



Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Economics,
Industry and Recreation

Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation

Approved for publication

Report 5
11th Assembly
October 2026

About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation on 3 December 2024.

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

- Gaming and racing
- Gaming and Racing Commission
- Arts
- Creative industries
- Screen Canberra
- Tourism
- Skills
- Sport and Recreation
- Building and construction
- Business
- Access Canberra
- ACT Events Fund
- Community events
- Major events
- Night-time economy
- Industrial relations and workplace safety
- Economy
- Economic development and diversification
- Infrastructure Canberra
- Employment

You can read the full establishing resolution on our [website](#).

Committee members

Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA, Chair

Ms Fiona Carrick MLA, Deputy Chair

Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA

Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA (from 11 June 2026)

Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA (to 15 May 2026)

Secretariat

Ms Sophie Milne, Committee Secretary

Mr Adam Walker, Acting Committee Secretary (12 November 2025 – 24 December 2025)

Ms Cherelyn Brearley, Assistant Secretary (from 8 December 2025)

Ms Kate Horgan, Assistant Secretary (13 October 2025 – 5 December 2025)

Mr Justice-Noah Malfitano, Acting Assistant Secretary (22 June 2026 – 14 July 2026)

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About this inquiry

Under Standing Order 216, standing committees can self-initiate an inquiry into any subject area it is given responsibility for by the establishing resolution. The Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation resolved to conduct an inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy on 26 November 2025.

The Committee informed the Assembly of its intention to conduct this inquiry on 4 December 2026.

Terms of reference

The Committee to inquire into and report on the opportunities and challenges affecting the night-time economy in Canberra's CBD and town centres, including:

1. the economic performance, employment and business sustainability of Canberra's night-time economy;
2. the regulatory environment including licensing, planning, noise regulations, entertainment precincts, safety and public transport;
3. the role of live music, special events, hospitality and entertainment venues in attracting residents, visitors and investment into Canberra's night-time economy;
4. opportunities to diversify and enhance Canberra's night-time economy, including late-night retail, food, drink, leisure, and accommodation, particularly given the changing entertainment preferences of young people;
5. the governance arrangements for social, economic and cultural development of the night-time economy, including the potential remit for a dedicated Night-Time Economy Coordinator or Office within the ACT Public Service;
6. international and domestic best-practice principles that could inform how Canberra's night-time economy can support greater community inclusion and cohesion; and
7. any other issues.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	Long form
CBD	Central Business District
CCEP	City Centre Entertainment Precinct
CRA	City Renewal Authority
GEP	Gungahlin Entertainment Precinct
NCA	National Capital Authority
NTE	Night-Time Economy
RAMP	Risk Assessment Management Plan
TCCS	Transport Canberra and City Services

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a dedicated Night-Time Economy Commissioner with strong industry experience capable of working across government and industry to support the activation and diversification of across Canberra's night-time economy, modelled on similar roles that have been legislated in NSW and Queensland.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a Night-Time Economy Advisory Group to inform and support the work of the Night-Time Economy Commissioner, with representatives from the ACT arts sector, business owners, multicultural communities, community groups, and venue managers.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the Night-Time Economy Advisory Group with undertaking genuine, timely, and meaningful stakeholder consultation prior to significant policy decisions that impact the viability of the night-time economy for businesses.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the new Night-Time Economy Commissioner to explore the development of a more coordinated and streamlined regulatory framework to improve how businesses engage with government, including with support for CALD stakeholders.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the new Night-Time Economy Commissioner to provide more accessible and targeted support for workers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, including those in hospitality and rideshare sectors, to improve understanding of their rights, obligations, and entitlements, and to strengthen protections against discrimination.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the Night-Time Commissioner with setting and monitoring progress on metrics for growth of the ACT's night-time economy, supported by transparent reporting and accountability measures.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish entertainment precincts across Canberra, including in Woden, Tuggeranong, Belconnen and the future Molonglo Town Centre, with investment in major developments co-ordinated to include early integration of entertainment and cultural use.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop and publish a Town Centre Entertainment Precinct Roadmap by September 2027 to guide the planning, delivery and activation of entertainment precincts across the city.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider expanding the remit of the City Renewal Authority, or establishing other governance arrangements with similar functions, to cover non-CBD Town Centres.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the new Night-Time Economy Commissioner with developing and delivering a dedicated Night-Time Economy Activation Strategy.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Night-Time Economy Activation Strategy include implementing a precinct activation and collaboration program which fosters a consistent, year-round activation across the city, and cultural centres, encouraging an “always-on” environment rather than relying solely on one-off or temporary pop-up events.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the Night-Time Economy Commissioner, as part of the Night-Time Economy Activation Strategy, explore the establishment of a Creative Land Trust to incentivise private landlords to support creative industries and enhance their contribution to the night-time economy, as well as identifying vacant public owned spaces which could be used for innovative night-time economy initiatives.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the new Night-Time Economy Commissioner to work with Visit Canberra to use major tourism events to promote local Night-Time Economy businesses, including by improving transport to different entertainment precincts.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider offering stronger temporary relief measures for businesses adversely affected by ongoing disruptions associated with major infrastructure works in the city, such as means-tested rent relief.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government encourage major institutions and organisations to ensure locally developed content and talent are considered for every cultural initiative.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider implementing targeted incentives, beyond existing program offerings, to encourage venues to feature live music, including performances by original and contemporary artists.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider strengthening training and apprenticeship pathways to support workers in the hospitality industry.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake a comprehensive review of the liquor licensing fee framework, including benchmarking against New South Wales, with a view to reducing regulatory burden and fostering business innovation, while minimising risk and harm.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that, as part of the review recommended above, the ACT Government consider providing liquor license fee reduction incentives for venues with a capacity of over 350 people similar to those available for smaller venues.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider incorporating flexibility within Risk Assessment Management Plans, allowing voluntary restrictions on liquor licence conditions in exchange for reduced fees

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government adopt agent-of-change planning laws that require the person or entity responsible for a new development to bear the costs of mitigating noise impacts from existing establishments in the area, such as live music venues, clubs, pubs and arts centres, protecting those established venues from future noise complaints brought about by the new development.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government adopt the NSW approach to noise complaints including existing thresholds and parameters, with its vibrancy reforms, to better balance the needs of both residents and businesses.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise measures to maintain access to the City precinct — including parking supply, accessible (disability) parking spaces, and alternative transport options — to offset the loss of capacity resulting from the closure of the Theatre Lane and Law Courts carparks.

Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider reinstating the City Loop free bus service, and expanding it to the Parliamentary Triangle.

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government extend its bus service operating hours to include late-night services on weekends.

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review opportunities to enhance the City and Town Centres precincts' appeal, accessibility, and safety, including through vandalism remediation, improved lighting, and other public safety measures.

Recommendation 27

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase community policing within City and Town Centre precincts to address concerns relating to safety and anti-social behaviour.

Recommendation 28

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, in the Night-Time Activation Strategy, encourage and support a greater range of multicultural events in the City and Town Centres, incorporating food, music, and cultural experiences.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Committee received 22 submissions to the inquiry. They are published on the inquiry webpage and are listed at [Appendix A](#).
- 1.2. The Committee resolved to adopt one exhibit as part of the inquiry. This exhibit is a report that had been commissioned for MusicACT. A covering letter from the current Director of MusicACT is also included, arguing that the report should not be relied upon as evidence due to a methodological flaw which undermines its findings. The exhibit is available to view on the [inquiry website](#).
- 1.3. The Committee held public hearings on 12 and 13 May 2026, hearing from a range of stakeholders as well as the former Minister for the Night-Time Economy. A list of witnesses is available at [Appendix B](#). Transcripts and video recordings of the hearings are available on the [Legislative Assembly website](#).
- 1.4. Ten questions were taken on notice at the hearings. Two questions on notice were submitted during the inquiry. The questions are listed at [Appendix C](#) and the answers are available on the [inquiry webpage](#).
- 1.5. Statistics on the gender of witnesses, collected in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, are at [Appendix D](#). The information is collected to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs of, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses.

What is the Night-Time Economy?

- 1.6. The Night-Time Economy (NTE) is generally accepted to be commercial activity that occurs between 6pm and 6am in a series of sectors including food, drink and entertainment.¹
- 1.7. The Committee learned throughout the inquiry that this definition can be extended further to include sport and non-alcohol related activities. As Ms Ashlee Berry, from the Property Council of Australia, explained that:

It is culture, sporting facilities and community sporting facilities, all through to professional sports—it is the whole gamut. I think we need to make sure that, when we are talking about a night-time economy, that is what we are focusing on. It is not just the bars, the cafes and the restaurants.²

- 1.8. The ACT Multicultural Council recommended the promotion of family friendly precincts and events including options where alcohol is secondary or absent, to encourage participation by families, elders, faith-based groups, and youth from CALD communities.³

¹ Ingenium Research, [Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025: A project for the Council City Lord Mayors](#), July 2025, p 2; NSW Government, [NSW 24-Hour Economy Strategy: A new state of night](#), p 7; London Assembly, Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [London's Night-Time Economy](#), February 2025, p 11.

² Ms Ashlee Berry, Property Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026 p 77.

³ ACT Multicultural Council, *Submission 8*, p 2.

1.9. Retail Drinks Australia explained through a commercial lens that:

Consumers are increasingly favouring informal gatherings, smaller-scale social experiences and mixed-use precincts rather than exclusively late-night venue models.

