

Introduction

Light rail in the Australian Capital Territory

- 1.1 The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government has committed to the construction of a city-wide light rail system 'as part of an integrated public transport network connecting key population, employment, social and cultural hubs across the Territory'.¹
- 1.2 The ACT Government envisages eventual connections stretching north to south from Gungahlin to Tuggeranong, and east to west from western Belconnen to the Airport and Fyshwick (see Figure 1.1).
- 1.3 In March 2012, the ACT Government identified the need to 'actively plan for mass public transport like light rail or bus rapid transport'. It stated that public transport infrastructure planning and design is a key element in encouraging the shift away from Canberra's current dependency on motor vehicles to more sustainable transport options.²
- 1.4 In July 2013, the ACT Government established the Capital Metro Agency (now Transport Canberra) to deliver light rail for Canberra and, in October 2014, the ACT Government approved the business case for Stage 1 of the light rail (LRS1), City to Gungahlin.³ In December 2015, the ACT Government updated the Light Rail Master Plan.⁴

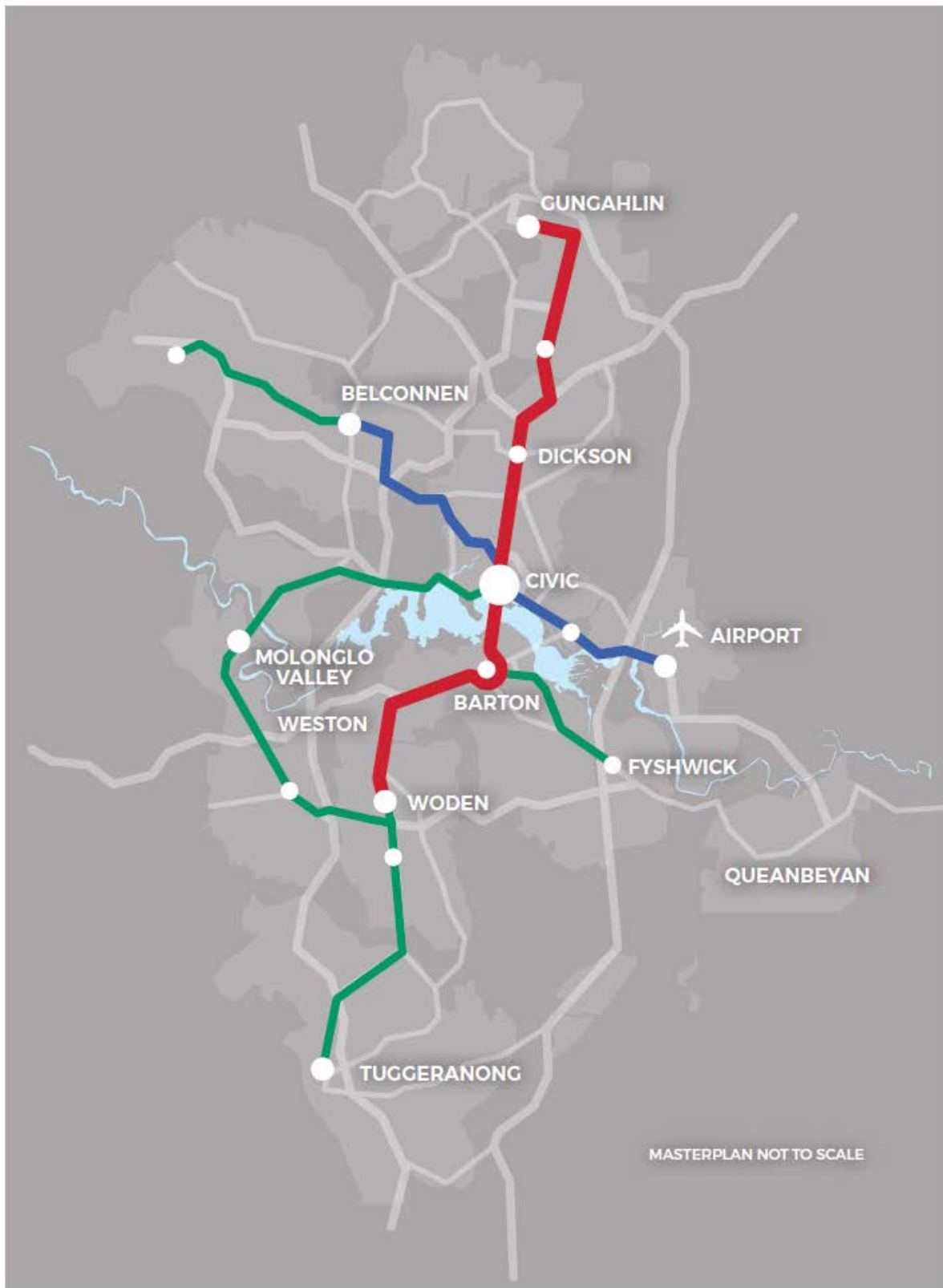
1 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 13.



