



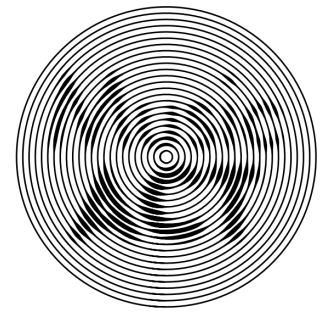
Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Economics,
Industry and Recreation

Exhibit Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Exhibit number: 1



Re: MusicACT Report – Unlocking the Potential of ACT's Night Time Economy

Thursday 28 May 2026

Dear Mr Werner-Gibbings,

Thank you for your letter of 25 May 2026, and for the opportunity to place the following concerns on the record regarding the report provided to the Committee by Mr Caffery.

MusicACT commissioned this report with the intent of informing our strategic approach to supporting and empowering artists in the ACT. We engaged in this process in good faith, genuinely ambitious about how the findings might contribute to both our work and broader policy discussions.

Following receipt of the report, the MusicACT committee was made aware of a methodological flaw that materially undermines its findings. The report's data draws on Australian Bureau of Statistics Local Government Area (LGA) datasets. The ACT is unique among Australian jurisdictions in that it has no LGAs and functions as a single administrative unit. The application of LGA-based data to Canberra produces results that are not representative of our community and, in our assessment, rendered the report's key findings unreliable for any evidential purpose.

Upon identifying this issue, the committee requested the consultants provide an amended report using data appropriate to the ACT context. A complete, like-for-like amended report was not delivered. Given the unresolved inaccuracies, the MusicACT committee made a deliberate and considered decision to withhold the report from publication pending correction.

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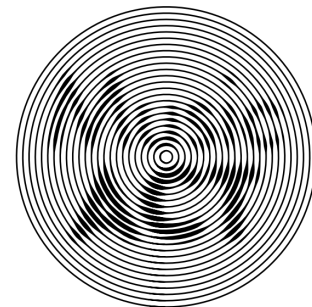
National Film and Sound Archive, McCoy Cct, Acton, ACT 2601

MusicACT is supported by the ACT Government.

The Ngunnawal people have made music and fostered culture on these lands for thousands of years.

We pay our respects to their elders past, present and to come. This is and always will be Aboriginal land.

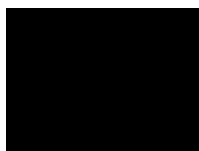




MusicACT notes with concern that the report was provided to the Committee by a former committee member without the authorisation of the existing leadership team. The report was shared in breach of the confidentiality under which it was held, and we wish to be transparent with the Committee about these circumstances.

For these reasons, MusicACT respectfully submits that the report should not be relied upon as evidence before the Committee. We remain committed to supporting the inquiry and would welcome the opportunity to provide further information or to engage with the Committee directly on the matters under consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Sia Ahmad
Director, MusicACT

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National Film and Sound Archive, McCoy Cct, Acton, ACT 2601

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Ingenium Research

Unlocking the potential of ACT's Night Time Economy

A project for MusicACT

3 October 2024

Overview

This report, commissioned by MusicACT and prepared by Ingenium Research, has two key areas of focus:

1. **Comparison of ACT's NTE to other Australian Capitals:** This analysis provides economic 'what if' scenarios that focus on what the ACT'S Core NTE might look like if it was further developed.
2. **Events and activations to support ACT's NTE:** With other cities increasingly activating their NTEs, this section examines successful initiatives in other cities around the world, which serve as useful examples for Canberra.

In relation to the first point, increasing the number of Core NTE businesses (to Victoria, New South Wales or Greater Sydney levels) presents a substantial economic opportunity for the city increasing business sales turnover by an estimated \$570m to \$998m. Further opportunities have also been identified for existing businesses to trade later into the night (9pm-12am).

In relation to the second point, this report includes **five case studies** to illustrate practical examples of how Canberra can enhance its night-time economy through specific initiatives:



Extending retail trading hours: Drawing on Melbourne's success, this case study explores how shifting retail hours to later in the evening can align better with peak foot traffic, boosting sales and customer engagement. Foot traffic data suggests that retail trade between 5pm and 9pm shows significant untapped potential.



Introducing a regular night/twilight market: Markets such as the Capital Region Farmers Market or Old Bus Depot Markets could host twilight events in Canberra's new entertainment precincts, driving increased footfall and dwell time in the city. This would provide both vendors and local businesses with more opportunities to engage with visitors.



Initiating mobile music activations: Drawing inspiration from similar events in other Australian cities, mobile music activations would bring local artists into Canberra's night-time scene, creating engaging experiences for both residents and tourists while promoting the local music industry.



Implementing strategic lighting initiatives: Canberra has already invested in street lighting upgrades to LED and adaptive lighting technologies. These enhancements could be strategically extended to key areas, making spaces safer, more inviting, and vibrant in the evenings, encouraging greater participation in nightlife activities.



