



Weston Creek - Woden Dodgers Basketball Club

Audit of Basketball Infrastructure in ACT's Weston Creek and Woden Valley

August 2021



Executive Summary

Basketball is booming, growing to over one million participants in Australia¹ with high growth rates in the ACT. The Weston Creek Woden Dodgers are at the forefront of this growth, with all 40 junior teams competing in Basketball ACT competitions at capacity. With no further training court availability in the area, the Dodgers are not able to meet current demand and grow the sport beyond current levels.

While participation numbers are up, the number of available courts in the WCW area are down, with total available training courts reduced from 15 to 10 courts across 7 venues, following the demolishing of 5 courts at Woden Basketball Stadium and Woden CIT in recent years.

Furthermore, all of the Dodgers training courts are old, shared use infrastructure of general poor quality, with urgent investment required to bring them up to an appropriate level to ensure player safety and development.

Most stadiums have either hard parquet wooden floors or synthetic rubber, often in a poor state. No stadium has high quality backboards or rings of competition standard that can be lowered to specification for u10 trainings and none have electronic scoring facilities installed. They are nevertheless all in high demand and shared with a range of other sports and recreational groups.

All courts in the area are at capacity at peak times (Monday - Thursday weeknights 4.30-8.30pm) with very limited to no capacity outside of these times. Most school courts are not available during school holidays nor during other school activities such as exams and parent teacher interviews, further limiting access.

To ensure all teams can train, the Dodgers have had to compress team trainings into the limited available space, with the majority of teams now sharing training courts with two or three others in short 1 to 1.5 hr blocks, often late into the night. With all teams now full and no further room to grow, numbers have been capped and new registration requests are being put on wait lists.

The time for action has come. The case for new indoor sports facilities in the WCW area has been well made in various ACT Government reports, the ACT Greens have committed to new multi-use sports infrastructure in Woden in the new ACT Parliamentary & Governing Agreement, it's a priority for the local Community Councils and grass-roots community support for it has never been higher.

While the development of a new stadium will take some years, there are many options the ACT Government could pursue to immediately upgrade existing facilities to competition standard, dramatically improving the quality and availability of courts local sporting clubs currently use and provide scope for Basketball ACT to expand competitions.

The redevelopment of Woden Town Centre also provides some exciting opportunities to expand high quality, outdoor 3x3 court offerings to the south side of Canberra.

The WCW Dodgers are keen to play a constructive role in working with all government, sporting and community stakeholders to upgrade existing courts and progress planning for new basketball infrastructure in the WCW region. To accommodate future growth, the Club proposes the following recommendations for the consideration of the ACT Government, Basketball ACT, the Weston Creek Community Council, Woden Valley Community Council, Wesley Church, local sporting clubs and schools:

¹ <https://australia.basketball/blog/2019/05/03/one-million-australians-are-basketballers/>

Recommendations:

1. Upgrade existing indoor basketball facilities, including;

- The Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning court to competition standard with high quality glass basketball backboards and rings (that can be lowered for Aussie Hoops and u10 trainings), resurfacing, electronic scoring equipment and player/spectator seating. **(ACT Government, Basketball ACT & WCW Dodgers)**
- Lancaster Hall in Wesley Church, Forrest to competition standard, including new rings, backboards and supports, rejuvenate floor boards, new line markings and electronic scoring facilities. **(ACT Government, Basketball ACT and Wesley Church)**
- Resurfacing Canberra College and Mount Stromlo High School courts **(ACT Government)**

2. Development of competition standard 3x3 basketball courts in Woden, including;

- A high quality outdoor community basketball facility in the redevelopment of the Woden interchange and town centre. **(ACT Government)**
- Upgrading outdoor community courts at Mount Stromlo High School, Malaga St Warramanga and Eddison Park. **(ACT Government)**

3. Establishment of a working group to advance planning for a multi-use indoor sports stadium in Woden (ACT Government, WVCC, BACT, WCW Dodgers, 1 or 2 other sports). Suggested terms of reference to include:

- Commissioning of an independent feasibility study to determine the ideal scope, location and operating model for a high quality multi-court indoor sports stadium in Woden, of at least 6 full sized basketball courts.



Malaga Street, Warramanga

Purpose

The WCW Dodgers Basketball Club has been approached by both the Weston Creek and Woden Valley Community Councils to support a call for increased indoor sports infrastructure in the region.

This paper provides stakeholders and policy makers with an overview of the current status of the Club, the infrastructure we use and the Club's views on growing basketball participation rates in the Weston Creek and Woden communities.

Background

The WCW Dodgers proudly traces its origins back to 1958, and as such is the oldest continuing basketball club in the ACT.

Reflecting a trend across Australia, the sport of basketball is booming in the ACT. Registrations for the 2021 Basketball ACT Winter season have seen a spike of over 23 per cent in team numbers.²

While the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted competitions, Dodgers registrations have continued to grow over this period, up almost 20 per cent on 2020 numbers (339 to 405 members), with 40 junior teams and 5 senior teams. In a further sign of the strength and appeal of the sport in the area, Marist Basketball Club had another 38 boys teams compete in the Winter 2021 season.

The Dodgers compete in Basketball ACT competitions, with the majority of games being held at either Tuggeranong (owned by Southern Cross Club) or Belconnen Stadiums (owned by Basketball ACT). With the demolition of Woden Basketball Stadium in 2016, there are no stadiums in the Weston Creek and Woden region currently being used for Basketball ACT competitions, meaning the Club does not have a 'home' venue it can use for games, trainings, club meetings or events.

Existing Basketball Courts

Currently the ACT Government-owned Headley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning single court facility would be considered the WCW Dodgers base, with storerooms generously being made available to the Club by the ACT Government following the demolition of Woden Basketball Stadium. With the court not often used during the day, the Dodgers are the primary tenants of this facility, with around 17 hours of use per week, Roller Derby also occasional users. While the hard parquet surface is not ideal and the rings and backboards are not of competition quality, it is well maintained and provides the Club with good access as the Centre is not affected by school holidays or other school-related use.

Upgrading the court to competition standard is a priority recommendation. Installing high quality rings and backboards that can be lowered for u10, u8 and Aussie Hoops programs could dramatically expand the range of programs the Club can offer the local community, while improved seating and amenities and the creation of a club meeting room, could establish Headley Beare as a centre of excellence for Dodgers Junior Premier League teams and enable the Dodgers to host games.

The Dodgers also use Lancaster Hall, Wesley Church, Forrest, as a training facility for their elite senior Premier League trainings. While it is an old court, it is also well maintained, is the only court with sprung wooden floorboards and provides excellent, year-round access for the Dodgers senior teams. Improving the rings and backboards and rejuvenating the floorboards, including bringing line markings up to competition standard (3-point lines are different at each end and it still has old key

² Basketball ACT Annual Report 2020.

lines changed in 2008) could provide an excellent centrally located home for the Dodgers senior teams, and an additional option for Basketball ACT games over the weekend.

The Dodgers also hire three public school courts for training, Mount Stromlo HS, Alfred Deakin HS and Canberra College, all of which are of general poor quality, shared with other sports and are at capacity during team training times (4.30-8.30pm Mon-Thurs).

Mount Stromlo and Canberra College have synthetic rubber flooring which is bubbling in places, slippery and unsafe for most teams. Only lower grade junior teams can currently train there, with Canberra College also having an old unsafe support system that requires operation of a drill to lower it, often in the presence of children running around nearby.

Alfred Deakin HS has a slightly higher standard court, which is used by Dodgers Junior Premier League teams, however the rings, backboards and supports are low quality, the hard parquet surface is often slippery and not cleaned after school hours, it's closed during school holidays and is frequently unavailable due to school events, disrupting team trainings.

Due to the unavailability of suitable additional facilities, most Dodgers team trainings are limited to one-hour training blocks with two or three teams sharing each court (half-court for each team). From a Committee-perspective, managing 5 different venues is highly resource intensive and has proved difficult to manage consistent health and safety standards over the COVID pandemic.