Our sector has seen significant growth in demand for non-alcoholic wines and beers, reflecting changing consumer preferences and a broader moderation trend.⁴

The Night-Time Economy in Canberra

1.10. The Night-Time Economy is a critical part of the ACT's economic and cultural landscape. It supports a wide range of local businesses and jobs: in 2023-24 it generated approximately \$4.7 billion in turnover and sustained 32,205 jobs and 2,300 businesses.⁵

1.11. A vibrant NTE is attractive to visitors. Interstate visitors contributed up to 22 percent of Canberra's NTE spending in 2025, according to a report from Visa. Their 2026 ranking of Australia's 'Visa Vibe Score', which is based on spending, business environment, vibrancy, and safety and accessibility, has Canberra 10th out of 88 locations.⁶

1.12. The ACT Government's submission sets out its high-level vision for the NTE in its submission to the inquiry:

[A] city where the night brings exciting opportunity 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 talents and creativity of businesses, artists and entrepreneurs are readily showcased and valued. Canberra, day and night, a better experience for everyone.⁷

1.13. In 2023 and 2024, the ACT Government undertook a NTE Review which examined 'different governance models including Night-time commissions; Night-time mayors; and Night-time advocacy group.' In 2024, the Night-time Economy Review report was released, which focused on legislation and regulation reform for businesses.⁸

1.14. Working with community, businesses and industry, the ACT Government also developed a set of NTE principles. These six principles are used as a 'touchstone for its ongoing reform program', and are:

- 1) taking an inclusive approach;

⁴ Retail Drinks Australia, *Submission 11*, p 3.

⁵ Ingenium Research, [Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025](#), July 2025, p 13; ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 4.

⁶ Visa Public, [Vibing the night: Australia night-time economy index 2025](#), September 2025, p 14; Visa Public, [Visa Vibe Score: Night-time Economy Index 2026](#), undated.

⁷ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 3.

⁸ ACT Government, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, [Night-time Economy Review: Better Regulation Taskforce Reform Program to July 2024](#), February 2024.

- 2) nightlife beyond liquor;
- 3) nurture the arts;
- 4) support the night-time workforce;
- 5) increase possibilities for small businesses; and
- 6) rethink governance.⁹

1.15. The ACT Government established a Minister for Night-Time Economy in 2024. Ms Tara Cheyne MLA was the Minister for Night-Time Economy from November 2024 until July 2026, after which the portfolio was moved to Mr Michael Pettersson MLA as Minister for Arts, Creative Industries and the Night-Time Economy.¹⁰

⁹ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p. 25.

¹⁰ Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, *Tara Cheyne MLA*, <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/members/current/cheyne>, undated (accessed 9 October 2026); Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, *Michael Pettersson MLA*, <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/members/current/pettersson>, undated (accessed 9 October 2026)

2. Process and policy improvements

- 2.1. The Committee heard that ACT Government policy and processes create barriers to a thriving Night-Time Economy.
- 2.2. This section examines the opportunities in establishing a Night-Time Economy Commissioner, an Advisory Group and a strategy, streamlining government frameworks and processes, and the systems through which government engages, consults, and supports businesses.

‘The multi-agency maze’

- 2.3. The main criticism which was brought to the Committee from Night-Time Economy businesses and industry groups was how confusing and complex they found it to deal with government agencies.
- 2.4. The Property Council of Australia ACT and Capital Region Executive Director, Ms Ashlee Berry, described a lack of co-ordination across ACT Government directorates:

At the moment, if you look across government and who has responsibility for those parts of the night-time economy, we now have planning and transport in the one department—which is fabulous—but they are still operating slightly in silos, particularly from a night-time economy perspective. No-one has that one focus. We also then have things from an economic development perspective with culture; we have the police and JACS with safety; and then we have licensing. They are the five things— planning, transport, culture, licensing and safety—that need to be considered for a night-time economy to be really vibrant and thriving. We need one person to be able to bring all of the ACT government priorities for that together.¹¹

- 2.5. Mr Samuel Conway, Director of Gang Gang Café, felt the same:

Currently, you have to deal with disconnected sections of government. It is hard to know who you need to reach out to or what you even need to do. It could be so much more streamlined. Also, having someone with industry experience would help significantly.¹²

- 2.6. Mr Josh Dotta called it the ‘Multi-Agency Maze’ in his submission, explaining as a nightclub operator in the ACT, he routinely interacts with up to 10 separate government organisational units:

1. Access Canberra — Liquor Licensing: licence applications, renewals, amendments, annual fees, RAMP approvals, floor plan changes, extended trading authorisations, incident reporting.

¹¹ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 79.

¹² *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 27.

2. Access Canberra — Compliance/Inspections: on-site compliance checks, noise monitoring, CCTV compliance, RSA enforcement.

3. ACT Policing (AFP): security and safety operations, incident response, patron behaviour, crowd management coordination.

4. Environment Protection Authority (EPA): noise complaints and standards enforcement.

5. CMTEDD / Better Regulation Taskforce: policy development, night-time economy reforms.

6. City Renewal Authority: precinct management, activation programs, CCTV infrastructure.

7. Events team: special event declarations, extended trading during events.

8. Planning & Land Authority: development applications, change of use, building compliance.

9. WorkSafe ACT: workplace health and safety, crowd management obligations.

10. Fire & Rescue / Emergency Services: occupancy loading compliance, fire safety.¹³

- 2.7. Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer of ClubsACT, also noted the navigation required for ACT Government agencies that do not interact with each other:

The problem with the ACT government structure at the moment is there is a lot of siloing that seems to take place between different functions. You find yourself frequently running from one to another, to another, and you do not seem to get any conclusion. There is no one responsible party, in terms of all the decision making. And licensing issues are different from a lot of the other issues, so you are dealing with one part of government for licensing and then dealing with another—even just food and alcohol licensing can be a different issue and have different parts of the government to work with.¹⁴

- 2.8. As well as having a negative impact on businesses, witnesses felt that this lack of co-ordination has resulted in a lack of focus and strategic direction for Canberra's NTE.

- 2.9. Mr Josh Dotta, nightclub owner, explained his grievances in relation to the current arrangements:

[T]here needs to be someone to be able to speak for us, to be able to consolidate all the venues that are having the issues, to identify what the big issues are, to

¹³ Fiction Nightclub, ONE22 Bar and Vent Nightclub, *Submission 17*, p 9.

¹⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 54.

then be able to put action in. We have had this nighttime ministry now since October or November last year and I have not heard “boo” from it.¹⁵

- 2.10. Mr Nesh Nikolic, another local business owner, agreed:

If I can address some of that as well: having a voice is, I think, part of the problem that this precinct does not have—and having a centralised person or place that potentially has some actual power to address some of our concerns.¹⁶

- 2.11. Mr Benjamin Johnston, Managing Director of the Meem Collective, explained how the current ACT Government arrangements to support businesses need to expand beyond Access Canberra and a ‘regulation’ role:

Some of the people at Access Canberra are very helpful and professional, but who you are going to get is a bit ad hoc. Further, we have a night-time economy minister, but there is no-one there to really help. It is still about regulation. It is not that the person within government gets back to the commissioner or commissioner role. It should be about: “How are we helping people? How are we growing it?” It is about proactively trying to do it and maybe reaching out more and asking, “What do you need?” There has been the BRT stuff, the Better Regulation Taskforce stuff, which came out of that, but it sort of went around in circles for years. It really shows that we need somebody there.¹⁷

- 2.12. Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, the Minister for the Night-Time Economy (at the time), during the inquiry hearings summarised that:

I think there is a diagnosis across the submissions that Canberra’s night-time economy has real strengths and real stress points, that current settings are not yet entirely aligned with how the sector actually functions, and that coordination across government can certainly be sharper.¹⁸

A Night-Time Commissioner for Canberra?

- 2.13. NSW and Queensland have night-time leadership positions which are formalised in legislation, with NSW including a broader framework for policy and stakeholder consultation.
- 2.14. A 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, a 24-Hour Economy Advisory, and a 24-Hour Economy Strategy are currently operating in NSW. The *24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023* (NSW) establishes the role of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, sets out functions of the Commissioner (which include advocating for and furthering the interests of the night-time economy) and defines that the Commissioner is not ‘subject to the control and direction of the Minister’.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 7.

¹⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 7.

¹⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 28.

¹⁸ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 92.

¹⁹ *24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023* (NSW) s 5.

2.15. The legislated functions of the Commissioner are as follows:

(1) The Commissioner has the following functions—

(a) to advocate for, and promote the interests of, the night-time economy State-wide,

(b) to advocate for policy change, legislative reforms and other improvements about the night-time economy, including by attending relevant forums and conferences and being involved in negotiations between stakeholders,

(c) to drive collaboration between government agencies to address common issues, and promote better policy development, about the night-time economy,

(d) to provide advice, recommendations and reports to the Minister, at the request of the Minister or on the Commissioner's own initiative, about matters relating to the night-time economy,

(e) to raise awareness and provide education about, and conduct programs and other activities to promote—

(i) understanding of issues affecting the night-time economy, and

(ii) compliance with legislation affecting the night-time economy, and

(iii) best practice in relation to other matters affecting the night-time economy,

(f) to promote and enhance multiculturalism as part of the night-time economy,

(g) to advocate for a mix of diverse cultural, social and business activities and experiences as part of the night-time economy,

(h) to encourage more collaboration across industry, local government and the NSW Government in delivery initiatives in relation to the night-time economy,

(i) other functions conferred on the Commissioner by this Act or another Act.²⁰

2.16. The legislation also prescribes that the Minister may establish an advisory council to provide advice to the Commissioner, members of which are appointed by the Minister on recommendation of the Commissioner.²¹

2.17. In Queensland, the *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024* (QLD) establishes the role of the Night-Life Economy Commissioner and office. The appointment of the Commissioner

²⁰ *24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023* (NSW) Div 2

²¹ *24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023* (NSW) s 6.

is by the Governor acting with the advice of the Executive Council and on recommendation of the Minister.²²

2.18. The QLD Commissioner has similar responsibilities to the NSW one:

The main functions of the commissioner are—

- (a) to provide a central point of contact in relation to matters affecting the night-life economy; and
- (b) to provide information and advice to night-life businesses and to refer night-life businesses to entities that provide advisory or support services; and
- (c) to raise awareness about—
 - (i) issues affecting the night-life economy; and
 - (ii) compliance with legislation affecting the night-life economy; and
 - (iii) best practice in relation to other matters affecting the night-life economy; and
- (d) to conduct inquiries as the Minister directs into matters affecting the night-life economy; and
- (e) to advocate on behalf of night-life businesses to—
 - (i) the State, the Commonwealth, another State or a local government; or
 - (ii) any other entity involved in administering a matter relevant to the night-life economy; and
- (f) to work collaboratively with other persons appointed on behalf of the State who are involved in administering matters relevant to night-life businesses; and

Examples of other persons—

- the commissioner under the [Gaming Machine Act 1991](#)
- the commissioner under the [Small Business Commissioner Act 2022](#)

(g) to work collaboratively with the equivalent of the commissioner in other States or the Commonwealth to enhance conditions for night-life businesses; and

(h) to report to the Minister about a particular issue or a general matter relating to the night-life economy or the commissioner's functions; and

²² *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024* (QLD) s 9.