Collaborating to facilitate vibrancy & safety: Collaboration between local councils, businesses, and safety authorities can enhance both the vibrancy and safety of the city's night time economy. An example of this is demonstrated through Purple Flag accreditation.

By presenting these case studies alongside data analysis, this report provides MusicACT with the tools needed to make a compelling case for night-time economy development in the ACT, setting the stage for both economic growth and cultural vibrancy.

1. Economic comparison of ACT's NTE to other Australian Capitals

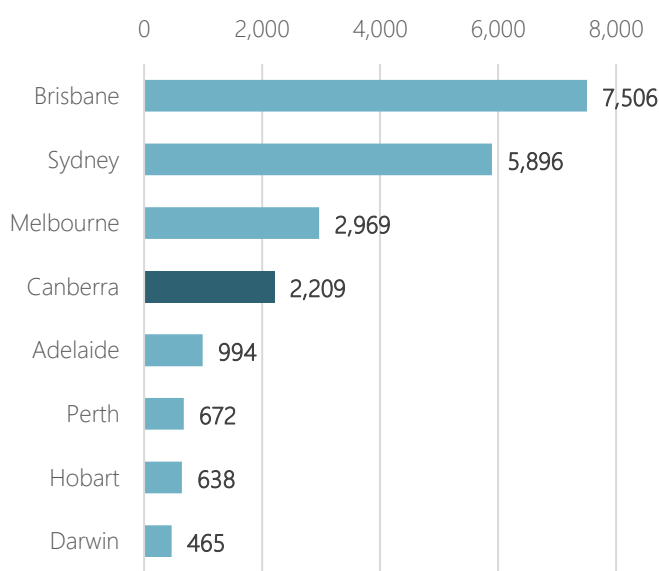


ACT's NTE performed stronger than other capitals in 2022/23

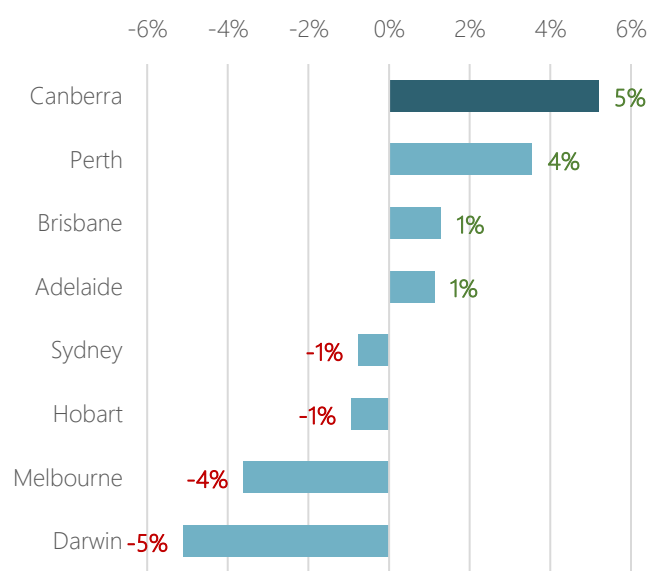
In FY 2023, Canberra's NTE performed well – with increases in businesses*, employment and sales turnover

Measure	# Core NTE FY23 % Change FY22-23	% Total Economy
 Establishments	2,209 +5%	6%
 Employment	34,835 +16%	14%
 Sales Turnover	\$4,466m +16%	6%
Sub-sector	# Establishments % Change FY22-23	% Core NTE
 Drink	129 -3%	6%
 Entertainment	521 +4%	24%
 Food	1,559 +6%	71%

The city is placed fourth amongst Australia's capitals in terms of the number of Core NTE businesses



However, Canberra led the way in business growth in FY23, with Core NTE establishments increasing 5%

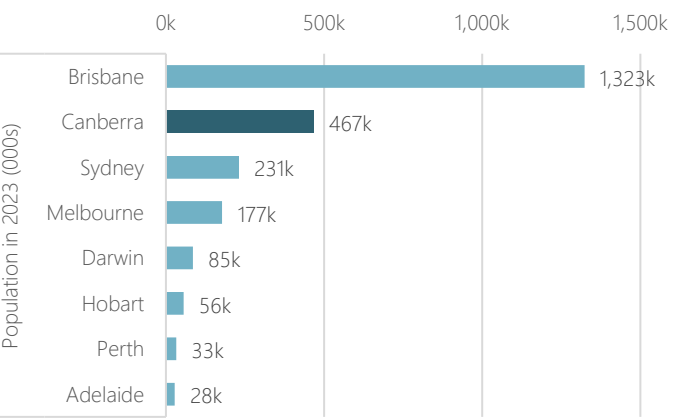
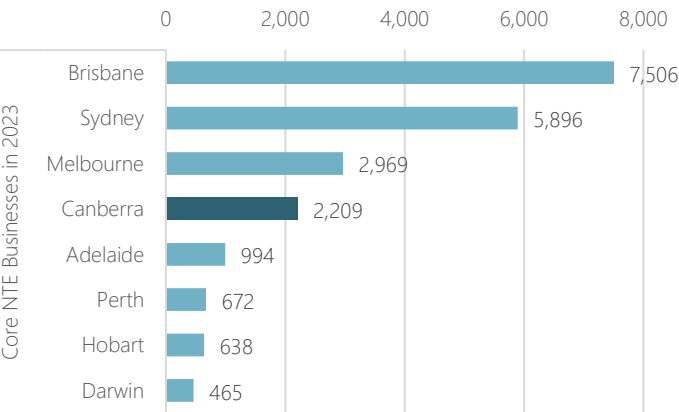


Canberra continues to have a strong focus on Food and Entertainment activities – similar to Melbourne

* Core NTE businesses counts are sourced from ABS data, which counts businesses in industry categories (e.g. restaurants, pubs, etc.). The Core NTE definition focuses on those industries with a high propensity to operate at night – but not all businesses in these counts may operate at night, some may only operate during the day.

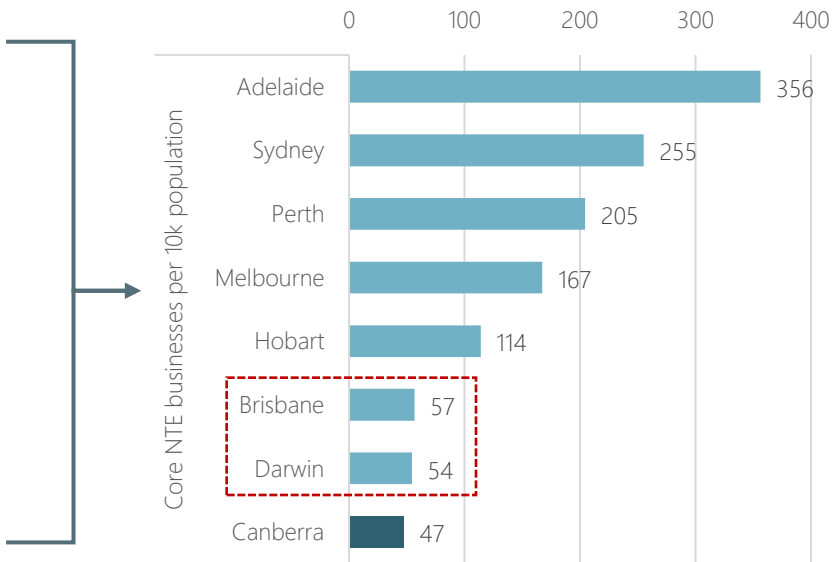
Despite strong growth, ACT's NTE has further opportunity

While fourth for Core NTE businesses, Canberra has the **second highest residential population** of all capitals

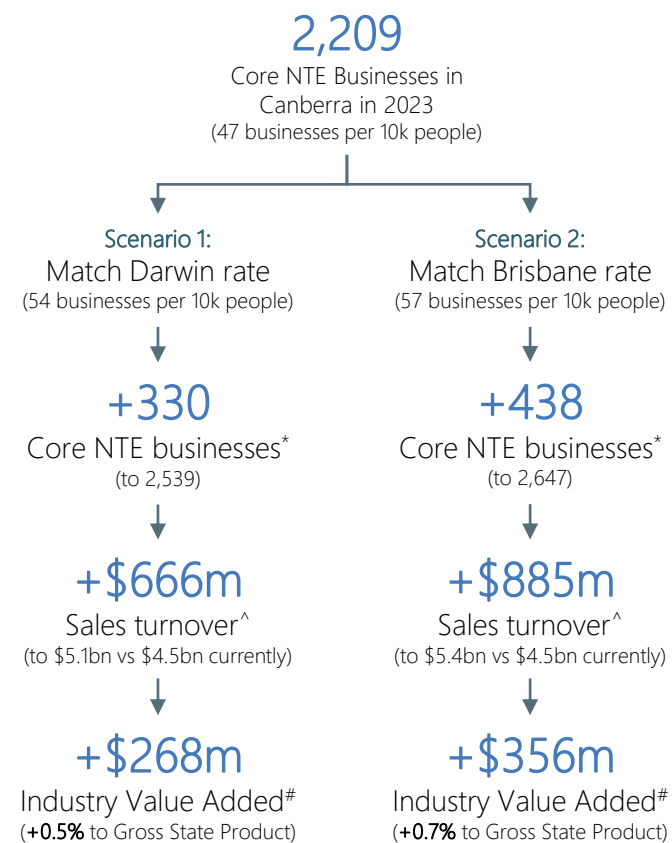


This places Canberra **last** in terms of **NTE businesses per 10,000 people**.

While several factors (e.g. area, density) play a role in this, it highlights **there is further potential for Canberra's NTE**



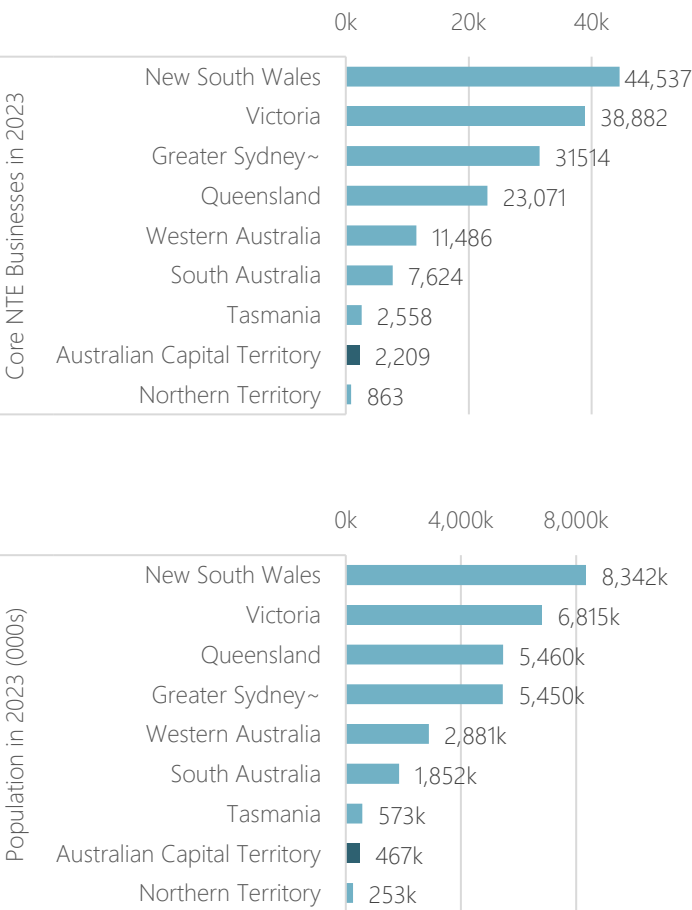
If Core NTE levels of Darwin or Brisbane could be matched, this could result in **a substantial boost to Canberra's economy**



* Calculated by increasing Canberra's rate of Core NTE businesses to 10k pop to the equivalent level for the stated city
^ Calculated on the basis that the average sales turnover per business is maintained as per FY23 levels
Estimated using relationship to sales turnover in FY23, with estimated result compared to ACT Gross State Product (GSP) Chain Volume Measures in FY23 to calculate uplift

Additional analysis by state/territory + Greater Sydney

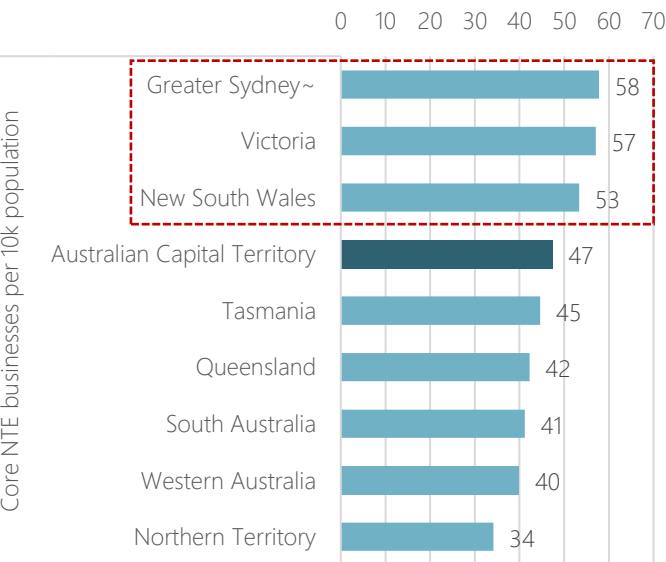
Core NTE businesses compared to residential population