Marcellin Hall at Marist College is the only court of competition standard in the WCW region. Its well-maintained 2-court facility is used exclusively by Marist College and its Basketball Club on weekdays and is also at capacity, with Marist basketball teams also overflowing into Melrose HS, placing further pressure on court availability. Marcellin Hall is not opened for basketball on weekends and is not used for BACT competitions.

Creating action

In 2015 the ACT Government commissioned an Indoor Sports Facility Study that found there is a shortage of multi-court indoor sport facilities, exacerbated by population growth and the loss of five courts at Woden Basketball Stadium and Woden CIT.

To progress the findings of the 2015 study, in 2018 the ACT Government commissioned a further study "Planning for Indoor Facilities and Other Sport and Recreation Infrastructure" to develop a preferred strategy to meet the needs of three sports, including basketball. While the Dodgers share Weston Creek Community Council's concerns about this report due to its underpinning assumptions of the demographics of the Woden area based on a limited catchment area that did not include all Woden Valley and Weston Creek suburbs, the report did acknowledge the need for new basketball courts in Woden and Canberra more generally through the two following recommendations:

- Consider options to develop an indoor sport & recreation facility in Woden at an existing ACT Government school/college.
- Support the preparation, by Basketball ACT, of a detailed Business Case for their planned 3-court expansion of Belconnen Basketball Stadium.

In 2019, ACT Government made funds available to undertake a feasibility study for the expansion of Basketball ACT's only owned and operated facility in Belconnen. To date, no announcement has been made on a decision to fund indoor infrastructure in Woden or the Belconnen Basketball Stadium expansion. The feasibility study has not been made public, however, Basketball ACT has noted in their 2019 Annual report "the feasibility study into the use of the vacant block to the south

of the stadium provides a level of encouragement that the Government considers the expansion of the Belconnen site footprint to be a real possibility”.

Basketball ACT has recently informed member clubs that it is undertaking “a full-scale facility audit with Basketball ACT regarding indoor basketball venues within the Canberra region. This report will compile information from clubs, schools, and leisure centres regarding indoor basketball facilities, as well as the number of hours and bookings that are allocated for basketball and other sports at each venue.”

Critical for this report will be communicating to Clubs and Government its strategies and priorities for developing new courts to meet current demand, upgrading existing courts to ensure equitable access to high quality competition standard courts for all member clubs and improving access to training courts, particularly those in private schools, for all member clubs right across the ACT.

3x3

3x3 is new variation of basketball played on one hoop with four players per team, three on the court and one substitute. 3x3 made its Olympic debut in Tokyo in 2021. According to a study commissioned by the International Olympic Committee, 3x3 is the largest urban team sport in the world and is increasingly being used as a vehicle to introduce recreation to under-utilised urban spaces. It is currently being promoted actively by governing bodies FIBA, Basketball Australia and Basketball ACT.

In 2017, Basketball ACT and the ACT Government opened the new four-court outdoor 3x3 basketball complex adjacent to the Belconnen Stadium, as part of a \$1.2 million ACT Government investment in the sport and the long-term development of the Belconnen site as the home of basketball within the ACT.

In 2019, the University of Canberra received \$215,000 as part of the Federal Government’s Sports Infrastructure Grants Program to build five 3x3 basketball courts at its Bruce campus.



High quality competition standard 3x3 infrastructure at the University of Canberra

Basketball ACT recently announced that it will be changing the traditional dual winter and summer season format to move towards a longer winter season and a revised summer program with a focus on 3x3 competitions.

There are currently no outdoor 3x3 courts of competition standard in the Weston Creek, Woden or any area on the south of Canberra. Poor quality metal rings above concrete playing surfaces (often adjacent to skate parks such as seen in Eddison Park), are not suitable or safe to hold 3x3 competitions on.

As an accessible, urban youth orientated recreational pursuit, locations in high density urban environments close to public transport links, youth centres and police stations, such as the Woden Town Park, would be ideal for 3x3.