(i) to perform any other function given to the commissioner under this or another Act.²³

2.19. Many witnesses in this inquiry called for a similar leadership role for the ACT, that would take a proactive approach to advocating for the NTE, as well as improving regulation and being a single point for feedback between the community and government.²⁴

2.20. Ms Sia Ahmad, Director MusicACT explained that the role could be a way of prioritising support for artistic and cultural pursuits:

When we think about a night-time—whoever it is going to be, whatever the role is going to be called, it is a movable feast. But the idea is that the portfolio should be finding ways of providing opportunity for platform artistry.²⁵

2.21. The view of the ACT Government is that the idea of a NTE Commissioner for the ACT had been previously explored but was not found to be suitable for a jurisdiction of this size:

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.²⁶

2.22. Instead, the Government has focused on streamlining policy and regulatory processes as a whole, as exemplified by the recent machinery of government changes which co-located major policy and operational units relating to the NTE within the new City and Environment Directorate.²⁷

2.23. The Minister talked about this choice during the public hearing, saying:

But I think it is a matter of asking: what will lift the city so that people are going out all the time? Does that need a strategy, or does it need us instead providing the best regulatory settings, and the best pathway navigation? That could be through a particular role to connect the right people so that something can happen and government otherwise gets out of the way.²⁸

Committee Comment

2.24. The Committee acknowledges the ACT Government has established a ministerial portfolio for the NTE, and machinery of government changes have consolidated positions under the City and Environment Directorate. The Committee also notes the ACT Government's welcomed program of regulatory reforms.

²³ *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024* (QLD) Div 1

²⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026 p 26; Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 14*, p 36, Fiction Nightclub, ONE22 Bar, and Vent Nightclub, *Submission 17*, p 18; MusicACT, *Submission 16*, p 6; The Meen Collective, *Submission 15*, p 6.

²⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 40.

²⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 23.

²⁷ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 23.

²⁸ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, pp 98–99.

- 2.25. Unfortunately, the evidence the Committee received suggests that silos are still in place across government and a lack of coordinated focus and feedback mechanisms continue for local business owners.
- 2.26. The Committee is concerned that this situation is limiting opportunities for collaboration between government, industry and local creatives in support of activating, strengthening and diversifying Canberra's night-time economy.
- 2.27. It is the view of this Committee that the role of Minister for the Night-Time Economy should be supported by a dedicated position within the bureaucracy of government.
- 2.28. A Night-Time Economy Commissioner could head an office which supports the activation and diversification of Canberra's NTE, take a proactive approach to finding improvements in administrative processes, and advocates for the sector within Government as well as with other external stakeholders.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a dedicated Night-Time Economy Commissioner with strong industry experience capable of working across government and industry to support the activation and diversification of across Canberra's night-time economy, modelled on similar roles that have been legislated in NSW and Queensland.

Establishment of Night-Time Advisory Group

- 2.29. The diversity of stakeholders in the NTE was highlighted in submissions and evidence provided by witnesses representing the ACT arts sector, business owners, multicultural communities, community groups and venue managers.
- 2.30. As previously outlined, local business owners felt there lacked consultation on issues and government policies that impacted them.
- 2.31. Drawing on best-practice principles for inclusion and cohesion, the Australian Multicultural Action Network called for co-design with multicultural communities, 'not consultation after decisions.'²⁹ This call was also reflected in the ACT Multicultural Council submission.³⁰
- 2.32. The ACT Multicultural Council also recommended the establishment of a structured mechanism for ongoing engagement that ensured 'representation of multicultural voices.'³¹
- 2.33. The importance of the inclusion of creative industries and the arts in the Night-Time Economy was also highlighted to the Committee.³²

²⁹ Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Submission 2*, p 5.

³⁰ ACT Multicultural Council, *Submission 8*, p 4.

³¹ ACT Multicultural Council, *Submission 8*, p 4.

³² Ms Alexandra Sekules, Producer, Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 21; Ms Sia Ahmad, MusicACT, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 38.

Committee Comment

- 2.34. The role of a NTE Commissioner should be supported by a formal mechanism which brings together expert and experienced NTE stakeholders. An advisory group would allow ongoing interaction and communication, and bring together the diverse range of stakeholders across many industries and groups.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a Night-Time Economy Advisory Group to inform and support the work of the Night-Time Economy Commissioner, with representatives from the ACT arts sector, business owners, multicultural communities, community groups, and venue managers.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the Night-Time Economy Advisory Group with undertaking genuine, timely, and meaningful stakeholder consultation prior to significant policy decisions that impact the viability of the night-time economy for businesses.

A one-stop shop

- 2.35. A Night-Time Economy Commissioner's office could help businesses navigate the red tape of approvals and regulations.
- 2.36. Mr Ross McQuinn, Director of Such and Such Restaurant, provided an example of the many layers of approvals required at a federal and territory level:

For example, to erect the umbrellas that are at the front of Such and Such, I had to coordinate between four different departments, both territory and federal departments, and get them all to talk to each other and agree with each other. I had the NCA telling me that I needed approval from the City Renewal Authority, which told me I needed approval from Access Canberra, which told me I needed approval from TCCS, which then told me I needed approval from the NCA. It became a bit of a rigmarole. After months and months, when I finally got the NCA to look at the space, they said, "I don't know why we thought that this was an issue. Done". It would be good to remove that bureaucracy and get some results by having some KPIs that someone can work towards.³³

- 2.37. Mr Conway described the importance of business support in government departments through a dedicated resource:

I think it is just making it easier for businesses to understand what and how they get through all of these different things. For us, the first time round of the festival

³³ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, pp 27 – 28.

was just a nightmare. I think it was like six months or something for us to get the public land use permit—something crazy. We now have a coordinator at Events ACT who is amazing, and they have been really helpful with that—which is just a festival. That is just a good example of one section where, if someone were able to just streamline all those processes, it would just make life a lot easier.³⁴

- 2.38. Multicultural community groups also explained the difficulty in navigating multiple directorates and processes for CALD communities, especially in terms of licensing.³⁵ Mr Andrew Ng, Chair, ACT Multicultural Council, suggested a ‘one-stop panel or advisory place to smooth out the application process’ that is multi-lingual and can assist members of the CALD community in navigating the administration.³⁶

- 2.39. Multicultural community groups also highlighted that understanding workplace rights is difficult for the many NTE workers that come from CALD backgrounds.³⁷

- 2.40. Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, President, Australian Multicultural Action Network, explained the diversity in the types of jobs undertaken from those with CALD backgrounds:

Many workers in the night-time economy have a CALD background. We know that lots of security staff and taxi drivers come from a CALD background. There are a lot of Bangladeshi and Nepalese workers. They are increasing in Canberra as well. Some of the hospitality workers, cleaners, and even delivery drivers and ride-share drivers are international students. They are participating in the nighttime economy. An important contribution by the CALD members is the diversified workforce that we can see. Lots of taxi drivers come from different backgrounds. So more support is needed to help these workers, because, if they can access stable jobs, a good leadership opportunity and even a safe workspace would help them to some extent.³⁸

- 2.41. Concerningly, the Committee also heard that people from CALD communities experience racism and discrimination when working in the NTE.³⁹

Committee comment

- 2.42. The Committee condemns the continued acts of racism and discrimination that are sadly still present in the ACT community.
- 2.43. The Committee believes that interactions with government could be improved for both businesses and workers, and should be a focus of a new Night-Time Commissioner, and that a
- 2.44. ccessible and targeted support for people from CALD backgrounds is essential.

³⁴ Mr Sam Conway, Director, Gang Gang café, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 36.

³⁵ Mr Anderw Ng, Chair, ACT Multicultural Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 73; Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, President, Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 72.

³⁶ Mr Anderw Ng, Chair, ACT Multicultural Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 71.

³⁷ Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, President, Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 72

³⁸ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 72.

³⁹ Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, President, Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 72

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the new Night-Time Economy Commissioner to explore the development of a more coordinated and streamlined regulatory framework to improve how businesses engage with government, including with support for CALD stakeholders.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the new Night-Time Economy Commissioner to provide more accessible and targeted support for workers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, including those in hospitality and rideshare sectors, to improve understanding of their rights, obligations, and entitlements, and to strengthen protections against discrimination.

