



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: 009

Submitter: ACT Government

Date authorised for publication: 1 April 2026

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ACT Government Submission

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Introduction

The ACT Government is committed to supporting and growing Canberra's Night-Time Economy (NTE).

The government has a vision for Canberra as a city where the night brings exciting opportunities for all Canberrans and visitors to connect, explore culture, work and have fun. A city after dark that is safe, easy to get around and accessible. Where there is plenty to see and do, which is visible or easily found. Where the talents and creativity of businesses, artists and entrepreneurs are readily showcased and valued. Canberra, day and night, a better experience for everyone.

The government recognises that a strong NTE brings significant wellbeing benefits for both local businesses and the Canberra community. These include more employment opportunities and access to a wider range of night-time amenities and leisure options, which foster mental health and social connection. Together, these benefits strengthen community wellbeing and make the ACT a more attractive place to visit, study, and live.

In recognition of this, the government has established a Minister for the Night-Time Economy to continue to oversee a program of reforms to support and grow Canberra's NTE, making it only the second jurisdiction, following New South Wales (NSW), to do so.

To deliver this vision, the government is implementing a program of reforms, guided by business and community, and informed by leading practices globally and nationally.

The government looks forward to the outcomes of the inquiry and further opportunities to grow the NTE.

Terms of Reference

Term of Reference 1 - Economic performance, employment and business sustainability

Canberra's Night-Time Economy

The NTE is a critical part of Canberra's economic and cultural landscape, contributing billions of dollars annually and supporting a wide range of local businesses and jobs.

According to the recent [Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025](#) Council of Capital City Lord Mayors' (CCCLM) report, Canberra's core NTE¹ generated approximately \$4.7 billion in turnover in 2023-24, while 32,205 Canberrans were employed and 2,300 businesses operated in the NTE.

Table 1: Core NTE Establishments, Employment and Turnover (\$m) in the ACT²

Measure/Sector	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Establishments	1,811	1,955	2,100	2,209	2,300
Employment	31,050	32,395	30,030	34,835	32,205
Turnover (\$m)	\$3,352	\$3,563	\$3,835	\$4,466	\$4,719

More broadly, Canberra's NTE underpins the city's liveability, attracting residents, students, and visitors while providing employment opportunities in Non-Core³ NTE industries all of which are essential for the ACT's broader economic health.

The strength of Canberra's NTE is also recognised in the [Visa Australian Night-Time Economy Index 2025](#) report (the Visa Report) - it ranked Canberra 12th, the highest-ranked metro area outside of Sydney and Melbourne, reflecting strong spending by visitors, nation-leading safety, fast growth in the number of restaurants open at night, and diverse NTE offerings. The report also indicated that Canberra leads the nation in growth of retail merchants trading consistently at night, up eight per cent in 2024-25.

¹ Core NTE means economic activity occurring at establishments that provide services to leisure users – mainly between 6pm and 6am. The Core NTE is split into sub-sectors of Drink, Leisure & Entertainment and Food and then further sub-divided by specific activity types.

² Ingenium Research, 2025. *Core NTE Establishments, Employment and Turnover (\$1m) in the ACT*.

³ Non-Core NTE means economic activity occurring at establishments that may operate across the 24-hour day, some of which provide integral services to Core NTE leisure activities. These include public and private transport, hotels and other accommodation, retail services, policing, health, parking, and lighting.

The NTE and the visitor economy are mutually reinforcing, as dynamic evening and late-night experiences attract tourists, while visitor demand sustains a wide range of nightlife experiences. Canberra's visitor economy supports one in 13 jobs, and its role in driving economic growth is set to expand. Tourism-related businesses account for one in every eight in the Territory – totalling 4,804 on the latest data available. The Visa Report notes that 22 per cent of night-time spend comes from interstate visitors providing business with a clear opportunity to cater to this audience.⁴

A coordinated approach to building industry capacity will assist in meeting future demand in the tourism sector. This includes growing a skilled and adaptable workforce and supporting innovation in tourism businesses and experiences.

The City Centre and Braddon are Canberra's most significant NTE areas, supported by strong resident populations, a large daytime workforce and sustained tourism visitation. Together, these precincts anchor the Territory's after-dark activity, with Civic alone employing 39,000 workers, 15 per cent of Canberra's total workforce⁵, and driving a substantial share of hospitality and entertainment visitation.

The ACT Government recognises that Canberra's NTE businesses are operating within a complex and challenging environment. This includes cost-of-living pressures impacting consumer spending, increased business costs, shortage of skilled workers, and changing consumer habits. These challenges are not unique to the ACT and are being grappled with by all jurisdictions in Australia.

The ACT Government is actively fostering growth, sustainability, and employment within the NTE through a comprehensive set of actions:

- regulatory reform to reduce regulatory burden and create opportunity (see Term of Reference 2);
- business advice and support (Term of Reference 2);
- targeted investment through grants, government funded activations and infrastructure (see Terms of Reference 3 and 4); and
- place-based initiatives including entertainment precincts, public realm upgrades and precinct improvements aimed at amenity and safety (see Terms of Reference 1,2, 3 and 4).

Term of Reference 2 – Regulatory environment

Regulatory settings play a significant role in driving a sustainable NTE:

“overly restrictive regulations can restrain activities and increase cost and complexity for businesses while insufficient regulation can lead to negative externalities and public harm.”⁶

⁴ Visa, 2025. [Visa Australian Night-Time Economy Index 2025](#), p. 14.

⁵ Scyne research commissioned by the City Renewal Authority, 2024.

⁶ NSW Productivity Commission, 2025. [Review of regulatory barriers impeding a vibrant 24-hour economy: Final Report](#), p. 126.

This is why the ACT Government is delivering regulatory reform to support business growth and engagement with the NTE while mitigating potential harms emanating from it. The work has focused on the regulatory environments most critical for supporting a strong and varied NTE in Canberra, in particular:

- liquor licensing;
- noise regulations;
- planning, including the establishment of entertainment precincts;
- the use of public unleased land;
- transport (including non-regulatory interventions); and
- safety (including non-regulatory interventions).

As well as improving regulatory settings, the government works one-on-one with local businesses to navigate the regulatory environment and provides free business advice.

Liquor licensing

The *Liquor Act 2010* (the Liquor Act) is the primary legislation governing the sale, supply, promotion, and consumption of alcohol in the ACT. It sets out principles that decision-makers must consider when balancing the need to facilitate the responsible development of the liquor and hospitality industries that contribute to the growth of the ACT's NTE and related sectors such as live music, entertainment, tourism, and hospitality with harm minimisation and community safety.