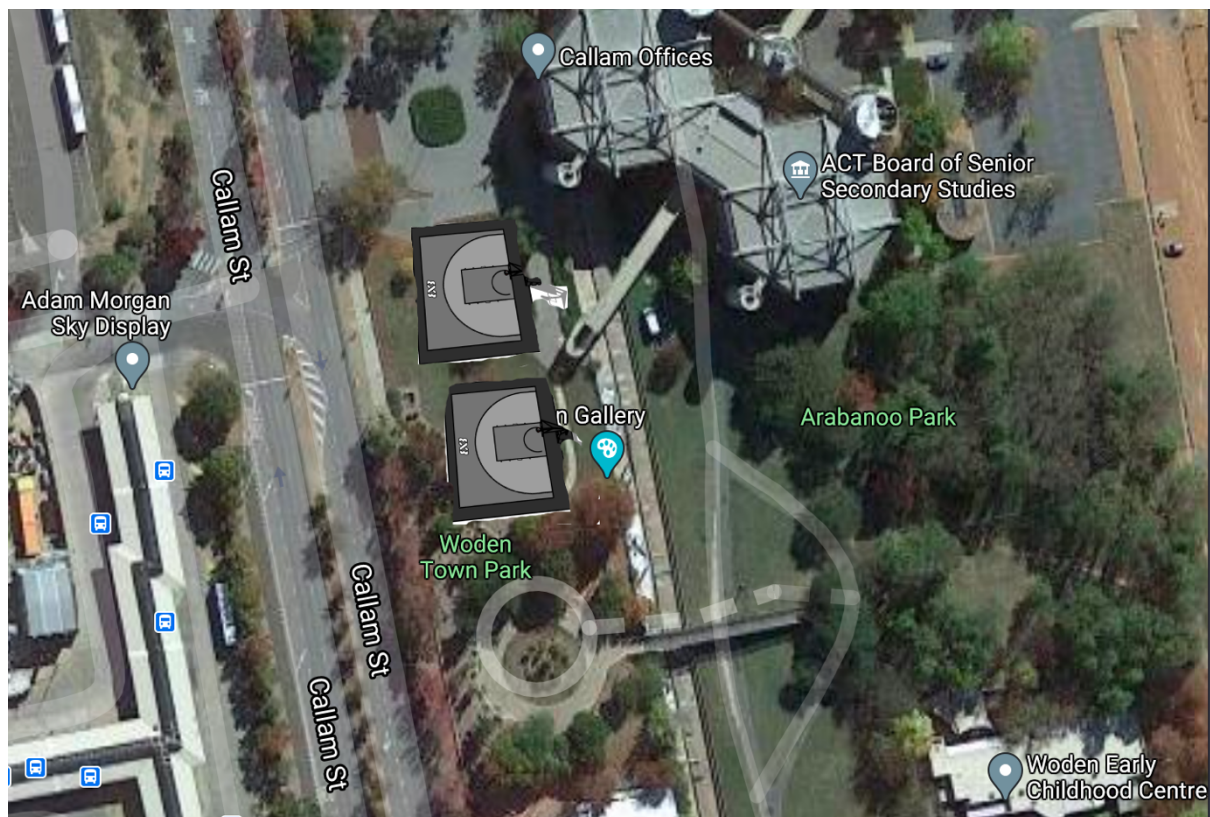


Image: Possible location for incorporating 3x3 basketball infrastructure in the redevelopment of the Woden Interchange

The ACT Government has most recently spent close to \$1 million dollars on the new facilities at Wright Active Play Park, which included a half-court set up with non-compliant basketball ring, developed without any consultation with WCW Dodgers or Basketball ACT, and has now been removed due to the noise complaints by new residents to the area.

Whilst supportive of a move towards 3x3 basketball, the Dodgers Committee are uncertain what recent changes to seasons, combined with the lack of suitable 3x3 infrastructure in the local region, will mean for club membership and participation levels without adequate infrastructure to support growth of this new emerging focus for Basketball ACT and basketball more broadly.

Outdoor 3x3 infrastructure is increasingly being used by cities across the world as a tool in urban design, bringing life to unused public spaces and the Dodgers stand ready to work with the ACT Government on the development of similar infrastructure in the south of Canberra.