Measuring impact

- 2.45. The Committee heard that data on the Night-Time Economy in the ACT is complicated by disruptions by COVID-19, the unique makeup of the territory, and workforce changes.⁴⁰
- 2.46. There are many ways to measure NTE activity. A *Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025* report identified that Canberra had one of the lowest percentages of core NTE businesses trading after 9pm, at just 34 percent.⁴¹ During the hearings, Ms Cheyne indicated that a valuable target to set could be uplifting this number as opposed to increasing particular venue numbers.⁴²
- 2.47. Other ways to measure the work of the Night-Time Commissioner could be tracking how long business administrative processes take. According to the ACT Government, liquor licence applications have a 90-day target processing time from receipt of a complete application exists for liquor licence applications. This includes required suitability assessments and public consultation, where community feedback may inform the decision.⁴³ However, ACT Government figures of average processing time in the 2025/2026 financial year (to 29 May 2026) for liquor licences was 115 days.⁴⁴ Shortening the average processing time would have clear positive effects for the hospitality industry.

Committee Comment

- 2.48. During the inquiry, there was some confusion on data provided to the Committee in reference to unfavourably comparing the ACT's NTE with those of interstate Local Government Areas (LGAs).⁴⁵ LGAs are geographic areas used in states with councils, which

⁴⁰ Mr David Caffery, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 14; Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 105.

⁴¹ Ingenium Research, *Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2025*, July 2025, p 15.

⁴² Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 107.

⁴³ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Night-Time Economy, *answer to QON 1* (21 May 2026), received 29 May 2026. p 1.

⁴⁴ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Night-Time Economy, *answer to QON 1* (21 May 2026), received 29 May 2026. p 1.

⁴⁵ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 105.

the ACT does not have. Therefore, comparing the economic activity of a metropolitan LGA with the whole of the ACT is not an equitable comparison, as the ACT's geographic area is predominantly covered by national park land.

- 2.49. The Committee believes that better metrics must be developed to track changes to the ACT's NTE. For example, the number of businesses operating after dark, numbers of patrons at venues, and key performance indicators in government agencies could be used.
- 2.50. These metrics should be reported publicly for transparency and accountability.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the Night-Time Commissioner with setting and monitoring progress on metrics for growth of the ACT's night-time economy, supported by transparent reporting and accountability measures.

Entertainment Precincts

- 2.51. In the ACT, 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.'⁴⁶
- 2.52. Developments in these precincts have specific Territory Plan Assessment Requirements:
- Developments should help make the area more vibrant, including supporting entertainment and nightlife activity.
 - Entertainment venues must consider how they manage loud music, especially bass sounds, through building design and venue management.
 - Buildings must meet soundproofing standards to reduce incoming noise, including bass sounds.⁴⁷
- 2.53. There are two entertainment precincts in the ACT: the City Centre Entertainment Precinct (CCEP) and Gungahlin Entertainment Precinct (GEP). They are both 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. In August 2024, new noise standards for entertainment noise were introduced for the CCEP areas.⁴⁸
- 2.54. The Committee heard that the NTE is decentralising outside of these two entertainment precincts.
- 2.55. The Australian Hotels Association ACT submission noted shifts to visitation patterns to Canberra's Central Business District (CBD), caused by changes to work patterns and the relocation of major government agencies. The submission also noted that 'around

⁴⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 8–9.

⁴⁷ ACT Government, Planning, Entertainment precincts, <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/planning-projects/entertainment-precincts>, undated (accessed 12 October 2026).

⁴⁸ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 8–9.

61 percent of employees in the Canberra CBD work from home at least some of the time' reducing traditional office occupancy and foot traffic in the city.⁴⁹

- 2.56. The Committee heard from a number of stakeholders that noise levels and questionable planning decisions remained an issue across the ACT entertainment venues that are not in the CCEP or Gungahlin Entertainment Precinct. Mr Caffery gave some examples:

Dairy Road cannot get a special entertainment precinct, even though the developer might put themselves forward and satisfy the requirements. It is apparently just up to the government to declare where it would be. [...] The Old Canberra Inn has been around for about 165 years. The planning department, 20 years ago, allowed apartments to be built there. Those apartments are now holding this beautiful old establishment to the absolute decibel—45 dBA. I am talking over it right now. They get complaints all the time from known people who live in those apartments who complain.⁵⁰

- 2.57. Dr Weir from the Canberra and Region Tourism Leaders Forum explained further in relation to town centres and planning:

I think, is that the town centres have been—not ignored, but—not as well supported in terms of promoting diversity in the offering to residents. Part of the night-time economy is certainly about visitors, but it is also about residents as well. And I do not think the government, so far, in its planning and its regulation, in its fees and charges [...] are really helping that. ⁵¹

- 2.58. Woden Valley Community Council called on all town centres, including Woden Town Centre to be 'recognised as integral components of Canberra's overall night-time economy.'⁵²

- 2.59. ClubsACT called for all club sites be considered as entertainment precincts. Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer of ClubsACT explained that clubs often become social hubs:

I will give you a very good example of it: The Harmonie German Club. It is a very significant entertainment precinct in and of itself, and it is getting urban densification going on around that location. Oktoberfest is held there, as most people would know. We want all club sites to be treated as entertainment precincts, particularly because they should become the lifeblood of the entertainment area within those increasingly growing residential areas. We have raised this with government before. The over concentration of focus just on the CBD, while it is worthy in its own right, should not be an exclusive option. It should be considering every town centre and every location that is a club facility

⁴⁹ Australian Hotels Association ACT, *Submission 14*, p 11.

⁵⁰ Mr Caffery, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 17.

⁵¹ Dr Brian Weir, Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 50.

⁵² Woden Valley Community Council, *Submission 21*, p 1.

site. I think it lends itself to great opportunities for social hubs for the Canberra community as it grows.⁵³

- 2.60. Other jurisdictions have created precincts to assist the diversity in the NTE. Ms Sekules, Producer at Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, explained the success of special entertainment precincts in Fortitude Valley in Queensland, where regulation ideas and managed areas provide a precedent for ACT to lend from.⁵⁴
- 2.61. The ACT Government outlined that ‘further work to investigate other entertainment precincts across the ACT’ would commence following the completion of the review of the City Centre Entertainment Precinct.⁵⁵

Committee Comment

- 2.62. The Committee acknowledges that the ACT Government recently reviewed the CCEP and is investigating future areas for entertainment precincts. That review also supported future investigations into town centres and other areas across the ACT that are suitable to be defined as entertainment precincts, although this is yet to be delivered.⁵⁶
- 2.63. The Committee is of the view that governance and coordination of town centre activation is fragmented, with no clear accountability or leadership. Furthermore, there is a significant gap between the strategic intent to develop distributed entertainment precincts and the practical delivery of those outcomes, limiting the ability of town centres to meet the needs of their growing residential catchments.
- 2.64. ACT Government planning for town centre entertainment precincts also lacks clear timelines and is not sufficiently integrated with major development, resulting in missed opportunities to embed activation outcomes.
- 2.65. A dedicated governance and activation model is essential to translate policy intent into on-the-ground outcomes and ensure Canberra’s town centres develop as vibrant, accessible and sustainable destinations. As it is, the Night-Time Economy outside of the CBD lacks the infrastructure, planning and investment required to support viable town centre precincts.
- 2.66. Clear leadership, cross-agency coordination, dedicated delivery capability and partnerships with local businesses, creatives and the community are required to support ongoing activation, programmed events and vibrant public space in the town centres. Alignment with transport options and infrastructure development is also crucial.

⁵³ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 51.

⁵⁴ Ms Lexi Sekules, Producer, Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 16.

⁵⁵ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Night-Time Economy, *answer to QON 2* (21 May 2026), received 29 May 2026. pp 1–2.

⁵⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 9-10; ACT Government, <https://www.act.gov.au/law-and-justice/law-reforms/new-standards-for-entertainment-noise>, 9 September 2026 (accessed 23 September 2026).

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish entertainment precincts across Canberra, including in Woden, Tuggeranong, Belconnen and the future Molonglo Town Centre, with investment in major developments co-ordinated to include early integration of entertainment and cultural use.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop and publish a Town Centre Entertainment Precinct Roadmap by September 2027 to guide the planning, delivery and activation of entertainment precincts across the city.

- 2.67. There is a dedicated government agency, the City Renewal Authority, which leads social and environmental renewal of the urban spaces of Canberra's CBD. According to its website:

Its mission is to transform Canberra's City Centre into a contemporary and magnetic destination by creating culturally rich, sustainable, and thoughtfully designed places, facilitating new investment, celebrating unique characteristics, attracting people to local businesses, engaging with the community, and activating welcoming, lively spaces.⁵⁷

- 2.68. The Committee believes that this work should be expanded to enliven Canberra's town centres alongside the establishment of more entertainment precincts.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider expanding the remit of the City Renewal Authority, or establishing other governance arrangements with similar functions, to cover non-CBD Town Centres.

⁵⁷ ACT Government, City Renewal Authority, City Renewal Precinct, <https://www.act.gov.au/cityrenewal/about/city-renewal-precinct3>, undated (accessed 12 October 2026).

3. Support for businesses

- 3.1. The Committee recommends the new Night-Time Commissioner be tasked with developing and delivering a dedicated Night-Time Economy Activation Strategy.
- 3.2. The Strategy is recommended to include a precinct activation program and coordinated promotions to encourage and support a wider range of NTE events.