To achieve these objectives, the Liquor Act incorporates a regulatory framework that supports a lively yet safe NTE. This includes consideration of cumulative impact when assessing new licence applications, including factors like proximity to sensitive land uses, transport availability, and existing venue density. It also applies risk-based licensing, where fees reflect venue size and trading hours, and requires licensees to prepare risk-assessment management plans tailored to their operations.

Additional provisions enable flexibility and safety, such as allowing special events and youth events under temporary regulatory relaxations. The ACT liquor licensing framework includes statutory authority for licensees, their employees, agents and crowd controllers, and police to exclude a person from a licenced premises where the person is intoxicated, violent, quarrelsome or disorderly. These measures collectively ensure that Canberra's NTE can thrive while maintaining public safety and community amenity.

Government action

Following a comprehensive review of liquor licensing laws, the ACT Government has introduced reforms to strengthen Canberra's NTE by reducing costs and increasing flexibility for businesses, and supporting live entertainment. These changes aim to diversify nightlife options beyond alcohol-focused activities and attract a broader range of people to the city precinct and venues. At the same time, the reforms maintain a strong focus on minimising alcohol-related harm to ensure a dynamic and responsible night-time environment. The full suite can be found here [Liquor licensing reforms - ACT Government](#).

From January 2024, restaurants and cafés with an occupancy of up to 80 people received an automatic 50 per cent discount on annual licence fees, while bars with a capacity of 30 patrons and general licences for up to 20 patrons received an 80 per cent reduction. These discounts were expanded in July 2025 to capture higher occupancy venues, with automatic 50 per cent

reductions for restaurants and cafés accommodating up to 150 people and general licences accommodating up to 150 patrons.

The 1 July 2025 reductions in annual licence fees for restaurant, café and general licences have benefitted:

- 160 licensed restaurant and cafés with occupancies between 81-150 people with their licences automatically reduced by 50 per cent; and
- 33 businesses with a general licence and occupancies between 21 and 150 people with their licence renewal fees automatically reduced by 50 per cent.

Reforms have also been introduced that specifically aim to support and encourage venues to showcase live entertainment and music. Eligible venues that showcase artists, musicians and other cultural activities that have a capacity of 150 or less can receive an 80 per cent reduction upon a successful application. Eligible venues with a capacity between 151 and 350 can also receive a 50 per cent reduction upon a successful application. Eligible businesses that showcase artists, musicians and other cultural activities can apply for the reduction [here](#).

Licensed venues now have more flexibility over when and how they can trade:

- Eligible restaurants and cafés can now extend their standard trading hours to 2 am without incurring additional fees.
- Venues can take advantage of declared ‘special events’ which automatically extend their trading hours when there is an important event for Canberrans. A recent declaration included 47 special events such as Enlighten Festival, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games and the 2026 FIFA World Cup.
- On top of special events, venues can also access free extended trading authorisations to hold licensee events.
- Venues can also apply for a floor plan adjustment for an event, giving operators more freedom to adapt their spaces for different formats and events.

These reforms are having a real-world impact. In addition to the automatic liquor licence fee reductions provided to all eligible businesses, as of 18 December 2025:

- 28 venues have been approved for an 80 per cent reduction and 20 venues have been approved for a 50 per cent reduction on their annual liquor licence fees for showcasing artists, musicians, and other cultural activities;
- 51 free extended trading authorisations to hold licensee events have been approved across 21 venues; and
- 11 free temporary floorplan extensions for special or licensee events have been approved across seven venues.

The ACT Government also amended the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) Trading Guidelines to allow interstate workers who hold a valid RSA certificate to complete a refresher training program every three years instead of the full course. This aimed to further support workforce availability and lower regulatory costs for businesses. Amendments proposed by the Liquor Amendment Bill 2025 will extend the expiry of RSA training certificates from three to five years as a further measure to support workforce availability and reduce regulatory cost.

Noise regulation

The ACT has established noise standards for noise zones across the ACT which regulate amplified music noise from entertainment activities. Each zone has its own standard which has been set based on the land uses, with higher permitted noise levels in commercial areas and lower levels in residential suburban areas. The setting of noise standards provides certainty for noise generators and receivers, particularly at the development stage, but also for compliance and enforcement.

Outdoor concerts that use amplifying equipment at a venue with a capacity of more than 2,000 people require an environmental authorisation from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). The EPA issues environmental authorisations in accordance with the *Outdoor Concert Noise Environment Protection Policy* (2001) made under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*. The noise levels permitted in an environmental authorisation for outdoor concerts will usually exceed the noise standard that normally applies, recognising these events are infrequent and for limited duration. Events with capacities below this threshold, which is the vast majority of entertainment venues, must comply with the noise standard set for the zone in which the event is occurring.

Government action

In 2019, following the Urban Sounds consultation and environmental noise monitoring across commercial areas in the ACT, legislative changes to the *Environment Protection Regulation 2005* extended the daytime noise limits on Friday and Saturday evenings from 10 pm until midnight in the City and town centres, and until 11 pm in group centres. As this was based on noise monitoring and community and business behaviours it has not resulted in any perverse outcomes. Further changes included the establishment of a Noise Map that allows Canberrans to see the relevant noise standard for a zone.

Next steps

Through the 2024 election, the ACT Government committed to investigating reforms related to the management of noise complaints to support Canberran musicians and artists and the venues who back them. This work is underway and expected to be delivered in this term of government.

Entertainment precincts

An entertainment precinct is an area identified through planning and other regulatory controls where existing and future nightlife character and activities, including live music, are prioritised and supported. These precincts give greater certainty to the community, businesses, residents, the NTE industry and building owners. While residential and other noise sensitive uses are not prohibited, future residential development proposals occurring in designated precincts will need to consider a higher noise environment, particularly regarding low frequency noise from entertainment venues.

Entertainment precincts are beneficial in supporting nightlife as they:

- apply tailored mandatory Territory Plan Assessment Requirements for new developments;
- integrate with the existing noise zones framework in the ACT by setting bespoke noise standards with a dB(C) weighting, associated with bass noise from live and amplified music;

- set amenity expectations up front by identifying land use objectives of an area as being for music-based entertainment and vibrancy;
- are business-friendly and provide certainty;
- protect existing venues from land use conflict and enable new venues to open without onerous constraint; and
- maintain the desired vibrancy character and land use intent of an area.

Government action

The ACT Government introduced the City Centre Entertainment Precinct (CCEP) which came into effect on 27 November 2023. The CCEP and Gungahlin Entertainment Precinct (GEP) are identified in the Territory Plan 2023, with their locations and assessment requirements detailed in the Inner North & City District Policy and Gungahlin District Policy respectively.