The new 'Underpark' in Melbourne, painted by renowned artist Reke Rennie, is part of the urban regeneration of the Southbank precinct.

https://www.instagram.com/p/CMefQllg5Lo/?utm_medium=share_sheet



Junior Dodgers competing at a 3x3 Hustle event at Belconnen Basketball Stadium

Audit of Basketball facilities

The Club has undertaken an audit of indoor sporting facilities in the Weston Creek and Woden areas (see Attachment A). The audit finds:

- The Club currently hires 36 hours of court space across 4 different 1-court venues and one two-court venue.
- All courts in the region are either at capacity or have limited capacity (e.g. late at night).
- Access to school gyms is not permitted during school holidays or other events such as exams or parent teacher interview nights.
- All facilities utilised by the Club are of poor quality. Only Alfred Deakin HS has a surface that would be considered competition quality. No stadium has high quality backboards or rings of competition standard.
- The only stadium of competition quality in the region is Marcellin Hall, which is used exclusively by Marist College.

Conclusion

- Basketball infrastructure in the Weston Creek and Woden region is inadequate, generally of poor quality and of below competition standard, with the exception of Marcellin Hall at Marist College.
- Due to the unavailability of suitable indoor infrastructure, the WCW Dodgers are unable to meet demand to expand the club beyond current participation levels.
- Without any suitable outdoor 3x3 infrastructure, the Dodgers are not prepared for Basketball ACT's move towards 3x3 and are uncertain about the effect this move will have on participation levels in the Weston Creek and Woden area.
- The WCW Dodgers are keen to work with government, sporting and community stakeholders to resolve the shortage of courts in our region.

We look forward to discussing this report and its recommendations with all stakeholders as a matter of urgency.

Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club Committee

August 2021



Attachment A: Audit of indoor basketball facilities in Weston Creek and Woden

Stadium	Courts	Hrs per week	Current Availability	Backboards and rings	Flooring	A/c or heating	Toilets/ Change	Score boards	Spectators	Summary
Headley Beare Centre, Stirling	1	17	At capacity	5 hoops, all wood backboards and poor quality flimsy rings.	Timber parquet (not sprung), average quality	No	Yes	No	Small upstairs viewing platform (no seats)	Aged facility used for the majority of club trainings. Good storerooms for Club use. Rings and backboards need upgrading, no scoreboard. Not adequate for games or elite/senior training.
Alfred Deakin HS	1	7.5	Some availability Friday night only	6 hoops all wood backboards and average quality fixed rings	Sprung timber good quality, sometimes slippery after school if not cleaned	No	Yes	No	Good upstairs area, limited seating around courts	Good quality and spacious 1-court stadium that could be brought up to competition standard with scoreboard and scoring facilities. Used by JPL teams.
Canberra College	1	3	At Capacity	6, all wood fixed rings, poor quality	Green plastic, bubbling in parts	No	Yes	No	Limited seating around outside of court	Small court with poor quality rings and deteriorating plastic floors, suitable for junior low division training only.
Stromlo HS	2	4.5	At Capacity	4, all wood fixed rings, poor quality	Terrible, slippery, only suitable for lower divisions.	No	Yes	No	Limited	Badly in need of resurfacing and maintenance.
Wesley Uniting Church	1	4	At capacity	2 wood backboards, poor quality rings	Good quality timber, old line markings, inconsistent 3pt line	No	Yes	No	Limited around outside of court	Well maintained old stadium in good central location, line markings, backboards and rings need upgrading to better cater for senior Premier League trainings
Marist College	2	0	Not available to external clubs	Glass backboards, high quality sprung loaded rings	High quality hard sprung timber, well maintained and sealed, correct line markings	Yes	yes	yes	Various viewing areas	Excellent high quality stadium of competition standard only available to Marist Basketball Club teams. Not open on weekends.
Melrose HS	2	0	No availability (being used by BACT and Marist)	8 wood bb, fixed rings. OK quality.	Green plastic	No	yes	No	None, parents sit on floor	Average quality training venue, currently used for BACT u12 rep trainings and Marist overflow, no availability for Dodgers.