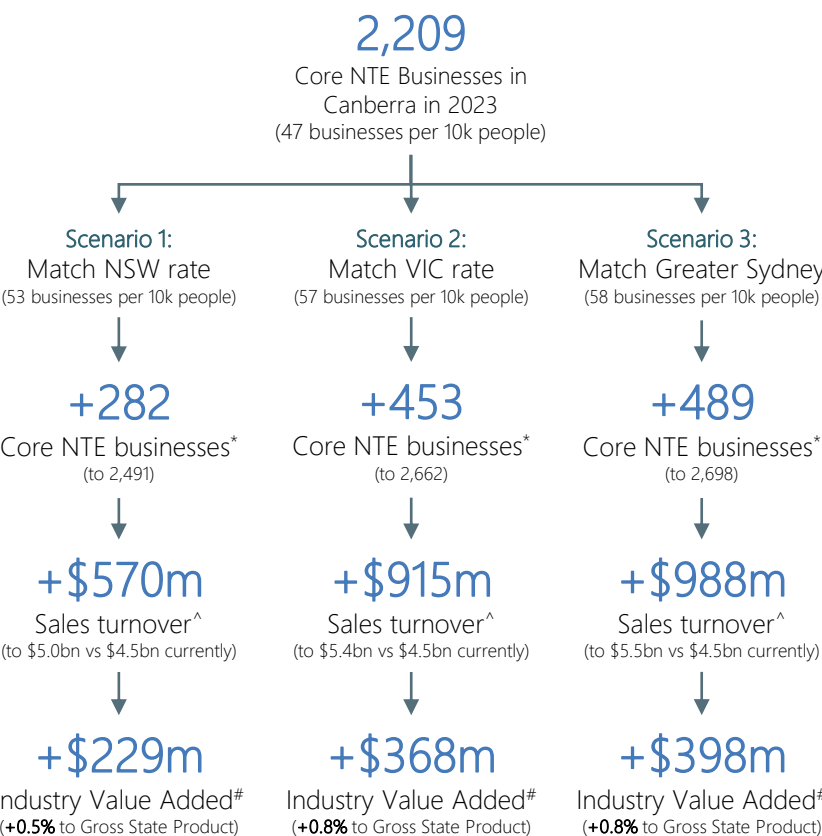
~ Greater Sydney Core NTE businesses are only published for 2022 so analysis is based on this compared to 2023 population.

By state and territory Canberra places well in terms of NTE businesses per 10,000 people

This analysis highlights there is further potential for Canberra's NTE



If Core NTE levels of NSW, VIC or Greater Sydney could be matched, this could result in a substantial boost to Canberra's economy



* Calculated by increasing Canberra's rate of Core NTE businesses to 10k pop to the equivalent level for the stated city
^ Calculated on the basis that the average sales turnover per business is maintained as per FY23 levels
Estimated using relationship to sales turnover in FY23, with estimated result compared to ACT Gross State Product (GSP) Chain Volume Measures in FY23 to calculate uplift

Trading patterns in ACT's NTE fall behind that of other capitals

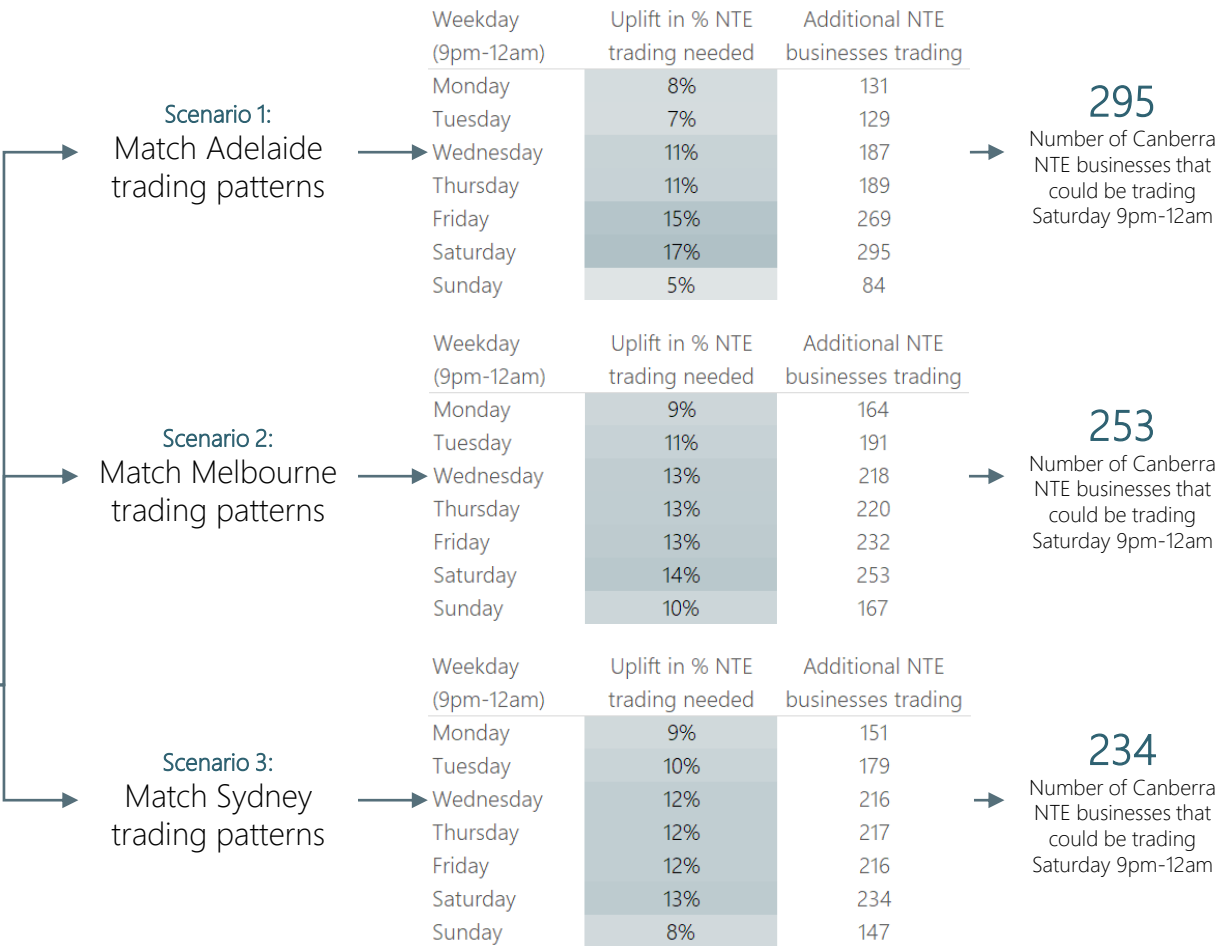
In 2000, author Bill Bryson noted that the city's nightlife seemed “to have actually gone backwards since 1972”. While trading patterns have likely improved since 2000, **Canberra is still falling behind other cities – particularly between 9pm and 12am**