The introduction of these precincts will support and provide more certainty for existing businesses and make it easier to set up a new business or to commence hosting live music and entertainment in these precincts.

In recognition that these two entertainment precincts are lively and noisy areas, where the level of amenity and enjoyment should align with expectations of an entertainment precinct, specific Territory Plan assessment requirements have been put in place for developments occurring within them. These controls include ensuring new development supports and enables entertainment uses, requiring new noise emitting developments to demonstrate how low frequency noise is considered, internal acoustic amenity criteria for new noise receiving development like residential developments, and allowances on gross floor area calculations for entertainment uses proposed at a basement level. These requirements ensure developments meet standards that provide support for existing and future venues and provide certainty and protections for residents and other community members. Further information can be found [here](#).

New noise standards for the City Centre Entertainment Precinct

The City Centre is the preeminent nightlife and music destination in the ACT where entertainment is already an established use. The ACT Government's vision for the CCEP is for it to be an iconic and accessible nightlife destination for all Canberrans with a lively and comprehensive mix of uses emphasising entertainment and nightlife, that is distinct, safe, and walkable, that accommodates organic growth of nightlife options.

To support delivering this vision, and to complement the change made to the Territory Plan, in August 2024, new fit-for-purpose noise standards for entertainment noise were introduced for the CCEP Core and Frame areas. The noise standards reflect community feedback and the unique characteristics of the CCEP.

The new noise standards were designed to support a noisier Core area within the CCEP, where entertainment venues are concentrated away from existing residential buildings, and a surrounding Frame area that provides a mix of venues and acts as a transition zone to the surrounding areas. The standards apply only to entertainment noise from non-residential venues, reflecting community feedback on the desired character of the precinct. Further information on the noise standards can be found [here](#).

These changes ensure the long-term sustainability of the CCEP by supporting live music and entertainment businesses, supporting local artists and industry workers, and attracting visitors while respecting the health and wellbeing of the community as the city grows.

Next steps

Through the 2024 election, the ACT Government committed to reviewing the CCEP and investigating future areas for entertainment precincts. This review is currently in progress. This review will support future investigations into town centres and other areas across the ACT that are suitable to be defined as entertainment precincts. This will include investigations into establishing fit-for-purpose noise standards for the GEP.

Planning system

The ACT's planning system and Territory Plan does not restrict NTE uses to only operate in entertainment precincts. Many commercial centres include core NTE businesses, such as pubs or restaurants, as part of their mix of uses. This regular pattern of development is not considered an entertainment precinct in the Territory Plan, as night-time uses are supported at a scale and intensity appropriate for their setting throughout all commercial land use zones. Elements of the planning system that further support Canberra's NTE include the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development's Statement of Planning Priorities (2025-2028), the ACT Planning Strategy 2018, the District Strategies, the City Plan, and the City Centre Urban Design Guide.

Public unleased land

The *Public Unleased Land Act 2013* (PULA) is the primary legislative framework for regulating the use of public unleased land in the ACT. It sets out rules for managing roads, parks, footpaths, and similar spaces that are open to the public. It requires permits for activities like outdoor dining, markets, performances, and events.

In relation to the NTE, PULA plays a crucial role by enabling, under permit conditions, event organisers and venues to legally use public spaces for night-time activities including outdoor dining, festivals, markets, food trucks, and outdoor entertainment. The permits may impose conditions around noise, public access, safety, structures, and required notifications to neighbours.

Government action

The ACT Government has commenced a comprehensive review of the PULA framework. The review aims to ensure the Act is fit-for-purpose, enables the activation and protection of public spaces, and delivers a better user experience through a simpler structure with clearer obligations. The government has also committed to developing a comprehensive guide to support event organisers by clearly identifying sites with the most suitable uses and services available. An updated public unleased land framework can better support a wide range of activations and events that contribute to a lively NTE.

Safety

Reducing alcohol harm in the NTE

While alcohol contributes to Canberra's NTE, alcohol consumption can cause a number of harms and reduce actual or perceived safety. Excessive alcohol consumption is strongly associated with domestic and family violence, can cause injury and disease, and can lead to anti-social and aggressive behaviours.

Reducing gambling harm in the NTE

Late-night play on electronic gaming machines has been strongly linked to problematic gambling behaviour. Gambling harm extends beyond financial harm, to psychological,

emotional, and social harm, both for consumers of gambling products, the people around them, and the broader community.

Other safety issues

Safety in the NTE context also broadly includes the actual harms people experience when out at night, and perceptions of, or feeling, unsafe when out in public at night. Therefore, safety encompasses a wide range of considerations such as:

- the presence of police including visible policing around licensed premises and entertainment precincts, security and other services;
- adequate public safety CCTV coverage;
- adequate lighting and clear sightlines as part of public space design;
- passive surveillance, building frontages and queue controls to deter antisocial behaviour;
- public, private and active travel options and worker safety to ensure people make it home safe; and
- making public spaces easy to understand and navigate through signage and other practices.

These considerations, alongside the diversification of entertainment options and the diversification of individuals enjoying those options, can all ensure people feel and remain safe when engaging in Canberra's nightlife.

Government action

Balancing activation with the safety of those who participate or work in Canberra's NTE is a key priority for the ACT Government. A safe nightlife advances Canberra's reputation as an inclusive city and encourages Canberrans that are more likely to experience vulnerability in the NTE, particularly women, LGBTQIA+ people, people with disability, and people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to participate meaningfully and without fear in Canberra's nightlife.

Strategic Direction

The ACT Government considers safety and inclusivity a core principle to guide its NTE reform program (refer [Appendix A](#)). Accordingly, liquor licensing reforms balance the need to support and grow licensed businesses with harm minimisation objectives, and support the diversification of the NTE away from a focus on alcohol.

Alcohol harm minimisation interventions

Acknowledging the harm that easy and fast access to alcohol can have on vulnerable people and same day delivery drivers, the ACT Government introduced the Liquor Amendment Bill 2025 on 21 October 2025. The Bill was designed through feedback from the community and aims to help the community consume alcohol safely when ordering through a same day alcohol delivery service. The Bill also addresses the role of alcohol in exacerbating the frequency and seriousness of family violence incidents, and violence more broadly. Changes proposed in the Bill include delivery time restrictions, volume limits, responsible service of alcohol training for same day delivery staff and ID checks. These are important measures that will reduce potential harms from alcohol and increase protection for workers operating in the NTE.

Measures to mitigate other harms associated with drug use have been delivered with changes to the ACT's Drugs of Dependence legislation in 2023. These reforms aim to divert people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system and encourage them to access health services. These changes do not affect how clubs and venues manage their patrons. These reforms were supported by extensive consultation and input from policy experts, local and national alcohol and other drug sector advocates, service providers, ACT Government directorates and ACT Policing. Providing people who use alcohol or other drugs with access to safe, appropriate, and affordable services and support is a key to the government's harm minimisation approach.

The ACT Government also funds support services for Canberrans participating in the NTE. This includes:

- the CBR NightCrew which offers a welcoming space in the city where people can rest, rehydrate, access first aid and get advice on getting home safely after a big night out. The service is staffed by professionals and trained volunteers who provide support to vulnerable people, including those affected by excessive alcohol or drug consumption. By offering practical support and a safe space, this service helps to reduce harm and ensure people can enjoy their night responsibly. This increases public safety and reduces pressure on emergency services.
- Marymead CatholicCare which runs ACT's Sobering Up Shelter, which is open on Friday and Saturday nights for adults aged 18 and over. As well as providing monitoring and care for intoxicated persons, the service provides assessment and referrals for problematic alcohol and other substance use.
- Drug checking, or pill testing, services to check the chemical content of drugs. Drug checking is a harm reduction service which aims to reduce the risk of harm from illegal drugs. Drug checking organisations also work with government and festival organisers on a case-by-case basis to decide whether drug checking will be available at a festival.

Consistent with the objects and harm minimisation and community safety principles provided by the Liquor Act, the ACT Government has pursued measures aimed at supporting safety in the NTE in addition to day-to-day liquor regulation. These include, for example:

- the introduction of 'cumulative impact' suitability consideration, statutory eviction powers, technical standards for security cameras, enhanced obligations on licensees and associated regulatory powers, incident reporting obligations and enhanced powers to declare prohibited alcohol products (see Liquor Amendment Act 2017);
- additional tightening of security camera requirements in 2024, with further work ongoing; and
- revision of guidelines for intoxication and responsible promotion of liquor.

In 2025, the ACT Government launched a community education campaign in relation to the ACT's affirmative consent laws, aiming to empower all Canberrans with the knowledge and confidence to seek and give clear, enthusiastic and ongoing consent in sexual interactions. The campaign was targeted at Canberrans aged 18-40 and was delivered directly into licensed venues through posters, coasters, as well as through social and traditional media.

The ACT Government will also explore other opportunities to address the relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual violence once National Cabinet has considered the report of the Council for the Australian Federation on this issue.

Gambling harm minimisation interventions

The ACT Government is also committed to minimising the harms associated with gambling, including reducing access to poker machines by legislating a long-term target of no more than 1,000 machines by 2045 and tackling harmful features of gaming machines by introducing mandatory, account-based gaming in all ACT venues, supported by a suite of evidence-based harm reduction measures.

In April 2025, the government announced an independent *Inquiry into the future of the ACT Clubs industry* that will develop an industry transition plan to ensure a thriving and sustainable future for community clubs without reliance on gambling revenue.

Public realm safety perception improvements for the City

The ACT Government is delivering safety outcomes in the City through design-led upgrades in City Walk and Garema Place. This will enhance lighting, sightlines, seating and wayfinding. City Centre infrastructure upgrades, including safer Braddon crossings and revitalised lighting and amenity in Garema Place, support safe night-time access and movement patterns for thousands of evening visitors each week. This work utilises Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles that were explored in a Night-time Vulnerability Assessment of the City Centre, as well as incorporating the Gender Sensitive Urban Design Guidelines. This project applied the principles to identify and analyse existing built and natural environment features that enhance or limit actual safety and the perceptions of safety in public spaces in the city.

Additionally, the City Renewal Authority (CRA) provides operational support during major events to ensure well-managed, accessible public spaces and works closely with ACT Policing on after-dark safety considerations. Seasonal programs such as Christmas in the City, Floriade Walking Trail and Winter in the City draw large crowds, creating busier public spaces that help people feel safer after dark. These actions are reflected in improved place perceptions, with comfort ratings rising from 65 per cent to 70 per cent, cleanliness from 57 per cent to 62 per cent, and safety from 68 per cent to 71 per cent in 2025 (City Renewal Annual Sentiment Survey).

Support for Canberrans working in the night-time economy

WorkSafe ACT administers the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* which sets out a comprehensive framework to protect the safety, health and welfare of workers and workplaces in the ACT. Under this Act, any place where work is carried out for a person conducting a business or undertaking is considered a workplace. This applies to any place where a worker may go while at work, including night-time workers.

The safety of transport workers, including from antisocial behaviour and occupational violence are relevant in the NTE. Existing controls include CCTV, security patrols, and coordination with enforcement teams. Additional measures announced in 2025 include funding of safety screens for all Transport Canberra buses to protect drivers and Transit Enforcement Officers to improve safety and deter antisocial behaviour.

Transport

The availability of safe, affordable and accessible transport options is key to night-time economies. Public transport services provide critical connectivity between suburbs and key areas of the NTE across the ACT, and when provided alongside options such as active travel, rideshare vehicles and parking, they ensure Canberrans and visitors to the Territory can participate in the NTE and make it home safely.

Government action

Public transport

Public transport across the ACT reduces reliance on private vehicles, contributing to a reduction of traffic-related congestion and supports environmental outcomes and improves accessibility for residents and visitors. Bus services provide critical connectivity between suburbs and key entertainment precincts, complementing the light rail spine between Gungahlin and the city. The ACT Government implements temporary timetable adjustments and additional services to support engagement with major NTE events including New Year's Eve, FLIGHT: Drone Skyshow and Night Markets, National Multicultural Festival, Spilt Milk Festival and other major cultural and sporting events across the Territory. Government initiatives including the now-concluded year-long fare-free Friday trial for public transport, and the subsequently introduced free public transport after 6pm on Fridays and Saturdays to February 2026, further support and encourage Canberrans to travel at night and participate more in the NTE over the festive season and attendance at numerous major events.

Parking and loading zones

The ACT Government is providing musicians with access to loading zones for free for up to 30 minutes for the purpose of loading and unloading music equipment at venues. This initiative complements broader NTE reforms by improving accessibility for musicians booked to play at venues. Permits can be obtained from Access Canberra online or via service centres. As of 22 September 2025, 63 permits had been issued.

In May 2025, the ACT Government has also implemented changes to three pay parking areas in the City Centre to provide free parking after 5:30pm from Wednesday to Sunday. These changes will carry through until the end of June 2027. This was undertaken to ameliorate pressures on parking areas and disruption to businesses as a result of consultation on Light Rail Stage 2A.

