



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: 021

Submitter: Woden Valley Community Council

Date authorised for publication: 22 April 2026

Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation,
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601
By email: LACommitteeEconomics@parliament.act.gov.au

16 April 2025

Dear Committee

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO CANBERRA'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

1. The Woden Valley Community Council (WVCC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Standing Committee's Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy. While much of the public discussion focuses on Civic and Braddon, the WVCC strongly submits that **all town centres—including the Woden Town Centre—must be recognised as integral components of Canberra's overall night-time economy.**
2. Woden is undergoing rapid transformation, with thousands of new residents, major infrastructure investment, and a growing hospitality and cultural sector. The night-time economy in Woden is not peripheral, but essential to the economic resilience of community life of the region.
3. This submission responds to the Terms of Reference and draws on community consultation undertaken by the WVCC, as well as issues raised in other submissions to this Inquiry.

Woden Town Centre as Part of Canberra's Night-Time Economy (TOR 1, 3, 4)

4. The WVCC **strongly recommends** that the ACT Government formally recognise **Woden Town Centre as a night-time economy precinct**, consistent with the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
5. Woden already exhibits the characteristics of a developing night-time hub:
 - a. Bradley Street and Furzer Street are established hospitality corridors with strong evening patronage. *This aligns with community feedback that these areas are "hotspots for night-time economy activities"* (WVCC Submission 100 to Role and future of the Woden Town Centre, para 39).
 - b. The new CIT campus and West Plaza will bring thousands of students and workers into the precinct, increasing demand for safe, vibrant evening activity.

- c. A rapidly growing residential population—particularly in high-density apartments—requires accessible, local evening options for food, socialising, culture and recreation.
6. Recognising Woden as part of the night-time economy is essential to ensuring equitable investment, planning attention, and regulatory settings across all town centres, not only Civic.

Establish a Designated Entertainment Precinct in the Core of Woden (TOR 2, 3, 4)

7. The **WVCC recommends** the establishment of a designated entertainment precinct in the heart of Woden, centred on **Woden Town Square**, and the **new West (CIT) Plaza** then flowing down Bradley Street.
- a. A designated entertainment precinct would mirror the approach taken in Civic and Gungahlin and would:
 - b. Provide planning certainty for existing and future hospitality and cultural venues.
 - c. Enable fit-for-purpose noise standards, including appropriate low-frequency allowances, to support live music and activation.
 - d. Protect venues from retrospective noise complaints as residential density increases.
 - e. Encourage investment in small-to-mid-sized venues, outdoor dining, and cultural programming.
8. This approach is strongly supported by other submissions that argues that protections must extend beyond Civic to town centres where local venues play a critical cultural role; MusicACT, that highlights the need for more venues and better noise regulation to support live performance; and ClubsACT and AHA ACT, that emphasise the importance of precinct-based noise reform and agent-of-change protections.
9. A Woden entertainment precinct would also align with WVCC's long-standing advocacy for activation of the Town Square and West Plaza as the civic heart of Woden (WVCC Submission 100 to Role and future of the Woden Town Centre, paras 26–29).

Support for Small Business and Local Evening Gathering Places (TOR 1, 4)

10. The WVCC strongly supports measures that enable small businesses to establish and sustain evening-focused venues that serve the local community.
11. Community feedback consistently highlights a desire for family-friendly, alcohol-optional evening spaces, and the need for local options so residents do not need to travel to Civic or Braddon, noting the current shortage of affordable, casual venues for residents to gather after work in the local Woden area.
12. This aligns with broader submissions, including AMAN that calls for culturally diverse, family-friendly, sober and intergenerational night-time spaces; MusicACT that identifies a shortage of small and mid-sized venues and the need for incentives to book live music; and AHA ACT and ClubsACT that highlight the financial pressures on small venues and the need for regulatory reform.
13. To support small business in Woden, the **WVCC recommends**:

- a. **Streamlined approvals and reduced regulatory burden**, particularly for outdoor dining, small-scale live music, pop-up cultural events and temporary activations in the Town Square and West Plaza.
 - b. **Incentives for local venues including fee reductions** for venues hosting live music or cultural programming, grants for small-scale evening activation and support for multicultural and youth-led events.
 - c. **Activation of public spaces.** The WVCC supports regular evening markets, small performance stages, lighting upgrades, flexible seating and weather protection and partnerships with local businesses for evening events.
14. These measures would help Woden develop a safe, inclusive, community-centred night-time economy.