% Canberra's Core NTE businesses trading by day of week & time of night
2024
→ Night rolls into next day →

Weekday (6pm-6am)	Evening 6pm-9pm	Early-Night 9pm-12am	Late-Night 12am-3am	Early-hours 3am-6am
Monday	50%	20%	6%	10%
Tuesday	57%	24%	7%	10%
Wednesday	59%	26%	7%	10%
Thursday	61%	28%	8%	10%
Friday	60%	32%	9%	8%
Saturday	51%	30%	9%	7%
Sunday	43%	21%	6%	10%

Weekday (9pm-12am)	Canberra	Adelaide	Brisbane	Darwin	Hobart	Melbourne	Perth	Sydney
Monday	20%	28%	19%	24%	21%	30%	22%	29%
Tuesday	24%	32%	21%	25%	23%	35%	26%	34%
Wednesday	26%	37%	23%	26%	28%	38%	31%	38%
Thursday	28%	39%	24%	27%	29%	40%	32%	40%
Friday	32%	47%	29%	31%	35%	45%	40%	44%
Saturday	30%	47%	28%	30%	35%	44%	39%	43%
Sunday	21%	25%	20%	26%	22%	30%	22%	29%

If Canberra's current NTE businesses were to **extend the levels of 9pm-12am trading** to match other capitals such as Adelaide, Melbourne or Sydney – this would lead to a **substantial activation of Canberra's existing NTE business base**



2. Case studies of events and activations to support ACT's NTE



Extending retail trading hours

What was the initiative?

The Melbourne [Twilight Trade](#) Initiative was designed to extend retail trading hours in Melbourne's CBD and surrounding areas, promoting increased economic activity during the evening.

The initiative was delivered by the Australian Retailers Association and was funded through a partnership between the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government, as part of the \$200 million Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund. It was implemented in partnership with retailers, hospitality businesses, and other local stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach to position Melbourne as a thriving 24-hour destination.

Key [shopping precincts participated](#), including Bourke Street Mall, Emporium Melbourne, and Melbourne Central, offering extended hours to attract both locals and tourists to enjoy shopping, dining, and entertainment in a vibrant and safe night time environment. The initiative was aimed at boosting foot traffic, increasing spending, and enhancing the visitor experience.

How could a similar initiative support Canberra's NTE?

A similar initiative in Canberra could enhance the city's night time economy by integrating twilight retail trading with evening experiences in the new entertainment precincts. For example, by encouraging retailers in the Canberra Centre and surrounding areas to extend trading hours, the initiative could:

- **Increase footfall and dwell time:** Linking twilight shopping with dining and entertainment options in nearby precincts, could encourage visitors to stay longer and boosting spending.
- **Strengthen local businesses:** Extended, or adjusted, retail hours provide an opportunity for shops, restaurants, and bars to increase revenue by catering to evening visitors.
- **Elevate Canberra's cultural appeal:** Combining shopping with evening events, such as live performances and local markets, would position Canberra as a lively, engaging night time destination.

What were the benefits?

The Melbourne Twilight Trade Initiative delivered several benefits to the city:

- **Economic boost:** Pedestrian [activity is now higher](#) between 5pm and 10pm than in the morning, while retail spending increased faster during non-working hours compared to traditional work hours between June 2023 and June 2024.
- **Addressing consumer demand:** Research revealed a [high demand](#) for out-of-hours shopping, particularly on Friday and Saturday (5pm-9pm) and Monday to Wednesday (5pm-7pm).
- **Enhanced 24-hour reputation:** With over 60% of entertainment spending now occurring after-hours, extended retail hours strengthened Melbourne's status as a vibrant 24-hour destination.