Taxis, rideshares and E-Scooters

In December 2025, the ACT Government also implemented new late night rideshare pick-up/drop-off (PUDO) zones in six locations in the City Centre, located near nightlife establishments, on a trial basis, to provide safe and convenient locations for patrons to be dropped off from or board rideshare services. All rideshare PUDO zones are available between 12:30 am and 5 am daily, with selected zones available for rideshare a few hours earlier. The government also implemented an e-Scooter slow-down area around the Sydney and Melbourne buildings, and an e-Scooter parking zone at Petrie Plaza to reduce potential e-Scooter conflict and clutter outside nightlife establishments, thereby enhancing patron safety near the Sydney Building and Petrie Plaza areas.

Business support and advice

The ACT Government is providing support services for local NTE businesses to engage with the regulatory environment to help run and grow their businesses.

The Event Coordination and Business Assist Team (ECBA) has been established to provide proactive, one-on-one business support to local businesses to discover and navigate the various approvals and endorsements needed to start or grow a business or run an event. ECBA works closely with the licensing and regulatory areas of Access Canberra and across the ACT Government to support event organisers and local business to discover and navigate the various approvals and endorsements relevant to start or grow a business or event.

From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, Access Canberra assisted 245 events obtain 961 approvals

and provided support to ensure events could continue. ECBA also engaged with and supported 274 businesses to understand requirements around approvals, both new and existing. In addition, 41 businesses engaged with ECBA via the in-person appointment service that was introduced in 2023.

The Canberra Business Advice and Support Service (CBASS) provides ACT businesses with up to four hours of cost-free business advice, tailored to each client's specific needs. CBASS also deliver workshops and webinars on a regular basis with local business experts to provide advice and direction on matters to support business growth.

Term of Reference 3 – Role of live music, hospitality and entertainment venues in attracting residents, visitors and investment

Role of live music and events

Live music and festivals

Live music events and festivals play a critical role in supporting the quality of life for Canberrans by enabling them to express their identity and connect to their communities. This is particularly the case for young Canberrans and diverse communities. They also are critical in attracting visitation to the ACT and supporting the tourism industry.

Residents

Canberra's population is very supportive and are comparatively large consumers of live music events.

The ACT recorded the third-highest growth in revenue and attendance between 2021 and 2022, behind only NSW and Victoria.

Attendance by ACT residents at live events in the ACT rose to 77 per cent in 2022, up from 71 per cent in 2019, according to the 2022 National Arts Participation Survey. This includes creative activities such as music, visual art, theatre, dance, and literature. Music events and festivals were the most popular artforms, with 48 per cent of respondents attending each. Attendance at live music peaked among 15–24-year-olds at 56 per cent, and nearly half of culturally and linguistically diverse respondents attended music events (49 per cent).⁷

While overall frequency of music event attendance has remained steady with a small increase since 2019, less frequent attendance (every couple of months compared to weekly attendance) has increased. This would likely be experienced as a drop in overall audience numbers for many live music venues and events. On average, attendees went to 7.6 music events in the 12 months to 2022, up from 5.8 in 2019.⁸

Visitors

Live music events and festivals support the tourism industry including attraction operators, hotels and hospitality as they have the potential to attract a significant number of tourist visitors and spend.

⁷ Creative Australia, 19 September 2023. [Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#), ACT Report.

⁸ Creative Australia, 19 September 2023. [Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#), ACT Report.

For example, in the week commencing 25 November 2023, when the Spilt Milk music festival was held in Canberra, there was the second highest level of weekly hotel occupancy (86 per cent) for the entirety of 2023. Data is not yet available for the Spilt Milk music festival held on Saturday 13 December 2025 in Canberra.

For the year ending December 2023, 227,000 domestic overnight tourists (7 per cent of total overnight tourists) came to Canberra and engaged in a live music event in some format (attended theatre, concerts or other performing arts or attended a festival / fair or cultural event).

Beyond direct spending, these events foster a lively atmosphere that enhances the destination's reputation as a dynamic place to visit. This perception encourages repeat visitation and strengthens the ecosystem of businesses that rely on evening trade, ensuring long-term economic benefits well beyond the event itself.

Flagship events

The ACT Government invests heavily in the visitor and event economy to drive demand for our night-time venues. Delivering major events which include night-time activations like Floriade Nightfest and the Enlighten Festival provide significant economic benefits through tourism, hospitality and retail spend. These events are declared 'special events,' enabling automatic extended trading for eligible licensed venues up to 2 am (see Term of Reference 2). The government also leverages these events to support venues and precincts across Canberra. This includes:

- Floriade About Town extends Floriade into local precincts, driving foot traffic and supporting businesses to trial later hours and themed activations.
- Enlighten Beyond provides opportunities for local businesses to run programming content that leverages the Enlighten marketing campaign and brings the festival audience to their venue.

These events also explore and deliver options of connecting town centres to the festival precincts, through partnerships with the CRA, shopping centres and transport options.

Sporting events

Major sporting events, whether elite fixtures or large-scale participation competitions, support growth in the NTE. Visitors drawn to these events often extend their stay beyond the game or competition, creating demand for evening hospitality experiences, such as dining, bars and entertainment venues. This influx of patrons drives revenue for restaurants, pubs and late-night establishments, while also supporting casual employment in these sectors.

Accommodation providers benefit significantly, with thousands of room nights booked during event periods. This not only sustains hotels and short-stay operators but also encourages visitors to explore the city after dark, contributing to lively and flourishing precincts and increased foot traffic in entertainment districts. For example, the 2024 UniSport Nationals generated 48,915 hotel room nights and total overnight visitor expenditure of \$8.4 million. The British & Irish Lions v ACT Brumbies generated 19,180 room nights and \$4.39 million in visitor expenditure. These events demonstrate how sporting occasions can transform a city's NTE into a hub of social and cultural activity.

Placed-based initiatives - City Centre and Braddon

Events, live music and small-scale activations also play a critical role in supporting night-time visitation in the City Centre and Braddon. The CRA delivers year-round programming across the

precinct including regular activations in Garema Place, Haig Park and Braddon, as well as grant-funded events such as live music nights and community celebrations led by local businesses and community groups, and linked to government community events. This is reinforced by major seasonal events that drew more than 40,000 people over two weeks during Winter in the City and 7,000 people at La Fiesta 2025.

These initiatives directly support footfall and spending trends. The City Centre and Braddon saw an 8.2 per cent increase in customer numbers (October 2025 year-on-year), and hospitality spend grew strongly, with restaurants up 4.7 per cent and pubs/bars/taverns up 9.7 per cent. Dwell time patterns also remain robust, with most visitors staying 3 to 4 hours or longer, and 59 per cent visiting with someone else, supporting shared evening experiences.

Continued investment in activation and events will be essential to both grow and protect NTE performance over the coming years.

