



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: 005

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Submission to the Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

ACT Legislative Assembly

Submitted by: Mijica Lus

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1. Introduction

I am a young woman from a multicultural background and a community advocate who volunteers with multiple not for profit organisations delivering services between 5pm and midnight to support young people in Canberra.

My submission reflects lived experience of Canberra's night-time economy as a:

- Young person
- Young woman navigating safety at night
- Multicultural community member
- Volunteer supporting young people after hours

This submission addresses the economic, regulatory, safety, inclusion, and governance aspects of the Terms of Reference.

2. Economic Performance, Employment and Sustainability (TOR 1 & 4)

For many young people, the night-time economy includes:

- Casual employment
- Volunteering and community outreach
- Affordable hospitality venues
- Social and cultural connection

However, affordability is becoming a barrier.

- Spending \$20 or more on transport alone significantly limits participation.
- Rising costs reduce young people's ability to engage in venues, events, and hospitality.
- If participation becomes unaffordable, young people disengage which affects long-term sustainability of the sector.

Opportunities include:

- Concession pricing or youth-friendly offers
- Affordable late-night food options
- Incentives for venues to provide budget-friendly meals

Encouraging affordable food options may also reduce excessive drinking and promote safer participation.

3. Regulatory Environment, Safety and Public Transport (TOR 2)

Public transport is a major barrier.

- Bus services ending around midnight do not reflect how the night-time economy operates.
- Extending services until 2am would significantly improve safety and accessibility.
- Many young people do not own cars and rely on public transport.

Safety during infrastructure works is also a concern.

Due to tram construction, navigating between venues around:

- City Circle
- Melbourne and Sydney Buildings

can feel disorienting and unsafe at night. Temporary fencing, reduced lighting, and unclear pedestrian routes create environments that feel particularly unsafe for young women.

Improvements should include:

- Temporary lighting upgrades
- Clear pedestrian pathways
- Wayfinding signage
- Safety-focused design during construction phases

Perceived safety directly influences whether young women participate in the night-time economy.

4. Diversification and Changing Preferences (TOR 4 & 6)

Young people increasingly seek:

- Alcohol-optional spaces
- Affordable late-night cafés
- Creative and cultural events
- Community-oriented spaces
- Inclusive environments

The night-time economy should reflect changing preferences, particularly among multicultural communities and students.

Investment in areas such as:

- Belconnen
- Woden
- Braddon

would support decentralisation and create safer, more accessible hubs outside the CBD.

5. Harm Minimisation and Support Services (TOR 2 & 6)

Visible support services are essential for a safe night-time economy.

Services such as:

- St John Ambulance
- Vinnies
- Red Frogs

provide reassurance and proactive harm minimisation.

Continued and expanded support for these services strengthens community safety and cohesion.

6. Governance and Coordination (TOR 5)

There is merit in establishing a dedicated Night-Time Economy Coordinator or Office within the ACT Public Service.

This role should:

- Engage directly with young people and multicultural communities
- Consider volunteer and outreach services operating after hours
- Coordinate across transport, safety, planning and culture
- Ensure youth voices inform decision-making

Governance arrangements should reflect the lived experiences of those who use and support the night-time economy at night.

7. Conclusion

As a young woman, multicultural community member, and volunteer supporting young people after hours, I view Canberra's night-time economy as more than entertainment. It is about:

- Safety
- Access
- Affordability
- Inclusion
- Community connection

A successful night-time economy must work for young people, not exclude them through cost, safety concerns, or limited transport.

By improving affordability, extending transport hours, strengthening safety during infrastructure works, decentralising investment, and supporting harm minimisation services, Canberra can build a night-time economy that is vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable.