



Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2024–2025

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Minister for the Night-Time Economy

Reference: Access Canberra

Hearing: 19 November 2025

In relation to: Supporting night-time businesses and employment

Question received: 27 November 2025

Answer Due: 4 December 2025

1. The Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025 report published in July shows an 8 per cent drop in night-time employment in Canberra within a single year. This is the third-largest decline among major cities across the country, trailing only Darwin and Adelaide. What is the Government's understanding of the causes of this decline, and what is being done to address it?
2. Given the ongoing disruptions to night-time businesses caused by construction in Civic, is any further targeted government support under consideration?

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

Question one:

- The Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025 report outlines that Australia's night-time economy businesses are operating within a complex and shifting environment. This includes cost-of-living pressures impacting consumer spending, increased business costs, shortage of skilled workers, and changing consumer habits.
- The co-author of the Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025 report, Dr Anna Edwards, has also stated the data included in the report reflects that businesses in the ACT are adjusting from the post COVID surge in hiring. Dr Edwards also indicated that the figures could reflect that businesses may be adapting their operating modes to reflect these economic conditions and changing consumer trends which are impacting businesses nationally.
- The ACT Government is delivering initiatives that generate demand for businesses, support businesses to grow and provide more opportunities for paid gigs and employment in the night-time economy. This includes:
 - Adjusting regulatory settings to reduce burden and make it easier for licensed businesses to start, run and grow. Not only have licence fees been significantly reduced, the package of reforms has also included innovative opportunities for businesses to use their licences in a more flexible way to host events and to encourage engagement with local musicians and artists.

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- Investing heavily in the visitor and event economy, to drive demand for our night-time venues. This includes delivering major events like Floriade and Enlighten Festival that provide significant economic benefits through tourism, hospitality and retail spend. In addition, the Government has delivered:
 - Floriade About Town which extends Floriade into local precincts, driving foot traffic and supporting businesses to trial later hours and themed activations;
 - the Enlighten Beyond initiative which provides opportunities for local businesses to run programming content, to leverage the Enlighten marketing campaign and bring the festival audience to their venue; and
 - initiatives that connect town centres to the festival precincts, through partnerships with the CRA, shopping centres and transport options.
- 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.com.au website that provides free promotion for business located in the City 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. To date, 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;
 - through the City Centre Marketing and Improvements Levy, funding more than 10,000 hours annually of cleaning, lighting, beautification, and events to enhance the precinct's appeal; and
 - targeted activations that extend dwell time, including La Fiesta, Christmas in the City and Winter in the City.
- An artist database that was launched in February 2025 which connects businesses looking to engage local artists for paid opportunities.

Question two:

- Yes, further targeted support is under active consideration and delivery:
 - The Business Partnership Plan will be refreshed in early 2026. This will be done in collaboration with local businesses including a review of current measures and consideration of new and/or additional measures, to ensure it is useful to the businesses it is designed to support.
 - Further Business Activation Grants to support business activation will be offered in 2026. These grants support businesses impacted by Light Rail Stage 2A construction, particularly in City West and surrounding areas.
 - Professional photography, media campaigns, and content creator partnerships are being used to promote affected businesses, with significant reach and engagement achieved.

- The Government is also committed to ongoing proactive engagement with stakeholders to assist in managing impacts associated with its construction projects. This includes:
 - monthly City Construction Information Group and individual meetings;
 - Government representatives meeting with businesses to keep them updated, talk through challenges, and coordinate bespoke solutions to address individual business needs. This has included developing tailored maps for businesses to support customers finding their nearest parking or transport options and coordinating the resolution of unrelated challenges with the relevant areas of government; and
 - other engagement activities, such as the “New season, new opportunities - City Centre & Braddon business update” held by the City Renewal Authority on 11 November and attended by local business owners, to provide direct channels for businesses to access information, support, share feedback, and connect with government representatives.
- The Canberra Theatre Centre will remain open during construction of the new Lyric theatre to continue to support activity in this part of the city. The Government is working with local businesses on how performances can provide benefit to city businesses. Early work to The Playhouse, creating a new loading dock, has been prioritised to facilitate this.
- The Government has also been working to secure new parking spaces for the public in the London Circuit east area. This includes:
 - two new accessible permit parking spaces have returned to the temporary loading zone area of London Circuit near Northbourne Avenue in November 2025;
 - civil works in the vicinity of Bailey’s Corner are on track to be completed by mid-2026. Completion of this work will allow the reinstatement of the loading zone on Bailey’s Corner and enable the temporary Theatre Lane car park loading zone to be configured as car parking places; and
 - when the light rail construction works on London Circuit east are complete by late 2026, the work area within the car park will be reconfigured back to car parking. This includes approximately 20 parking spaces – including 10 accessible spaces.
- The Government is also introducing new Pick-Up and Drop-Off zones to support safe access to the city-centre at night-time, to help ease access issues arising from disruption due to construction work.
 - The new Pick-Up and Drop-Off zones will be located in and around areas of the city centre and the west city area.
 - All rideshare zones will be available between 12.30am to 5am daily. Some will operate from 9pm for patrons who wish to start their night early, and the zone on Genge Street will operation from 6pm, perfect for those wanting to get dinner or do shopping.
 - The new Pick-Up and Drop-Off zones will operate on a trial basis to support Canberra’s night-time economy by giving patrons greater travel choice and further enable safe access to the city centre area late at night.

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

Signature: 
By the Minister for Night-Time Economy, Ms Tara Cheyne

Date: 7/12/25