2 ACT Government, *Transport for Canberra: Transport for a sustainable city: 2012-2031*, 2012, p. 35.

3 ACT Government, Transport Canberra, *City to Gungahlin: Stage 1: Project History*, <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/light-rail-network/city-to-gungahlin-stage-one/project-history>, accessed 16 July 2018.

4 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 70.

Figure 1.1 Indicative Canberra light rail network



 **ACT** Government |  **TTC** Transport Canberra

Proposed Light Rail Route
— Gungahlin to Woden — Belconnen to Airport — Future stages

Source ACT Government, Submission 25, p. 14.

- 1.5 In May 2016, the ACT Government entered into a public private partnership (PPP) with Canberra Metro Consortium to build, maintain and operate LRS1. In January 2017, construction commenced for LRS1, with completion and operation expected in early 2019.⁵
- 1.6 In May and June 2017, the ACT Government commenced community consultation regarding proposed route options, selection of alignment, and stop locations for Stage 2 of the light rail (LRS2), City to Woden.⁶ In April 2018, ACT Minister for Transport and City Services, Meegan Fitzharris MLA, announced the ACT Government's preferred route for LRS2.⁷ The finalisation and approval of the business case for LRS2 is scheduled for 2018/2019.⁸

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.7 On 10 May 2018, the committee agreed to inquire into and report on Commonwealth and Parliamentary approvals for the proposed Stage 2 of the Australian Capital Territory light rail project, in accordance with combined terms referred by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the former Minister for Regional Development, Territories and Local Government, comprising:
- the relevant parliamentary approval processes for works within the Parliamentary Zone;
 - the roles of the National Capital Authority and the Australian Government, and the associated approval processes;
 - possible impacts on the Parliamentary Zone and Parliamentary Precincts, including any impacts on the heritage values and national importance of the Parliamentary Zone and our national capital;
 - the identification of matters that may be of concern prior to formal parliamentary or Australian Government consideration of the project; and
 - any other relevant matter the committee wishes to examine.

5 ACT Government, Transport Canberra, *City to Gungahlin – Stage 1: Project History*, <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/light-rail-network/city-to-gungahlin-stage-one/project-history>, accessed 16 July 2018.

6 ACT Government, Transport Canberra, *City to Woden – Stage 2* <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/light-rail-network/city-to-woden-stage-two>, accessed 16 July 2018.

7 Meegan Fitzharris MLA, Minister for Transport and City Services, Australian Capital Territory, 'Next steps for light rail stage two from Civic to Woden' *Media Release*, 19 April 2018.

8 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 70.

- 1.8 The committee received 43 submissions, 11 supplementary submissions, and two exhibits. A list of submissions is at Appendix A and a list of exhibits is at Appendix B. The committee held three public hearings in Canberra, hearing from 25 witnesses. A list of witnesses is at Appendix C.
- 1.9 The committee offers its sincere thanks to all those who contributed to the inquiry.

Structure of the report

- 1.10 The report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 1 briefly outlines the background of light rail in Canberra and the conduct of the inquiry;
 - Chapter 2 examines the areas and legislated protections under the Commonwealth's jurisdiction that the LRS2 project engages as well as the Commonwealth approvals process for the project;
 - Chapter 3 explores the ACT Government's proposed route alignment against the National Capital Plan, examines concerns regarding the proposed route alignment, and considers the alternative routes put forward throughout the inquiry; and
 - Chapter 4 considers the consultation undertaken by the ACT Government and National Capital Authority and examines the potential heritage impacts of the LRS2 project.

Scope of the inquiry

- 1.11 Whilst the terms of reference of the inquiry require the committee to closely consider issues related to the Commonwealth and Parliamentary approval processes and potential impacts in the Parliamentary Zone and Parliamentary Precincts, there is a range of overlapping considerations relevant to LRS2.
- 1.12 Where these issues have been raised by inquiry participants, the committee has given them due consideration in the context of safeguarding the unique heritage of the nation's capital. However, the committee acknowledges that broader consideration of the merits of light rail in Canberra is a matter for the ACT Government and the people of the Australian Capital Territory.