



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Economics,
Industry and Recreation

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Submission number: 007

Submitter: Alcohol and Drug Foundation

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27 February 2026

Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation
Via email LACommitteeEconomics@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Committee,

Re: Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation: Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) is Australia's leading alcohol and other drug (AOD) harm prevention organisation. We work nationally to prevent AOD related harm through evidence-based policy development, education and community programs. A community-centred approach is at the heart of everything we do.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy. Our submission responds to Items 2, 6 and 7 on the Terms of Reference related to the regulatory environment, best practice principles for Canberra's night-time economy, and any other relevant issues.

The ADF supports a thriving and inclusive night-time economy when it is designed with safety and harm prevention at its core. This includes minimising health and safety risks in the community, in particular through sensible, evidence-based regulatory safeguards on the availability of alcohol and the management of alcohol-related health and safety risks.

Recent changes and the need for a health impact assessment

As noted in the Night-time Economy Review paper, in 2024 the ACT Government made a number of changes to liquor licensing aiming to support the 'responsible development' of the hospitality and liquor industries. This included measures to increase the number and opening hours of liquor outlets in Canberra and surrounds.

Health impacts are an important consideration for whether the Liquor Act is achieving its objective of 'responsible development' of the liquor and hospitality industry. In February 2026, the difficulties of balancing the industry and public health objectives were recognised by the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs in its report on the [Inquiry into the Liquor Amendment Bill 2025](#). The Committee recommended that harm minimisation becomes the paramount objective of the *Liquor Act 2010* (ACT).

It is now well-established that increased availability of alcohol is a driver of alcohol harms, including accidental injuries and alcohol related violence.(1-3) Extended trading hours correspond with higher rates of injury, hospitalisation and emergency department presentations, homicide and other crime, non-domestic assault, unintentional injury, drink-driving offences,(4, 5) and domestic and family

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violence.(6) These harms are felt by individuals, communities and across systems, including our under-resourced ambulance services.

Alcohol harms should be of particular concern for the ACT government, with ACT communities experiencing increased rates of:

- daily drinking, since 2016(7)
- alcohol-attributable hospitalisations, from fewer than 350 per 100,000 population in 2011 to nearly 450 per 100,000 in recent years(8)
- alcohol-attributable deaths, from 3 per 100,000 in 2011 to 17 per 100,000 in 2022.(8)

To properly understand whether the Liquor Act amendments are achieving their objectives, the ADF recommends that the ACT government undertake a health impact assessment of the reforms. This should include an analysis of alcohol-related ambulance and police attendances and emergency department presentations prior to and following the reforms. We further recommend that there is no further liberalisation of the ACT's liquor laws until the health impact of the existing laws have been assessed in this way.

Best practice in supporting a vibrant NTE, without increasing alcohol harms

Creativity, culture and connection thrive in diverse, inclusive environments, not just licensed venues. By broadening night-time offerings, such as late-night arts, food, recreational activities, retail, and alcohol free entertainment, cities can create safer, more welcoming spaces for families, young people, and culturally diverse communities. This approach strengthens economic resilience while reducing dependence on industries associated with heightened health and social risks. The ADF urges this Committee to consider the benefits and opportunities of investing in these social and cultural offerings.

For those areas where there is a higher density of liquor outlets, there are a range of measures that can limit the risk of alcohol-related injury, violence and the perception or experience of a lack of safety. Generally, the evidence supports implementing a suite of measures such as:

- Substantive, consistent enforcement of liquor regulations.(9)
- Capability uplifts for venue staff and licensees, such as responsible service of alcohol (RSA) and sexual harassment training, venue management guidance, and simple, evidence-based planning and operation requirements (e.g. capacity limits, floorplans, polycarbonate glassware in high-risk/late-night venues, security, free water in venues, restrictions on high-risk drink promotions, and managing intoxicated patrons).(10)
- Coordinated, place-based harm reduction partnerships between government, venues and police to facilitate open communication and coordinate practical responses, such as support patrols, staggered closing times and recovery spaces.(9, 11)
- Adequate transport coverage; well-lit and activated routes between venues and transport nodes; and place-based safety planning partnerships for precincts.(12) It should be noted however, merely extending the hours of transport availability has not been associated with a reduction in alcohol related harms in late night entertainment districts, and may have counterproductive effects.(12)

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this Inquiry. For any discussion on the above please contact Ms Allison Reid, State Manager, NSW and ACT (allison.reid@adf.org.au), or James Petty, Senior Policy Officer (james.petty@adf.org.au).

Yours sincerely,

Sincerely,

Dr James Petty

Senior Policy Officer

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