Role of entertainment venues

The ACT Government is proud to have several major entertainment venues across the ACT, including Exhibition Park, GIO Stadium and the Canberra Theatre Centre among others, that allow Canberra to host some of the nation's biggest festivals, international sporting matches and blockbuster exhibitions.

Canberra Theatre

The Canberra Theatre Centre (CTC) is a cornerstone of the ACT's NTE, driving cultural vitality, economic activity, and employment. As the Territory's premier performing arts venue, CTC delivers a year-round program of theatre, comedy, music, family entertainment, and festivals, attracting strong local audiences and significant interstate and international visitation. This positions Canberra as a leading cultural destination.

In 2024–25, CTC welcomed over 272,000 visitors, generating an estimated \$36.5 million in direct economic impact—\$18 million from local patrons and \$18.5 million from out-of-town visitors. These contributions sustain hospitality, accommodation, transport, and retail businesses during evening periods.

CTC's influence extends beyond ticket sales. Independent modelling suggests that for every \$1 spent on a ticket, patrons spend an additional \$1.23 in the ACT economy, with a single four-week musical season injecting \$8 million in incremental activity. Initiatives like the Canberra Theatre Centre Membership Program, launched in December 2025, strengthen partnerships with local hospitality operators, encouraging pre- and post-show dining and fostering a robust and exciting night-time precinct. Through sustained audience growth and strategic investment, CTC is shaping Canberra's cultural and economic future.

Licensed venues

Smaller venues are integral to the development and employment of local artists. Canberra is home to dynamic and varied music communities. Our musicians are significant for their contributions and achievements within Canberra, Australia and abroad. Many are recognised through national awards and contribute their work to arts and cultural programs for the benefit of wider Australian audiences.

These smaller venues provide important access to live music for broad sectors of the community and can support new or emerging forms of entertainment and music that might not fit larger or mainstream spaces. They can provide jobs for local sound engineers, hospitality staff and promoters.

Role of hospitality

Canberra's hospitality sector is pivotal in energising the NTE by offering exceptional dining and bar experiences that appeal to residents, tourists, and investors. In 2025, more than 29 of the ACT's hospitality venues were recognised in national industry awards and prominent culinary publications.

Our well-respected hospitality landscape not only enhances Canberra's liveability and brand appeal but drives economic returns—stimulating local supply chains, supporting hotels and precinct development, and attracting tourism investment. Table 1 of this submission includes data on establishments, employment and turnover for core NTE businesses.

Government action

Strategic direction

The ACT Government is investing in strengthening the ACT's visitor economy to realise Canberra's tourism potential. On 10 December 2025, the government launched Phase 2 of the [T2030 ACT Tourism Strategy](#) which sets out an ambition to grow the ACT's visitor economy by \$1 billion over the next five years.

Through this, the ACT Government will provide direct stimulus to the NTE by continuing to invest in programs and infrastructure that support visitation growth and create new opportunities to reach key domestic and international target markets, as well as promoting the breadth and depth of tourism and hospitality businesses, products and experiences available in the Canberra region. Investing in major events that attract visitation to Canberra is a key element of delivering this strategy and ambition.

Major Event Fund

The ACT Government supports large-scale events and exhibitions via the Major Event Fund (MEF). The MEF delivers significant tourist visitation and economic impact outcomes for the ACT, often over an extended period. Since 2011, the MEF has supported 65 events that have attracted 6.9 million attendees and delivered \$1.29 billion in economic return.

Investment in infrastructure

As Canberra's visitor economy diversifies and grows, the ACT Government is investing in infrastructure that supports tourism and strengthens Canberra's role as a destination for both business and leisure.

The ACT Government is also progressing the transformation of the CTC into a contemporary, nationally significant performing arts precinct, delivering a new Lyric Theatre, updated facilities and improved public spaces, supporting a broader range of performances and attracting larger audiences. The construction of the new Lyric Theatre will employ around 254 full time equivalent workers and, by its fifth year, generate \$33.7 million annually in visitor economy spend through major performances.

The ACT Government is also progressing with planning and design work for a new Convention and Entertainment Centre Precinct, an investment in the city's future as a national hub for business, culture and tourism. The new precinct will deliver a purpose-built venue capable of hosting major conferences, exhibitions and events, supporting growth in the visitor economy and creative industries. The project will also enhance the city's central precinct through improved public spaces, better connectivity, and a design that reflects Canberra's identity.

Driving renewal in the City Centre

The ACT Government is supporting night-time visitation to businesses in the City and Inner North through a suite of initiatives designed to boost visibility and drive visitation. This includes:

- the launch of the [InTheCity](#) website that provides free promotion for businesses, as well as photography, content creator campaigns and advertorial partnerships;
- business activation grants which are supporting businesses affected by construction, with up to \$5,000 available for activations that attract visitation. As at 1 December 2025, 22 business-led events and activations have been supported;
- design-led safety upgrades, improved lighting, and cross-government collaboration with ACT Policing to address antisocial behaviour and perceived safety concerns;
- funding for more than 10,000 hours annually of cleaning, lighting, beautification, and events to enhance the precinct's appeal through the City Centre Marketing and Improvements Levy; and
- targeted activations that extend dwell time, including La Fiesta, Christmas in the City and Winter in the City.

The ACT Government also recognises that the construction works that are supporting the future growth of the City are impacting businesses, including those operating in the NTE, located near light rail construction work in and around London Circuit. In 2025, the government provided practical and financial supports with a focus on easing cost pressures and encouraging visitation to the area. This also included establishing the Business Capability Building Program which provides targeted cost-free business advice for businesses impacted by Light Rail Stage 2A construction. The package was informed by the impacted businesses and designed to help during the disruption. Information on the supports provided can be found here: [Light Rail Stage 2A business support measures - Our Canberra](#). Further targeted support to assist night-time businesses impacted by the delivery of Light Rail Stage 2A is under active consideration and delivery.

Term of Reference 4 – Opportunities to diversify and enhance the NTE

Changing consumer demand

A recent report by the NSW Productivity Commission described the changes occurring in consumer demand in the NTE.

“Consumer demand for night-time activities is diversifying. While eating out, pubs and shopping remain the most popular activities, since December 2023 participation has grown across a broader range of experiences, including community events, cinema, theatre, live sport, community sport and pop-up activities...”