Activation Strategy

- 3.3. Evidence provided to the Committee by local businesses and industry groups promoted the need to develop a NTE strategy, which would diversify the activities considered ‘night-time’ and plan further initiatives to support existing venues, with a focus on consultation and shared vision.⁵⁸
- 3.4. Mr David Caffery, who owns a small event company, explained in his submission that:

[T]he CBD will not become the economic and reputational ‘place’ it should without a nighttime activation strategy. The new Entertainment Precincts will lack activity at night without multi-disciplinary campaigns aimed at changing the grain of our city and bringing together businesses, media, transport, and government departments toward a shared vision.⁵⁹

- 3.5. There was a view by some stakeholders that the lack of strategic planning by ACT Government was due to ‘reliance on pop-up festivals and events which often provide only a temporary spike in activity.’⁶⁰
- 3.6. Major events are a key investment in the Government’s Tourism Strategy.⁶¹ However, the former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, also reflected on the need for a permissive regulatory framework for the NTE to thrive:

But I think it is a matter of asking: what will lift the city so that people are going out all the time? Does that need a strategy, or does it need us instead providing the best regulatory settings, and the best pathway navigation? That could be through a particular role to connect the right people so that something can happen and government otherwise gets out of the way.⁶²

- 3.7. In their submission to the inquiry, the ACT Government referred to the *T2030 ACT Tourism Strategy, Phase 2: 2025 and Beyond* explaining that:

⁵⁸ Mr Johnston, Director, The Meem Collective, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026 p 26; Ms Sia Ahmad, Director, MusicACT, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026 p 43; Ms Berry, ACT and Capital Region Executive Director, Property Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026 p 79; Mr Nelson Tang, President, Woden Valley Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026 p 88–89 and Mr David Caffery, *Submission 6*, p 1.

⁵⁹ Mr David Caffery, *Submission 6*, p 1.

⁶⁰ Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Submission 20*, p 2.

⁶¹ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 18.

⁶² Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026 p 99.

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.⁶³

Committee Comment

- 3.8. Whilst the Committee acknowledges that the ACT Government covers aspects of the NTE in the *T2030 ACT Tourism Strategy, Phase 2: 2025 and Beyond*, considering the significant value both economically and culturally of the NTE, the development of a separate strategy would provide better focus for activations and regulatory ambitions.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the new Night-Time Economy Commissioner with developing and delivering a dedicated Night-Time Economy Activation Strategy.

Precinct activation

- 3.9. The NSW Uptown Accelerator Program provides an example of an Australian jurisdiction encouraging innovation in the ‘going-out’ economy of the local area. It is a grant program for businesses which aims to ‘unlock the potential of going-out districts across urban centres’ through business skill workshops, skills development, network building, and grants.⁶⁴
- 3.10. Some initiatives in the ACT have had similar aims, for example, ACT Government regulation changes for the reduction in costs for liquor licences for businesses who engage in or support artistic activity.⁶⁵ Ms Sekules, Producer at Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, provided an example of how this has generated activity, saying that it led the Ambrosia Bar and Lounge approaching her to form a partnership to sell discounted cocktails to theatre patrons.⁶⁶
- 3.11. Businesses and industry groups also praised the City Renewal Agency’s ‘place-based regeneration’, artsACT’s ‘You Are Here’ festival, and their ‘always on’ approach.⁶⁷

Committee Comment

- 3.12. The Committee acknowledges that implementing these programs can be complex due to bureaucratic arrangements. Activation and placemaking within the Urban Renewal Precinct

⁶³ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 18.

⁶⁴ NSW Government, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/office-of-24-hour-economy-commissioner/uptown-program/uptown-accelerator> (accessed 23 September 2026)

⁶⁵ Ms Lexi Sekules, Producer, Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 16; Mr Christopher Gatfield, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 65–66.

⁶⁶ Ms Lexi Sekules, Producer, Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 16. <https://visitcanberra.com.au/attractions/6747b141a139b87941e1f217/mill-theatre-at-dairy-road>

⁶⁷ Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 14*, p 26; Ms Sia Ahmad, Director, MusicACT, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026 p 43 and Ms Sekules, Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 19.

– declared areas of City Renewal’s remit – which includes Dickson, Braddon, Haig Park, the City Centre, and Acton Waterfront is funded through a combination of ACT Government funding and the City Centre Marketing and Improvements Levy (CCMIL).⁶⁸

- 3.13. However, the Committee believes that more activation programs, similar to the NSW Uptown Accelerator Program, are needed in Canberra to grow the NTE, especially outside of the CBD and of major events.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Night-Time Economy Activation Strategy include implementing a precinct activation and collaboration program which fosters a consistent, year-round activation across the city, and cultural centres, encouraging an “always-on” environment rather than relying solely on one-off or temporary pop-up events.

Using vacant space

- 3.14. The Committee heard complaints about vacant shopfronts in Canberra. The Property Council of Australia believes that many have been vacant for ‘too long’ with buildings having been vandalised while they waited for planning approvals because of lack of foot traffic.⁶⁹
- 3.15. The Committee heard of initiatives in other jurisdictions which encourage activations and innovative use of vacant land and buildings, including London, Newcastle and Melbourne.
- 3.16. The Property Council of Australia submission described a successful ‘Creative Land Trust’ model used in London which retained and promotive creative spaces. The submission suggested that the ACT Government also offer ‘rates reductions or rebates for landlords who lease to eligible creative tenants at affordable rates in identified geographic areas, in a coordinated and intentional manner in conjunction with the City Renewal Authority and other activations in the area.’⁷⁰
- 3.17. Ms Sia Ahmad, Director MusicACT, described the ‘Renew Newcastle’ movement and how pop up venues and renewed shopfronts turned into ‘galleries or small venues, record shops, [and] artisan shops’. The project rejuvenated Hunter Street in NSW, which was previously a ‘dead zone’.⁷¹
- 3.18. A City of Melbourne initiative in 2021 turned vacant shopfronts into temporary creative spaces. Lord Mayor Sally Capp, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne at the time, stated that ‘empty shopfronts are a visible reminder that the City of Melbourne’s economy has been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.’ The City of Melbourne worked with precinct

⁶⁸ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Night-Time Economy, *answer to QON 2* (21 May 2026), received 29 May 2026, p 3.

⁶⁹ Ms Ashlee Berry, ACT and Capital Region Executive Director, Property Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 79.

⁷⁰ Property Council of Australia, *Submission 18*, pp 2–3.

⁷¹ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 43.

associations, businesses and the commercial real estate industry to create opportunities for start-ups, local creatives, not-for-profits, and social enterprises to use temporarily vacant spaces.⁷²

Committee Comment

- 3.19. The Committee is aware of the Creative Spaces program, which finds affordable and accessible spaces for artists within the City of Melbourne. The complementary Creative Spaces website includes a 'searchable database for creative spaces across Australia' connecting creative practitioners with suitable venues and spaces.⁷³
- 3.20. The Committee notes that the issues with vacant commercial land also apply to the use of public spaces.
- 3.21. The Committee notes that within artsACT fund guidelines for the 'City of Design project fund', pop up spaces and urban interventions are eligible for grant support.⁷⁴ However there is no clear listing of possible available spaces on the artsACT website for these initiatives or others.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the Night-Time Economy Commissioner, as part of the Night-Time Economy Activation Strategy, explore the establishment of a Creative Land Trust to incentivise private landlords to support creative industries and enhance their contribution to the night-time economy, as well as identifying vacant public owned spaces which could be used for innovative night-time economy initiatives.

Promotion of local businesses

- 3.22. The Committee heard from restaurant owners that they were seeking better promotion of 'the experience of Canberra', with Mr Benjamin Johnston, Managing Director, The Meem Collective, explaining:

When people go somewhere and they say, "I went to Canberra on the weekend. Yeah, Floriade was all right, but I went to this restaurant and, man, it was awesome and the waiter was really cool," that is actually what they talk to their friends about. I just do not think the ACT government do that very well in general—just with its existing events. They are making efforts to provide a bit more spin-offs from Floriade around town and whatever. That is fine, but it is actually how to get more connection happening. When we have already got millions of people coming in, how do we then sort of share the love? Some of the links on the Visit Canberra website and whatever are pretty woeful. They are out

⁷² Melbourne City Council, 'Turning vacant shopfronts into temporary creative spaces', *Media release*, 4 March 2021.

⁷³ City of Melbourne, *Creative Spaces*, <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/creative-spaces> (accessed 30 September 2026).

⁷⁴ artsACT, City Design Fund https://www.arts.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/2977118/City-of-Design-Fund-public-info-session-November-2025.pdf, (accessed 6 November 2025).

of date. They do not even have the current information. Come on; we can do better.⁷⁵

- 3.23. Mr Johnston suggested that major events could be leveraged more for promoting ACT small businesses:

Enlighten and Floriade are great, but the ACT government does not sell the tourism experience for Canberra very well. It is all heavily skewed towards these major events. When those events are on, what the government should be doing more is packaging that up with the experience of Canberra and highlighting and promoting small businesses.⁷⁶

Committee Comment

- 3.24. The Committee believes that increasing the promotion of local businesses alongside major tourism events could grow the year-round appeal of Canberra's Night-Time Economy.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government task the new Night-Time Economy Commissioner to work with Visit Canberra to use major tourism events to promote local Night-Time Economy businesses, including by improving transport to different entertainment precincts.

Support for local business in the CBD

- 3.25. The impact of major infrastructure works in the city has been felt by local businesses.
- 3.26. The ACT Government is providing practical and financial supports including business activation grants to support 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 had been supported. The ACT Government also established the Business Capability Building Program which provides targeted free business advice for businesses impacted by Light Rail Stage 2A construction.⁷⁷
- 3.27. The Committee heard from industry groups and local business owners that they believed that current support for businesses adversely impacted by major infrastructure construction was not enough.⁷⁸
- 3.28. Within the Australian Hotels Association ACT submission, a comparison to infrastructure work was made to Sydney's Metro project which showed 'that foot traffic reductions of

⁷⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 35.

⁷⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 35.

⁷⁷ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ Mr Josh Dotta, Director, Fiction Club, ONE 22 and Vent Nightclub, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 9; ClubsACT, *Submission 10*, p 36–37; Canberra Region and Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber, *Submission 12*, p 4, 7 & 8; Tadija Miladinovic, *Submission 13*, p 2 and Australian Hotels Association ACT, *Submission 14*, p. 6 & 14–15.

30–60 per cent are common during periods where access, parking, or visibility are impaired.⁷⁹

3.29. The Committee heard that disruptions could impact on business to the point of closures.⁸⁰

3.30. A number of options for business support were laid out by the Australian Hotels Association for consideration:

In the ACT, the need for structured mitigation – be it through direct financial assistance or no-interest loans, rent relief, marketing support, or proactive consultation with affected businesses – should be regarded as an intrinsic and non-negotiable aspect of major infrastructure delivery. This is not an exceptional measure, but the adoption of national best practice.⁸¹

Committee Comment

3.31. The Committee accepts the reports from witnesses that the support offered to businesses impacted by construction in the city has been insufficient.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider offering stronger temporary relief measures for businesses adversely affected by ongoing disruptions associated with major infrastructure works in the city, such as means-tested rent relief.

Initiatives for creative industries

3.32. The need for further support for the creatives industries in the ACT was raised by various stakeholders.

3.33. Ms Lexi Sekules, Producer at the Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, explained the complexities for the local creative sector. She emphasised that local creators are encountering inherently held values of a ‘Canberra Cultural Cringe’ by sector leaders and institutions:

One final, critical issue the Committee must address is the Canberra Cultural Cringe. It is a well-worn trope that much of Australia mistakenly thinks Canberra sucks, but the more damaging reality is that we have sector leaders and institutions who wrongly perpetuate this myth from within. Canberra is changing, the very existence of this inquiry is a testament to that journey, but we cannot achieve a thriving night-time economy while we continue to quietly undermine our own local creators. It is time to call out a cultural bias that assumes anything produced locally is inherently second-rate.⁸²

⁷⁹ Australian Hotels Association ACT, *Submission 14*, p. 14–15.

⁸⁰ Australian Hotels Association ACT, *Submission 14*, p. 15; Mr Nikolic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 13.

⁸¹ Australian Hotels Association ACT, *Submission 14*, p. 15.

⁸² Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Submission 20*, p 4.

- 3.34. Within the inquiry hearings, Ms Sekules provided examples of local theatre content and Canberra companies being overlooked by the Australian War Memorial, the Canberra Theatre Centre, and the Street Theatre.⁸³ She elaborated:

They are funded bodies who, in my experience, do not believe that local and professional can exist without unfair interrogation and assumptions. That is my experience. If we do not tackle that idea, how will we attract enough people? How will we get the confidence of businesses to be open to book an artist? So I guess that is the rub.⁸⁴

- 3.35. Ms Sia Ahmad, Director, MusicACT also touched upon challenges for musicians and the ‘music ecosystem’ in Canberra.⁸⁵ Ms Ahmad explained that a strength of the ACT lies in people ‘making things happen’ because of lack of support from institutions.⁸⁶

- 3.36. The Committee acknowledges the Better Regulation Taskforce in the reduction of liquor licences for businesses who engage in or support artistic activity. The ACT Government submission includes examples of ‘80 per cent reduction in annual liquor licence fees’ given to venues who have hosted author talks, local dancing and musicians, together with staged exhibitions featuring Canberra-based artists.⁸⁷ One industry witness called the program ‘a complete game changer.’⁸⁸

Committee Comment

- 3.37. The Committee recognises the strong and innovative creative industries in the ACT, led by local talent. These industries could be further developed under the ACT Government’s Arts, Culture and Creative Policy, which aims to create, develop and promote arts and culture in the Territory.⁸⁹

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government encourage major institutions and organisations to ensure locally developed content and talent are considered for every cultural initiative.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider implementing targeted incentives, beyond existing program offerings, to encourage venues to feature live music, including performances by original and contemporary artists.

⁸³ Ms Lexi Sekules, Producer, Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 21.

⁸⁴ Ms Lexi Sekules, Producer, Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 21.

⁸⁵ Music ecosystem as defined by Ms Ahmad includes venues, managers, PR representatives and venue bookers.

⁸⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 41.

⁸⁷ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, pp. 21-22.

⁸⁸ Ms Lexi Sekules, Producer, Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 16.

⁸⁹ ACT Government, *Canberra: Australia’s Arts Capital—Arts, Cultural and Creative Policy 2022-2026*, p 2.

Supporting pathways for chefs and kitchen staff

- 3.38. The Committee heard of labour shortages in the ACT for chefs and kitchen staff.⁹⁰
- 3.39. Mr Chris Gatfield, General Manager of Australian Hotels Association ACT presented some data and drew comparisons to the loss of incentives for large employers for qualified kitchen staff:

[...] cook and chef commencements fell in the year to September 2025 by 12%, and the number in training has dropped by 11% to 5,695. The previous loss of incentives for hospitality traineeships continues to see those numbers fall, with commencements down 19.2% on the previous year, and the hospitality traineeships in training fall by 27% to 4,920. Importantly, these falling chef numbers predate the further reduction in incentives which took effect on 1 January 2026 which is sure to make the problem worse as will the loss of incentives entirely for large employers which took effect from Budget night May 2026.⁹¹

- 3.40. Due to this shortage of staff, Mr Benjamin Johnson, Director of the Meem Collective, explained that venues like his had been ‘forced to rely on sponsored migrant workers just to keep doors open.’ He explained further that changes for minimum salary for employee sponsored visas was a ‘massive fixed cost.’⁹²
- 3.41. Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, President, Australian Multicultural Action Network touched upon support and training of workers in hospitality from a CALD background:

Many workers in the night-time economy have a CALD background. [...] Some of the hospitality workers, cleaners, and even delivery drivers and ride-share drivers are international students. They are participating in the night time economy. [...] So more support is needed to help these workers, because, if they can access stable jobs, a good leadership opportunity and even a safe workspace would help them to some extent. The ACT government can definitely help. They can create some form of a multicultural workforce program, training pathways or mentoring opportunities.⁹³

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider strengthening training and apprenticeship pathways to support workers in the hospitality industry.

⁹⁰ The Meem Collective, *Submission 15*, p 1; Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 14*, p 6.

⁹¹ Mr Chris Gatfield, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association ACT, *answer to QTON 1* (13 May 2026), received 3 June 2026, p 2.

⁹² The Meem Collective, *Submission 15*, p 2.

⁹³ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 72.

Liquor licensing

- 3.42. All persons who intend to sell liquor to the public, or at private events with more than 30 people present, must hold a liquor licence or permit. A licence is required if the sale is proposed for a single premises during nominated trading hours. There are a range of licence types depending on the place of consumption and type of premises.⁹⁴
- 3.43. Liquor licensing fees for the ACT are prescribed in the *Liquor Act 2010* (the Act). Section 227 provides that the Minister may determine fees for the Act. Section 32A of the Act provides that a licensee must pay to the Commissioner the annual fee determined for the licence. Annual fees are calculated based on the type of licence, the occupancy loading for the premises, and the licensed time a licensee is permitted to serve alcohol up to.⁹⁵
- 3.44. Liquor licensing fees were a central focus for the ACT Government in its 2024 *Night-Time Economy Review* with proposed changes to the framework around occupancy rates, standard licensed times for restaurants and cafes, and incentives to business owners to host live music, entertainment and art events.⁹⁶
- 3.45. The Committee heard that for local nightclub owner, Mr Dotta, liquor license fees were a substantial percentage of his business costs. He equalled the amount to ‘an extra employee for a year’ at each of his venues.⁹⁷
- 3.46. There were claims that liquor licence fees in the ACT were ‘significantly higher’ than any other jurisdiction in Australia.⁹⁸ As a part of their submission, the Australian Hotels Association provided a table of comparison amounts across Australia:

⁹⁴ ACT Government, https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.accesscanberra.act.gov.au%2F_data%2Fassets%2Fword_doc%2F0006%2F2229900%2FApplcation-for-a-New-Liquor-Licence.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK (accessed 31 August 2026).

⁹⁵ DI2025-130 Explanatory Statement, [Liquor \(Reduction in Annual Licence Fee for Eligible Events\) Guidelines 2025 \(No 1\)](#), Disallowable instrument, ACT Legislation Register.

⁹⁶ ACT Government, https://www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/2790948/Night-time-economy-review-paper.pdf, February 2024 (accessed 25 August 2026).

⁹⁷ Mr Dotta, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026 p 4.

⁹⁸ Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber, *Submission 12*, p 5; Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 14*, p. 6; Fiction Nightclub, ONE22 Bar and Vent Nightclub, *Submission 1*, p 3 & 7—8.

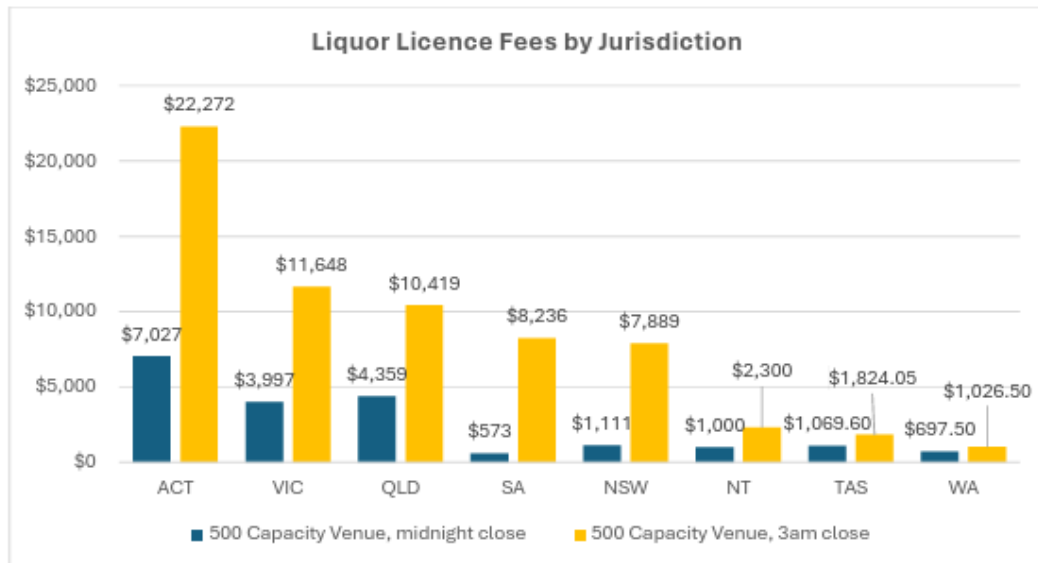


Image 1: Liquor Licence Fees by Jurisdiction [Source: Australian Hotels Association, Submission 14]

- 3.47. Mr Johnston, who owns businesses in both NSW and ACT, also highlighted the difference in licence fees between jurisdictions:

The licence that we have at the Steampacket is until 12 pm, whereas we have a 2 am licence at the Old Canberra Inn. Having said that, that is a food-driven business. I do not know how many times we have traded past midnight, to be honest. It does not really happen. I am not 100 per cent sure, but it is potentially another couple of grand to get to that extension in New South Wales. It is going to be a quarter of the cost for a comparable licence. If we reduced hours back the other way, I think it is \$8,000. We pay an extra \$8,000 a year for the 10 pm to 2 am extension. I do not know if it is worth it, to be honest, but, if you compare apples to apples, it then becomes \$8,000 versus the \$1,400 minimum for the New South Wales licence.⁹⁹

- 3.48. The Australian Hotels Association reflects this call for consistency between jurisdictions in their submission. They request that liquor licensing better reflect ‘venue size, employment contribution, revenue, cultural programming frequency and relative risk profile.’ They also request benchmarking of ‘overall fees and structures against New South Wales liquor licence costs to maintain cross-border competitiveness.’¹⁰⁰
- 3.49. In his submission, Mr Johnston compared his small pub liquor licence fee to the amounts that large liquor retailers pay in their fees. Mr Johnston explaining that fees:

[D]o not reflect the sheer volume of alcohol they sell or the comparatively low number of staff they employ relative to that volume. These outlets can move enormous quantities of alcohol with far fewer employees than a hospitality venue, yet their regulatory contribution does not scale accordingly. If liquor licensing is genuinely risk- and impact-based, large-format liquor retailers should

⁹⁹ Mr Johnston, Director, The Meem Collective, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026 p 30.

¹⁰⁰ Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 14*, p. 6.

pay materially higher licence fees than small and medium hospitality venues that employ more people and provide supervised, social environments. Licence fee reform should recognise differences in business models by weighting fees to alcohol volume, employment contribution and the balance between food and beverage trade, rather than treating all licences within a category as if they carry the same risk and social impact.¹⁰¹

- 3.50. The ACT Government stated that ‘ACT and NSW liquor licencing fees cannot be directly compared because of differences in the underlying policy frameworks and regulatory schemes.’ Further, the ACT Government explained that:

ACT fees for each licence type are derived from the licence type and characteristics relevant to each licence type. For licence types that permit on-premises consumption of liquor, annual fees vary by occupancy loading (that is, patron capacity) and trading hours. For licence types that permit off premises consumption of liquor, annual fees vary by the wholesale value of liquor and trading hours. NSW fees for each licence type are derived from a base fee with risk loadings, where applicable, that consider risks arising from trading hours, patron capacity and compliance history. The approach to trading hours in the ACT and NSW is not aligned. Similarly, ACT and NSW thresholds for patron capacity differ. The ACT does not include compliance history when imposing fees.¹⁰²

Committee Comment

- 3.51. The Committee acknowledges alcohol harm minimisation in an important aspect to any liquor licensing reform. The Alcohol and Drug Foundation, in their submission, highlighted that:

It is now well-established that increased availability of alcohol is a driver of alcohol harms, including accidental injuries and alcohol related violence. Extended trading hours correspond with higher rates of injury, hospitalisation and emergency department presentations, homicide and other crime, non-domestic assault, unintentional injury, drink-driving offences and domestic and family violence.¹⁰³

- 3.52. The Committee notes the balancing of liquor licensing reform and public health objectives.
- 3.53. The Committee also notes recommendation 5 in the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs report on the *Inquiry into the Liquor Amendment Bill 2025*. This recommendation, which was not agreed by the ACT Government, recommended the government amend the bill to make harm minimisation the paramount objective of the *Liquor Act 2010*.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ The Meem Collective, *Submission 15*, p 2.

¹⁰² Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *answer to QTON 8* (13 May 2026), received 29 May 2026. p 1.

¹⁰³ Alcohol and Drug Foundation, *Submission 7*, p 1.

¹⁰⁴ ACT [Government Response](#), Standing Committee on Legal Affairs – Report No. 4 – Inquiry into the Liquor Amendment Bill 2025, June 2026. p. 4.

- 3.54. The Committee also acknowledges concerns that the cost of liquor licensing fees may be impacting business viability in the ACT.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake a comprehensive review of the liquor licensing fee framework, including benchmarking against New South Wales, with a view to reducing regulatory burden and fostering business innovation, while minimising risk and harm.

Licence Fee reductions for larger businesses

- 3.55. As outlined earlier, recent liquor reforms reduced license fee reductions for small businesses. The Committee also heard from larger venues seeking similar incentives, with some stakeholders describing the current regulations as ‘restrictive.’¹⁰⁵

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that, as part of the review recommended above, the ACT Government consider providing liquor license fee reduction incentives for venues with a capacity of over 350 people similar to those available for smaller venues.

Risk assessment management plans

- 3.56. The *Liquor Act 2010* (the Liquor Act) provides for licensing and regulation of liquor in the ACT. The Liquor Act requires a licensee or commercial permit holder to detail their risk-management procedures in an approved Risk-Assessment Management Plan (RAMP). The requirement for a RAMP does not apply to a restaurant or non-commercial liquor permit unless the Commissioner directs that a RAMP be prepared.¹⁰⁶
- 3.57. The approved RAMP must contain the information required by the Liquor Act and the Liquor Regulation 2010. It needs to identify the risks for a particular premises and outline the procedures the licensee or permit-holder will implement to manage the risks in accordance with the harm minimisation and community safety principles of the Liquor Act. Information such as trading hours, security arrangements, dealing with difficult people, and how to identify minors in adults-only areas are covered in the RAMP.¹⁰⁷
- 3.58. The ACT Government explained the licensing fee framework and the policing data that supported these fees:

ACT Policing capability established to collate Policing data to compare alcohol-related incidents at restaurants, cafes, clubs, bars, taverns and nightclubs. The

¹⁰⁵ MusicACT, Submission 16, p 8; Tadija Miladinovic, *Submission 13*, p 2; The Meem Collective, Submission 15, pp 2–3.

¹⁰⁶ ACT Government, [Guide-to-completing-a-Risk-Assessment-Management-Plan.pdf](#) (accessed 28 September 2026), p 1.

¹⁰⁷ ACT Government, Access Canberra, *Guide to completing a Risk-Assessment Management Plan (RAMP): A Guide for Liquor Licensees and Permit-Holders*, undated.

data showed that the highest number of alcohol-related incidents occurred at nightclubs, followed by clubs, bars, and taverns and, after that, restaurants, and cafes. Most alcohol-related incidents occurred at larger venues; 61 per cent of incidents occurred at venues with occupancy loadings of more than 350 people; and, during late night trading, 80 per cent of incidents occurred at venues trading to 4.00 am or to 5.00 am. So, in establishing our fee framework, the factor in the fee levels was the cost associated with the regulatory and police enforcement associated with licensed premises and alcohol related antisocial or violent behaviour. Our fees support the cost of ACT Policing's Territory Targeting Team, which enforces our liquor laws and provides policing in our nightlife districts. It has been subject to review several times.¹⁰⁸

- 3.59. According to the ACT Government, there is an overall decline in reported incidents of violent, unlawful, or anti-social behaviour at licensed venues between 2023-24 and 2024-25.¹⁰⁹
- 3.60. The Australian Hotels Association ACT suggested the RAMP 'reflects your risk profile and perceived risk profile' and that members of their association face challenges to changing patron capacity or trading hours 'without that having some effect' on their businesses'.¹¹⁰
- 3.61. The Australian Hotels Association ACT also suggested that a useful measure for businesses would be for them to manage capacity and trading hour issues, 'if you are not using those hours or you do not need that capacity [...] you could put a voluntary cap on your trading hours or a voluntary cap on your patron capacity and have your liquor licence fees reflect the actual risk profile of the business'.¹¹¹
- 3.62. The Committee heard that flexibility exists in other jurisdictions, such as NSW, where an 'Occasional Extended Trading Condition' can be applied for, to be added to liquor licences. Mr Christopher Gatfield, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association ACT explaining:

It keeps the hours on your liquor licence, so it maintains the value of the business, and it allows you to trade, 12 times a year, a little bit later, with notification to police, the council and a range of other bodies. Fundamentally, when that business is either sold or someone else takes it over, they can choose whether to use those full hours or maintain the limited hours. It is a way to minimise your costs, reflecting your actual risk profile and the way in which you operate the business. We think that that has legs in Canberra, because there are a lot of very large venues which have very late trade, who do not necessarily use those hours. During winter, a lot of people are going to be inside, and your beer garden will be empty. If there are 350 people who are meant to be out there, you are paying for nothing.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 103.

