



Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA

Addressed to: Ms Ashlee Berry, ACT & Capital Region Executive Director, Property Council of Australia

In relation to: Creative Land Trust

Hearing: 13 May 2026

Uncorrected Proof Transcript p 94

Transcript provided: 21 May 2026

Answer Due: 28/05/2026

Ms Ashlee Berry took on notice the following question:

MS LEE: Thank you, Chair. Ms Berry, your submission spoke about a creative land trust and potentially that it could be a model to be utilised in the ACT. If you just explain, for the committee, an example of where it works in other jurisdictions and how you see that playing out here in the ACT?

Ms Berry: Yes. It could work. And I do not—I could take on notice other jurisdictions where it has been successful. It has certainly been proposed in many others. But in terms of how do we define success and whether it actually works? But it is something that a night-time economy commissioner could really give some thought to and look into as whether it would work.

And so, ultimately, we have a really vibrant, and innovative, and exciting, arts and cultural industry, community, here in the ACT. But it often is not just under-funded, but where do they go? Where do they—and have a bit of a permanent space. So again, part of what I was just speaking about with Mr Emerson, is it is really difficult for these building owners to be innovative and to say, 'Hey, we could have an arts and cultural hub here'. Because they cannot change their lease purpose clause. So it is about thinking outside of the box. But it is also, I think I have said in my submission, it is about having a way that landlords would actually be incentivised to do this. Because often, from a creative arts and a creative industry perspective they probably cannot pay the same sort of rent that other commercial tenancies would be able to pay.

So it is about what is the vision from the government? If there is one? And what sort of businesses, what sort of industries, do we actually want here in the city that would create that foot traffic? Because having art galleries, having other museums, things like that, would generate people coming into the city and actually exploring and looking around. Again, it would be something that is a little bit different from needing to go up to the nightclub. It would just create that foot traffic. So it is a bit of an innovative—different way of looking at

it. But it is about—

Ms Ashlee Berry: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

[Insert answer to question taken on notice]

Two examples of where a Creative Land Trust has been established are London and Sydney. The London Creative Land Trust was established in around 2019 by the Lord Mayor as part of a broader cultural and economic strategy, to combat thousands of artists at risk of losing workspace. The initial funding model was with “seed funding” from the Mayor, Arts Council, and additional support from philanthropy or other art funds, but the ongoing funding model includes a mix of philanthropy, investment and partnerships with developers and local authorities. It uses the funds now to acquire buildings and provide finance to workspace providers – that is, either buy or secure long-term leases on buildings. There is success in the sense there are long waitlists for the space.

The Sydney model is only emerging as part of a \$20 million, 10 year cultural strategy that commenced in 2024. The funding has primarily come from the City of Sydney and the NSW Government, with private sector contributions and philanthropy intended for future capital investment. In Sydney, the intention is to acquire or receive underused buildings, and provide affordable studios, rehearsal spaces, and potentially housing for artists. It is still at the feasibility stage at the moment.

This model could be explored for Canberra, noting the data previously released by the Property Council about an increasing office vacancy rate in the CBD. However, to make this an effective policy for the ACT, it would need significant upfront investment from the ACT Government or other philanthropy organisations to purchase the building outright.

Another option that is worth exploring is “meanwhile use”. At the moment, buildings that are empty or under utilised cannot be used for purposes other than what is included in the crown lease without triggering the need for a lease variation application. Promoting meanwhile use for arts and cultural activities, entertainment opportunities, in addition to emergency accommodation or other social outcomes, would provide an immediate social benefit and also address the concerns about empty buildings and lack of foot traffic. This would only be a temporary fix for an ongoing situation but it is something that should be explored and considered by the Committee.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation

Signature:



Date: 31/5/2026

By Ms Ashlee Berry, ACT & Capital Region Executive Director, Property Council of Australia