Safety, Lighting and Public Realm Improvements (TOR 2, 6)

15. Safety is a prerequisite for a successful night-time economy. Community feedback identifies several areas of concern including that:
- a. Woden Town Square and Bowes Place are perceived as dark and unsafe after nightfall (WVCC Submission 100 to Role and future of the Woden Town Centre, paras 31–32);
 - b. Although recently repaired in a like-for-like manner, which did not address community concerns raised at the time, the Melrose Drive underpass and surrounding walkways, requires lighting and safety upgrades; and
 - c. Construction impacts have created confusing pedestrian routes and reduced passive surveillance.
16. Other submissions reinforce these concerns. Tourism Leaders Forum highlights the importance of clean, well-lit, well-maintained public spaces for visitor confidence; AMAN emphasises safety concerns for multicultural communities, women and young people; and MusicACT notes that poor lighting and unsafe routes deter participation in night-time events.

The WVCC recommends:

- a. A comprehensive lighting and safety audit of the Woden Town Centre;
- b. Upgrades to lighting, CCTV, wayfinding and passive surveillance;
- c. Ensuring construction sites maintain safe, well-lit pedestrian routes at night; and
- d. Activation strategies that increase natural surveillance through evening activity.

Transport and Accessibility (TOR 2)

17. A successful night-time economy requires reliable, safe, late-night transport.
18. Community feedback highlights several impedances to the local night-time economy's success including poor weekend and evening bus frequency to and from Woden (WVCC Submission 100 to Role and future of the Woden Town Centre, paras 60–61); limited bus access to the west side of the plaza (para 59); and safety concerns around walking routes to transport hubs at night.

19. Other submissions reinforce this whereby AHA ACT calls for late-night services aligned with trading hours; MusicACT identifies late-night transport as a major barrier to participation and AMAN emphasises the need for culturally safe transport options.

The **WVCC recommends**:

- a. Extending bus services to match closing times of the current nascent Woden night-time economy. This is expected to grow over time, especially increased public transport demand in light of the fuel crisis; and
- b. Ensuring safe, direct pedestrian routes between venues and transport nodes.

Governance and a Night-Time Economy Coordinator (TOR 5)

20. The WVCC supports the establishment of a Night-Time Economy Coordinator or Office, consistent with strong support across multiple submissions (MusicACT, AHA ACT, ClubsACT, Tourism Leaders Forum).
21. For Woden, this role would:
- a. Ensure town centres, not just Civic, receive strategic attention;
 - b. Coordinate planning, licensing, noise, transport and activation across agencies;
 - c. Support local businesses navigating complex regulatory processes;
 - d. Facilitate partnerships between government, community groups and venue operators; and
 - e. Ensure the Woden entertainment precinct is implemented effectively.

Recommendations

22. In summary, the **WVCC recommends** that the Committee:
- a. **Formally recognise Woden Town Centre as part of Canberra's night-time economy.**
 - b. **Establish a designated entertainment precinct** centred on Woden Town Square and the West Plaza, flowing south down Bradley Street.
 - c. **Adopt fit-for-purpose noise standards** to support live music and activation in Woden, with an emphasis on the designated entertainment precinct.
 - d. **Support small businesses** to establish and sustain evening venues and community gathering spaces. This includes:
 - e. **Streamlined approvals and reduced regulatory burden**, particularly for outdoor dining, small-scale live music, pop-up cultural events and temporary activations in the Town Square and West Plaza;
 - f. **Incentives for local venues** including fee reductions for venues hosting live music or cultural programming, grants for small-scale evening activation and support for multicultural and youth-led events; and

- g. **Activation of public spaces** including regular evening markets, small performance stages, lighting upgrades, flexible seating and weather protection, and partnerships with local businesses for evening events
- h. **Invest in lighting, safety and public realm upgrades** across the Woden Town Centre, including a comprehensive safety audit with subsequent lighting, CCTV, wayfinding and passive surveillance upgrades; and activation strategies that increase natural surveillance through evening activity.
- i. **Improve late-night public transport** to and from Woden, including the extension of bus services to match closing times of the night-time venues/activities and ensuring safe, direct pedestrian routes between venues and the transport nodes.
- j. **Establish a Night-Time Economy Coordinator or Office** with responsibility for all town centres.
- k. **Ensure activation and investment strategies apply equitably across all town centres**, not only Civic.

Conclusion

- 23. Woden is at a pivotal moment. With thousands of new residents, major redevelopment, and a growing hospitality sector, the Woden Town Centre is well-positioned to become a vibrant, safe and inclusive night-time destination.
- 24. To achieve this, the ACT Government must:
 - a. recognise Woden as part of the night-time economy,
 - b. provide planning certainty through an entertainment precinct,
 - c. support small business and cultural activation,
 - d. invest in safety and transport, and
 - e. ensure governance structures include all town centres.
- 25. The WVCC looks forward to working with the Committee and the ACT Government to ensure Woden's night-time economy grows in a way that strengthens community life, supports local business, and enhances the liveability of our town centre.
- 26. Please contact Nelson Tang, President, by email on wodenvalleycommunitycouncil@gmail.com if you would like to discuss this submission further.

Yours faithfully

Woden Valley Community Council