This shift reflects a growing appetite for wellness, cultural and community-based activities beyond traditional nightlife. At the same time, nightclubs have seen declines in patronage and consumer spend. This trend is likely linked to cultural changes in attitudes

to alcohol: younger cohorts are more likely to disapprove of regular alcohol use, and those aged 16–24 drink less frequently than the NSW average.”⁹

Furthermore, the societal impacts of COVID lockdowns on younger people who missed out on the experiences of attending concerts and are understanding ‘how to be in crowds again’ combined with cost-of-living pressures are said to be fundamentally changing how younger people engage with the NTE.¹⁰ In the youngest age group (14-17 years), there is a lack of interest in going out and this trend is increasing.¹¹ This matters not only because of its productivity impacts but also because of the effect on social and cultural wellbeing. Loneliness and social isolation are worsening, particularly among younger people.¹²

The Visa Report also notes changing consumer habits, driven by hybrid work and flexible schedules, are altering peak going out times and that businesses that adjust trading hours to reflect this, including by extending busy nights, are well positioned to meet this changing demand.¹³

Government action

The ACT Government recognises that a successful NTE must not only support the well-known and popular activities of eating out, pubs and shopping, it must reflect the diversity of Canberrans and the way they wish to spend their time. The government is creating opportunities for diversification and growth through targeted investment, collaboration and promotion, regulatory reform and strategic direction. Finally, this submission identifies further opportunities to diversify and enhance the NTE in partnership with the Commonwealth and with NSW.

Targeted investment

Through its funds and grants programs, the ACT Government provides financial assistance for business, event organisers and artists to create events that provide a rich variety of experiences for community.

- The ACT Event Fund helps fund precinct-based events such as Canberra Comedy Festival, SouthFest, and Belco Bowl Jam. These events hold appeal for a wide range of audiences.
- With more than 20 Business Activation Grants awarded and four large Placemaking Grant initiatives underway, the list of recipients and activations of the CRA’s programs, reflects how targeted assistance is providing businesses with the opportunity to trial ideas to diversify and enhance the NTE.
 - Grants are supporting businesses to run new food, drink and leisure events in the city such as a chef-led Italian cooking class followed by a fine dining meal blending hands-on learning, culture, and cuisine. Also, a weekly Latin music

⁹ NSW Productivity Commission, 2025. [Review of regulatory barriers impeding a vibrant 24-hour economy: Final Report](#), pp. 27-28. See also Creative Australia, 2025. [Listening In: Insights on live music attendance](#), p. 59.

¹⁰ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts, March 2025. [Am I Ever Gonna See You Live Again?](#), pp. 14, 25.

¹¹ Creative Australia, 2025. [Listening In: Insights on live music attendance](#), p. 4.

¹² NSW Productivity Commission, 2025. [Review of regulatory barriers impeding a vibrant 24-hour economy: Final Report](#), p. 33.

¹³ Visa, 2025. [Visa Australian Night-Time Economy Index 2025](#), p. 19.

series called Havana Nights which will blend live funk and salsa with cocktails to revive midweek city life, support local artists, and energise the area's nightlife.

- The ACT Arts Fund is one of the main ways in which the ACT Government provides direct support to the arts, including music. As at 8 December 2025, \$145,496 has been allocated to 12 music projects through Arts Activity funding in 2025-26.
- The Arts Organisation Investment Program provides funding of over \$9 million per annum to 28 arts organisations. As part of this program, multi-year funding of \$125,000 per annum (2023 to 2026) is provided to MusicACT to deliver professional development programs and services for contemporary musicians and bands.
- Community Outreach funding of \$559,053 per annum (2024 to 2026) is also provided to the Australian National University School of Music for a range of programs delivered through its Community Music Centre.

These interventions help stabilise businesses during periods of disruption, encourage later-night activity and provide business with the opportunities to try new things without bearing all the financial risk. These interventions also create opportunities for artists, whose live music and performance is integral to a diversified and enriched NTE.

Collaboration and promotion

The ACT Government has identified opportunities to expand the NTE through government-industry promotion and business to business collaboration. This includes:

- Delivering marketing support to event organisers, ensuring broad audience reach and contributing to a lively and inclusive night-time culture.
- Leveraging digital platforms for real-time event discovery, the recent launch of InTheCity.com.au now features 170+ local businesses, improving visibility and driving visitation to evening activities.
- Local businesses with a leisure or tourism focus, or event organisers can create a free listing on the Visit Canberra and Events ACT (if relevant) websites.
- In early 2025, the government launched the [Artist Database](#) to connect local artists seeking paid employment opportunities with businesses that wish to showcase local artists, musicians, and other cultural activities.
- The ACT Government's Business Hub website ([Business - ACT Government](#)) and the fortnightly CBR Business Update e-newsletter provide Canberra's business community with information and relevant resources to increase awareness and uptake of ACT Government support services such as CBASS and the Event Coordination and Business Assist team. These channels consolidate Commonwealth and ACT Government information, providing a single portal for businesses to access critical information and support including a factsheet for [Night-time economy businesses](#).

Regulatory reform

To meet consumer demand for more choice at night, the ACT Government is committed to making it easier for businesses to respond to what people want.

A suite of reforms to support Canberra's musicians and artists, and the venues that back them were introduced in 2024 and 2025 and have supported greater variety in NTE activities. For

example, an 80 per cent reduction in annual liquor licence fees has been given to venues who have:

- hosted an ongoing series of talks from international best-selling and award-winning authors based in Australia;
- showcased local belly dancing and burlesque artists;
- run weekly jazz sessions; and
- staged exhibitions featuring Canberra-based artists, hosting opening nights and events, such as artist talks.

There are further reforms under development for delivery in this term of government (see Term of Reference 2). These reforms will identify future entertainment precincts and investigate entertainment noise settings, unlocking opportunity for businesses while maintaining amenity for residents.

Another key opportunity to diversify and enhance Canberra's NTE is to review the way in which public land can be used to support events and leisure activities. A review of the PULA is currently underway and will identify opportunities for reform to support the government's vision for the NTE (see Term of Reference 2).

Further Opportunities

Leveraging the role of the Commonwealth in supporting the ACT's Night-time Economy

The National Capital Authority (NCA) manages key precincts such as Lake Burley Griffin foreshore, Commonwealth Park, and the Parliamentary Zone, which are prime locations for cultural and leisure activation. By enabling events, public art installations, and improved lighting and amenity in these areas, the NCA can help create safe, attractive spaces for evening activity. Collaboration between the ACT Government and NCA on placemaking and activation strategies can ensure that national precincts contribute to Canberra's identity as a night-time destination.

Canberra's national institutions, such as the National Gallery of Australia, National Museum of Australia, National Library, and Questacon, are major cultural anchors that can extend their operating hours or host after-dark programs (e.g., late-night exhibitions, music, and food experiences). These institutions attract interstate and international visitors, and their participation in night-time activation strengthens Canberra's reputation as a cultural capital. Partnerships between institutions and local businesses can create linked experiences, encouraging visitors to explore surrounding hospitality and retail precincts.

