departments. This stream of activity could include working with local services to broaden

activities for 18-30 year olds and working with Canberra-wide services to support local efforts for 18-30 year olds.

- Identifying (or encouraging) establishment of social groups at places like Timezone and Zone Bowling Belconnen
- Working with local organisations, services and ACT Government to establish a community hub with support services, mentoring, networking for social and other recreational purposes; link into CIT and UC activities
- Developing and articulating values for *Connect Up #2617* that are always visible; ensure that the purpose and these values are always apparent in activities. This will help give people permission to be friendly and engage with others
- One participant highlighted that older people were not as lonely as young people, and had better 'training' in connecting - so perhaps intergenerational education could be incorporated into the program.

Communication suggestions

There was a wide variety of suggestions for promotion of *Connect Up #2617* including:

- Ensuring local workers and participants lead peer to peer communication approaches – including curation and promotion of testimonials from local residents through all communication channels
- Development and promotion of an interactive crowdsourced online map – what's on locally (categorised, capacity for filtering); opening hours, events, etc.
- Curating and promoting opportunities, activities, social groups, links to services and organisations around Belconnen and Bruce in an online directory, list or 'community compendium'
- Consolidation and promotion of existing apps and programs for connection, ie the 'Peanut' app (for mothers), Meetup.com, etc
- Establishing a website with regular events and information: QR code linking to this could be promoted through ACT Government newsletters and posters in bus-stops
- Regular email newsletter to subscribers
- Social media
 - o establishment of facebook and instagram pages and TikTok accounts specific to this project, for 18-30 year olds in Belconnen region
 - o Instagram advertising (frequently mentioned)
 - o facebook events
 - o facebook Buy Nothing Groups and community noticeboards
 - o UC and CIT student and staff newsletters
- Direct mail if budget allows – the ACT Government Our CBR newsletter which is directly distributed to households was widely read by this age group as it was seen as relevant to locals.
- Popup stalls at markets, shops, UC to promote project and its activities