



Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA

Addressed to: Mr Chris Gatfield, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association ACT

In relation to: Skills and Apprenticeships

Hearing: 13 May 2026

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Transcript provided: 21 May 2026

Answer Due: 28/05/2026

Mr Chris Gatfield took on notice the following question:

Mr Gatfield: The ACT has the comparative disadvantage of not being Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne along the tourist trail, working holiday makers. So we do struggle more than other jurisdictions to attract and retain skilled staff. That is just the reality of the situation. With chefs, look , keeping the migration pathways open, which happily was announced in the government, the federal government budget last night, is absolutely critical. But apprenticeship pathways, the number of —

THE CHAIR: That is where the ACT government could be—

Mr Gatfield: Absolutely. So getting CIT involved. Making sure that there are people who are entering into apprenticeships, who stay in apprenticeships. The numbers are pretty diabolical. And I can provide them on notice to the committee, if you so wish?

THE CHAIR: Yes

Mr Chris Gatfield: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

As the table below shows, cook and chef commencements fell in the year to September 2025 by 12%, and the number in training has dropped by 11% to 5,695. The previous loss of incentives for hospitality traineeships continues to see those numbers fall, with commencements down 19.2% on the previous year, and the hospitality traineeships in training fall by 27% to 4,920. Importantly, these falling chef numbers predate the further reduction in incentives which took effect on 1 January 2026 which is sure to make the problem worse as will the loss of incentives entirely for large employers which took effect from Budget night May 2026.

Chef Apprentices in training September quarter								
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025 v 2021	2025 v 2024	
Chefs Cert IV	485	660	520	680	735	51.5	8.1	
Cooks Cert III	7315	7295	6600	5720	4960	-32.2	-13.3	
Total	7800	7955	7120	6400	5695	-27.0	-11.0	
Chef Apprentices commencements year to 30 September								
Chefs Cert IV	315	460	200	380	285	-9.5	-25.0	
Cooks Cert III	4320	3840	2795	2310	2085	-51.7	-9.7	
Total	4635	4300	2995	2690	2370	-48.9	-11.9	
Hospitality Traineeships in training September quarter								
Cert I to Diploma	11480	14650	9555	6700	4920	-57.1	-26.6	
Hospitality Traineeships commencements year to 30 September								
Cert I to Diploma	13375	16425	7495	6310	5100	-61.9	-19.2	
Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research								

In terms of completions, in the year to September 2025 there were 1,265 completions of Certificate III cookery apprenticeships compared to 1,415 the previous year. There were 35 completions in Cert IV compared to 60 the previous year.

In the ACT in the 12 months to September 2025, there were 270 commencements across all hospitality traineeships and cookery apprenticeships compared to 300 the previous year. Of these, 50 were cookery apprenticeships in 2025 compared to 60 for the year to September 2024. There were only 20 apprenticeship completions for cookery and around 100 for hospitality traineeships completed in the year to September 2025.

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

Signature:

Date:

By Mr Chris Gatfield, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association ACT