Visit CBR is a strategic partner for the current Hallyu! The Korean Wave exhibition at the National Museum. The events schedule includes evening events such as dining, 16+ dance parties and concerts.

Collaboration with New South Wales

NSW has a strong focus on growing its NTE. Like the ACT, NSW has a portfolio for the NTE with the Hon. John Graham MLC as Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy. Through the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, NSW has undertaken a program of reform to wind back the significant impacts of the lock-out laws on its NTE. It is also seeking to address overlap and duplication in its regulatory framework at the council and state levels around planning, noise, licensing and trading hours.

ACT Government representation at the most recent NEON Forum, the annual conference hosted by the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, has forged strong relationships for future collaboration at both the officials and ministerial levels. Opportunities to diversify and grow the NTE was a particular focus of this year's Forum and will be a regular item for discussion for the newly established cross-jurisdictional roundtable. Items for future exploration include NTE data collection and sharing, and approaches to evaluation and monitoring.

Term of Reference 5 – Governance Arrangements

The Visa Report notes that jurisdictions that ranked lower on its index were without 'strong, coordinated state-level governance' such as a dedicated NTE minister.¹⁴

At the commencement of the 11th Legislative Assembly, a dedicated Night-Time Economy Ministerial portfolio was created to drive and oversee the continuation of NTE reforms, highlighting the government's commitment to NTE expansion.

All reforms delivered have been informed by extensive consultation with the public, peak bodies and industry representatives and businesses. Collaboration, co-design and consultation on the work program for this term of government will continue.

Governance frameworks, such as a commissioner type role, used in other jurisdictions may not be appropriate for the ACT due to its unique administrative characteristics. The challenges of fragmented governance in managing layers of regulation and bureaucracy across council and state governments in NSW, for example, does not exist in the same way in the ACT's more streamlined system.

Governance models for how the government engages with businesses and other key stakeholders to develop NTE reforms was explored as part of consultations undertaken for the [NTE Review](#) in 2023. This included examining different governance models including Night-time commissions; Night-time mayors; and Night-time advocacy groups. There were positive but mixed views from participants on the best model. Representatives were also keen to explore how existing governance channels could be used.

The ACT Government recognised that co-ordination across government could be improved resulting in the significant machinery of government changes that took place on 1 July 2025. Apart from policy responsibility for liquor licensing, the major policy and operational units impacting the NTE are now co-located within the one directorate, the City and Environment Directorate (CED). Policy alignment across CED is being prioritised, while existing governance arrangements through the whole of government Business and Economic Development Inter-directorate Committee will continue.

Term of Reference 6 – International and national best practice principles

Global and domestic discussion on the NTE bears witness to a significant shift in mindset which is shaping best practice. The NTE was traditionally seen as a space for leisure and entertainment, primarily bars, clubs, and late-night venues. The dominant policy approach was

¹⁴ Visa, 2025. [Visa Australian Night-Time Economy Index 2025](#), p. 17.

regulatory and risk-focused, aiming to control or suppress activity to minimise harm. Globally and domestically, we now understand the NTE as a vital dimension of urban life and human experience. It is essential for human connection, economically significant, and a contributor to wellbeing and resilience – offering inclusive spaces, sustaining livelihoods, and adapting to challenges like climate change through flexible, low-carbon activity patterns.

The ACT Government is a keen observer and participant in the ongoing conversation on the NTE. The government participates in the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) which provides a forum to leverage best practice policy in relation to the NTE, as well as the NSW NEON Forum. The NEON Forum brings together industry leaders, policymakers, creators, and community voices. Participants in 2025 included speakers from the UK, New York, Barcelona, Japan and Canada, as well as other national jurisdictions.

Key takeaways from the 2025 NEON Forum to help inform greater inclusion and cohesion in the NTE included:

- making spaces more inclusive for everybody improves amenity for everyone, day and night;
- public spaces can be better used for activation and in new ways, including by community for community;
- First Nations creatives' connection with the NTE needs sustained engagement;
- the NTE offers a potential antidote to the growing loneliness epidemic;
- all players in the sector have a part to play in improving safety for all, with a focus on proactive prevention; and
- venues are places of community and connection, not just businesses.

In 2023, the ACT Government developed a set of principles as a touchstone for its ongoing reform program, following a review of the key features of successful NTE's around the world. These include principles to increase community inclusion and cohesion (see Appendix A).

Term of Reference 7 – Other issues

During the 10th Legislative Assembly, the former government heard from community clubs about potential opportunities and challenges associated with community clubs viably continuing their contribution to the ACT economy and social community. The current government has now established an independent inquiry into the future of the ACT community club industry that is exploring these and related issues that are directly relevant to the ACT's NTE. Further information is available [here](#).

APPENDIX A – NTE PRINCIPLES

The ACT Government worked with community, businesses and industry to develop principles to guide reform to help achieve Canberra's NTE vision.

1. Take an inclusive approach

For night-time strategies to be inclusive, they must take account of patterns of inequalities and address them, particularly for women, LGBTIQ+ people, older people, families, younger people, people with disabilities, people with a culturally and linguistically diverse background, and low-income earners.

2. Nightlife beyond liquor

A diversity of venues is a key contributor to vibrancy and inclusivity. This is achieved largely through ensuring a range of affordable venues and experiences are on offer. Ideas include spectating sport, learning a craft, listening to readings, rock-climbing, late-night museums and galleries, late trading retail and educational seminars.

Notwithstanding this, liquor has a role to play in the NTE. Reform must ensure the integrity of harm minimisation remains intact while supporting small venues to thrive and the diversification of businesses operating in the NTE.

3. Nurture the arts

The Arts sector, including music, is essential to a thriving NTE. Consistent with our ambition to be recognised as Australia's arts capital, exploring innovative ways to support artists will enhance and support the NTE.

4. Support the night-time workforce

The ACT Government recognises that many people, including those in transport, logistics, retail and healthcare, must work in order to create and support 'fun'. While the NTE focus often favours consumers, infrastructure should consider and respond to this key workforce's interests. This is particularly important given the current difficulty in recruiting staff to NTE industries in Canberra, and nationwide.

5. Increase possibilities for small businesses

Government can support a diverse range of small businesses and entrepreneurs by providing incentives to start-up and try new things that appeal to a wide range of people through licensing mechanisms and business support programs.

The ACT Government can remove unnecessarily burdensome regulations where applicable and give clearer information to business on how to understand and comply with regulation, giving back time.

As regulators, the government can take an overall posture of seeking the success of small businesses and start from a stance of what we can do to help small businesses, artists, musicians, and event holders to succeed.

6. Rethink governance

Governance should be collaborative and consultation with business continuous throughout, because ultimately business will drive a city's NTE.