Introducing a regular night/twilight market



What was the initiative?

[Foodie Friday](#) is a monthly street food festival launched in Stockport in 2013 to bring life to the town centre after hours. Initially funded by Stockport Council, the event was later funded by the [Portas pilot](#) and managed by Seven Miles Out after council funding ceased. Local sponsorship from businesses like Orbit Developments, Robinsons Brewery, and CDL has also helped keep the festival running.

Held on the last Friday of each month, Foodie Friday features a variety of street food vendors, craft ales, and live entertainment in Stockport's Old Town Market Place. The event is designed to attract thousands of visitors each month, creating a vibrant atmosphere that boosts the local economy. In 2016, Foodie Friday won the Best Pop-Up, Event or Project award at the Manchester Food and Drink Festival, highlighting its success in transforming Stockport Market into a lively, community-driven destination.

What were the benefits?

Foodie Friday has delivered numerous benefits to Stockport's Old Town:

- **Direct economic:** Attracting an estimated [2,500 visitors and generating around £25,000](#) (c.\$49k) per event Foodie Fridays contributes substantial economic benefit to the local community, supporting local businesses such as street food vendors, craft ale producers, and entertainers.
- **Indirect economic, social and cultural impact:** The event has revitalised the town centre, encouraging greater spending in nearby restaurants, bars, and retail shops, and helping to transform the area into a bustling evening destination, and [attract investment](#). Combining local food, craft ales, and live entertainment, Foodie Friday has turned Stockport Market into a vibrant community hub, showcasing local talent and playing a key role in the economic, cultural and social revitalisation of the area.

How could a similar initiative support Canberra's NTE?

A similar initiative in Canberra could support the city's night time economy by partnering with [existing local markets](#) and inviting them to host twilight events in the city's new entertainment precincts. By coordinating such events on quieter evenings of the week, the initiative could:

- **Promote twilight trade and activity:** By linking up with popular markets like the Capital Region Farmers Market or the Old Bus Depot Markets, Canberra could create vibrant evening events that attract visitors into the CBD. Featuring local produce, food, and crafts, these twilight markets could drive more foot traffic and encourage spending in nearby restaurants, bars, and shops.
- **Enhance Canberra's cultural scene:** Incorporating live music, art installations, and other entertainment into these markets would create a lively and engaging evening atmosphere, further promoting Canberra as a night-time destination.
- **Support local businesses:** Regular evening markets would provide a new platform for vendors to reach customers, supporting local producers, artisans, and entertainers while fostering a stronger sense of community and boosting the night time economy.



Initiating mobile music activations

What was the initiative?

The [Eighty-Six](#) was a music activation in Melbourne's northern suburbs, designed to celebrate and support the local music industry along the iconic 86 tram route. Funded by the Victorian State Government, the event ran from 23 to 31 October 2023, showcasing a variety of live performances, cultural events, and local businesses across Northcote, Thornbury, Preston, and Reservoir.

The festival's flagship event, Super Saturday, featured [over 220 artists](#) performing in more than 60 venues along the 86 tram route, including restaurants, cafes, bars, and record stores. The goal of the initiative was to highlight Melbourne's rich live music culture, while offering free and ticketed events that connect residents and tourists with the area's unique entertainment and culinary offerings.

Initiated by music curator, booker & DJ [Woody McDonald](#), and implemented in partnership with Creative Victoria, the City of Darebin, businesses along High Street and community radio stations, the event secured [\\$600,000 in government funding](#).

How could a similar initiative support Canberra's NTE?

A similar initiative in Canberra could significantly enhance the city's night time economy by promoting local talent and businesses. By focusing in and around entertainment precincts and cultural hubs, such a festival could:

- **Promote Canberra's cultural identity:** A festival that highlights local artists, musicians, and cultural events could help position Canberra as a vibrant night-time destination. A multi-day festival could incorporate diverse activities like live performances, outdoor dining, and art installations, encouraging more evening engagement.
- **Foster safety and accessibility:** With a strong emphasis on safety and transport, the initiative could draw attention to existing public transport routes that are available at night, encouraging people to explore the city at night with confidence, all while boosting the night time economy.
- **Increase foot traffic and spending:** Canberra's hospitality and retail sectors would see a boost from a coordinated festival that draws both residents and tourists to local venues.

What were the benefits?

The Eighty-Six Festival brought numerous benefits to Melbourne's northern suburbs:

- **Economic boost:** The event supported over 200 small businesses and local venues, including Thornbury's [Program Records](#), which pressed 10,000 records for the festival's Independent Music Exchange, increasing business and drawing interest from more labels.
- **Increased footfall:** The festival drove increased foot traffic and spending in the area while more restaurants, bars, and retail shops will have indirectly benefitted from the influx of festival-goers.
- **Cultural promotion:** By featuring a wide range of local and international artists, the festival showcased Melbourne's vibrant live music scene, helping to strengthen the city's reputation as a cultural hotspot.



Implementing strategic lighting initiatives

What was the initiative?

[Arup](#) have provided examples of several initiatives from cities around the world (e.g., B-Lit in New York and The Park in Las Vegas) that demonstrate the positive economic and social impacts of lighting interventions in urban settings.

By improving lighting in public spaces, the initiatives improve the aesthetics, perceptions of safety and usability of urban spaces after dark, thereby creating environments where people feel safe to engage in evening activities, thereby encouraging social gatherings, outdoor events, and increased footfall.

The initiatives include both temporary installations (like light festivals) and permanent lighting enhancements to public spaces, streets, and pedestrian routes, helping to stimulate economic activity and community engagement.

What were the benefits?

Well-lit areas can attract more visitors after dark, encouraging people to stay longer, spend more at local businesses, and participate in night-time activities, while lighting initiatives, such as festivals and artistic displays, can draw tourists and increase local spending - particularly during off-peak seasons. For example [Arup](#) have stated that:

- In 2017/18 California's Riverside Festival of Lights was estimated to have generated 1,430 jobs and \$130m in revenue (direct, indirect and induced economic impact)
- Dilworth Plaza, Philadelphia's transformation featuring enhanced lighting and public art, revitalised the area, generating \$2.7m in annual CBD income.
- The renovation of HK Metroplaza, Hong Kong, with expanded green space and an LED-lit 'starlight corridor,' increased visitation, boosting average spending with double-digit growth and led to +45% new retailers in the mall.

How could a similar initiative support Canberra's NTE?

The ACT Government have been [investing in streetlighting](#), upgrading to LED technology and trialling adaptive lighting to improve efficiency, reduce energy consumption and limit light pollution. There is further opportunity, however, to creatively leverage lighting for broader benefits, such as:

- **Enhancing civic spaces:** Upgrading lighting in Canberra's special entertainment precincts could create safer, more inviting areas for evening leisure activities, encouraging residents and visitors to explore nightlife and support local businesses, thus fostering a thriving night-time economy.
- **Cultural events and light festivals:** Light festivals, such as [Enlighten Canberra](#) can attract both locals and tourists after dark, boosting footfall in retail and hospitality sectors, and positioning Canberra as a vibrant cultural hub. Introducing a winter festival could be beneficial in attracting people during the quieter months (as has been the case with Dark Mofo in Hobart). These events should involve and fairly compensate local artists to strengthen Canberra's artistic community. The environmental impacts should also be taken into consideration in planning these events.



Collaborating to facilitate vibrancy & safety



What was the initiative?

Purple Flag Accreditation is an international programme that recognises cities and towns for excellence in managing the evening and night time economy (ENTE). It promotes the creation of safe, vibrant, and thriving night-time destinations through innovation, planning, and partnerships.

The accreditation process involves thorough evaluations of policy, wellbeing, movement, appeal, and place. It encourages a collaborative approach involving local authorities, businesses, and public bodies, with the goal of creating engaging, diverse, and safe environments after dark.

The Purple Flag initiative was first developed by the [Association of Town & City Management](#) in the UK but has recently been successfully adapted and piloted in Australia by the [New South Wales' Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner](#). Following the pilot, it has been announced that the program will be [rolled out state-wide](#).

What were the benefits?

Both the UK ATCM and NSW Government state that the Purple Flag accreditation can lead to:

- *"a raised profile and improved public image for the area"*
- *wider patronage, and increased expenditure*
- *reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour*
- *more effective promotion of the area's night-time economy*
- *a more successful mixed-use economy in the longer term"*

The Purple Flag accreditation supports and reinforces dialogue between the public and private sectors, empowering key governance stakeholders to identify ways to address challenges and to capitalise opportunities within an area's night time economy.

How could a similar initiative support Canberra's NTE?

The Purple Flag accreditation scheme could act as a key driver in supporting Canberra's night time economy by:

- **Boosting civic pride and tourism:** By aligning with international standards, Canberra could position itself as a leading night-time destination, drawing tourists and locals alike, and encouraging greater spending in its hospitality, arts, and retail sectors.
- **Fostering collaboration:** A Purple Flag initiative could support Canberra by encouraging stronger collaboration between businesses, ACT Government departments and other key stakeholders to create well-managed night-time areas.
- **Enhancing night-time precincts:** Collaborations via Purple Flag could lead to the identification of new initiatives and innovations. This could include, for example, ways to enhance urban design, promote positive perceptions safety, improve transport mobility, and activate under-used spaces and times, encouraging greater participation in nightlife and boosting the local economy.