¹⁰⁹ Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, former Minister for the Night-Time Economy, *answer to QTON 9* (13 May 2026), received 29 May 2026. p 2.

¹¹⁰ Mr Christopher Gatfield, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 57.

¹¹¹ Mr Christopher Gatfield, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 57.

¹¹² *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 58.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider incorporating flexibility within Risk Assessment Management Plans, allowing voluntary restrictions on liquor licence conditions in exchange for reduced fees

Noise

- 3.63. The arts sector, including music, is vital to a prosperous night-time economy, and it was one of the sectors that was most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹³
- 3.64. Noise standards for noise zones across the ACT have been established which regulate amplified 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.¹¹⁴
- 3.65. The ACT Government has undertaken reform to noise standards and regulation, including legislative changes to the Environment Protection Regulation 2005, and the introduction of the City Centre Entertainment Precinct and Gungahlin Entertainment Precinct.¹¹⁵
- 3.66. More recently, in August 2024, the ACT Government changed the Environment Protection Regulation 2005 to introduce new standards for entertainment noise in the CCEP. Changes were also made to the Territory Plan to allow for a higher concentration of noise-emitting entertainment venues away from accommodation, and with a buffer zone that makes up the rest of the precinct.¹¹⁶
- 3.67. As outlined in earlier in the report, noise levels and questionable planning decisions remain an issue across the ACT according to witnesses. Business owners and industry groups explained there should be safeguards against vexatious complaints, with some requesting entertainment precincts to established outside of the CBD.¹¹⁷
- 3.68. In relation to land use conflict, the Committee heard that the ‘agent of change’ principle ‘effectively ensures that new developments adjacent to existing live music venues or entertainment venues bear the responsibility for appropriate noise attenuation.’ The principle also applies to a new venue established next to a resident ‘that it should be on the venue to make sure that noise attenuation is part of the design principle for the building.’¹¹⁸

¹¹³ ACT Government, <https://www.act.gov.au/law-and-justice/law-reforms/new-standards-for-entertainment-noise> (accessed 30 September 2026).

¹¹⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 8.

¹¹⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, pp 8-9.

¹¹⁶ ACT Government, <https://www.act.gov.au/law-and-justice/law-reforms/new-standards-for-entertainment-noise> (accessed 30 September 2026)

¹¹⁷ Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 15* pp 8 & 28; The Meem Collective, *Submission 15*, p 3 -4; ClubsACT, *Submission 10*, pp 25–26 & 29; Fiction Nightclub, ONE22 Bar and Vent Nightclub, *Submission 17*, p 18; Mill Theatre at Dairy Road, *Submission 20*, p 2.

¹¹⁸ Mr Christopher Gatfield, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 58.

- 3.69. Embedded in Victorian planning frameworks, and also in NSW an ‘order of occupancy’ consideration in their disturbance noise complaint framework, the principle helps to protect licensed venues from unreasonable complaints and expectations around noise.¹¹⁹

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government adopt agent-of-change planning laws that require the person or entity responsible for a new development to bear the costs of mitigating noise impacts from existing establishments in the area, such as live music venues, clubs, pubs and arts centres, protecting those established venues from future noise complaints brought about by the new development.

- 3.70. Other Australian jurisdictions are focusing on venue sound management to support the arts sector. In 2023, the NSW Parliament passed the *24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Act 2023* whilst in Victoria, the Environment Protection Authority Victoria is currently undertaking a live music precinct noise regulation review.¹²⁰
- 3.71. Recently changes were made to the Statutory disturbance complaints process in NSW, in which, a person can make a formal noise complaint under the *Liquor Act 2007* (NSW). These changes include; more people needed to lodge a complaint (increased from three to five) with these people living and working in the neighbourhood of the venue; complainants must try to resolve issues first; order of occupancy (referring to the order in which the licensed venue and the complainant/s first began to operate or occupy their premises and it favours the party established first) and a higher threshold or level of disturbance may be upheld when the order of occupancy is in favour of the licensed venue.¹²¹

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government adopt the NSW approach to noise complaints including existing thresholds and parameters, with its vibrancy reforms, to better balance the needs of both residents and businesses.

¹¹⁹ Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 15* p 29; NSW Government, *Reforms to sound management regulation*, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/liquor-and-gaming/liquor-licensing/sound-regulation-for-licensed-venues/reforms-to-venue-sound-management-regulation> (accessed 30 September 2026).

¹²⁰ NSW Government, *Reforms to sound management regulation*, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/liquor-and-gaming/liquor-licensing/sound-regulation-for-licensed-venues/reforms-to-venue-sound-management-regulation> (accessed 30 September 2026); Engage Victoria, *EPA’s live music precinct noise regulation review*, <https://engage.vic.gov.au/EPAs-live-music-precinct-noise-regulation-review> (accessed 30 September 2026).

¹²¹ NSW Government, *Reforms to sound management regulation*, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/liquor-and-gaming/liquor-licensing/sound-regulation-for-licensed-venues/reforms-to-venue-sound-management-regulation> (accessed 30 September 2026).

4. Encouraging visitors

- 4.1. The Committee heard repeated evidence from local businesses, industry associations, community groups and individuals that ‘friction points’ exist for people who want to visit the CBD. These include parking, accessibility, transport, and safety.¹²²
- 4.2. Local business owners also spoke of the impacts of the *Light Rail Stage 2A: City to Commonwealth Park* infrastructure project, which involves major construction work closing roads, pedestrian and cycle (shared) pathways and the erection of fencing and construction hoardings.¹²³
- 4.3. As Mr Nesh Nikolic, a local business owner explained, these points become a barrier to visitation:

The more friction you place in an area, the less likely you are going to return. And whether that is the temporary stuff of construction, it is unpleasant, you do not pick that venue. You pick another venue. When you multiply all of those factors, it is not very compelling to come back into the city. And if we do not have a compelling city, then obviously trade becomes an issue, employment becomes an issue, the more unruly behaviour becomes an issue, and that is that ongoing erosion.¹²⁴

- 4.4. Mr Nesh Nikolic also provided an example of how these issues work together on to become a deterrent:

When a family comes into the city—they come for dinner—and they struggle with finding parking and all the challenges with accessibility, there is unpleasantness as you are trying to navigate through to your venue, there is graffiti, there is unruly behaviour, there are safety issues, there are lighting issues and so on, it is a deterrent.¹²⁵

- 4.5. The Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber submission highlighted:

A key part of this is presentation of the city as clean, orderly, well-kept and welcoming. Canberra does not match this ambition. We do not believe that Canberra is meeting or even actively pursuing these aspirations, primary due to

¹²² Mr Nesh Nikolic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, pp 2, 7–10; Ms Sia Ahmad, Director, MusicACT, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 45; Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, Clubs ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 65; Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, President, Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, pp 72, 74; Ms Ashlee Berry, ACT and Capital Region Executive Director, Property Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, pp 77–80; Mr Benjamin Johnston, Managing Director, the Meem Collective, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, pp 33–34; Mr Josh Dotta, Director, Fiction Club, ONE 22 and Vent Nightclub, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 6.

¹²³ Property Council of Australia, *Submission 18*, p 3; Fiction Nightclub, ONE22, and Vent Nightclub, *Submission 17*, p 6; Australian Hotels Association ACT, *Submission 14*, p 14–15; Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber, *Submission 12*, p 4–5.

¹²⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 7.

¹²⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 7.

ACT Government inaction and under funding of its municipal services and facilities.¹²⁶

- 4.6. For ACT's multicultural community, the Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN), in their submission, described safety as 'the foundation of a thriving night-time economy' as 'safety perceptions among CALD communities can differ significantly due to language barriers, past trauma, unfamiliarity with policing systems and geographic isolation.'¹²⁷

Parking

- 4.7. Parking supply, availability, and cost was raised by witnesses in the inquiry. The Committee heard that parking has been lost within key areas around the city precinct due to the light rail construction.¹²⁸

- 4.8. Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer of Clubs ACT, explained:

Transport and parking are big issues for a lot of locations around town. You cannot get a car park, or there is no readily available access to public transport after the 9 o'clock period, particularly for getting back to residential areas. That is a real disincentive for people to stay after that 9 o'clock period.¹²⁹

- 4.9. Mr Nikolic provided an example of the closure of the Lyric Theatre carpark and ACT Government decisions around consultation and communication to local businesses, he explained:

Four weeks prior to the lyric theatre car park being closed, myself and numerous other business owners in the precinct went along to the construction meeting that was being held monthly and we were told— advised—that it would simply be closed. No other consultation was provided. No other messaging was provided prior. There was no preparation. And I think that is quite appalling, in fact. I did reach out to Minister Barr's office at a later date, after that, and although he said at a previous Legislative Assembly meeting that consultation was widely held, his office did respond saying that they did not have to and they did not need to, so they did not. They simply advised us. When I think about public consultation, that is actually listening to the folk who are on the ground, taking their considerations into mind and then making a decision from that so that planning staging could be appropriate so it does not affect the city, which actually just does harm to the community.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber, *Submission 12*, p 3.

¹²⁷ Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN), *Submission 2*, p 2.

¹²⁸ Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, President, Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 72; Ms Berry, Property Council of Australia ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 80; Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 65; Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 14*, p 15 & 27; Pedro Rivera, *Submission 3*, pp 1–2; Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber, *Submission 12*, p 4 –5; Fiction Nightclub, ONE22 and Vent Nightclub, *Submission 17*, p 6; Mr Nesh Nikolic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 7–8 and Tadija Miladinovic, *Submission 13*, p 2.

¹²⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 65.

¹³⁰ Mr Nesh Nikolic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 3.

- 4.10. The Committee heard that the lack of parking options impacted on visitor experience. In one submission, a resident of Canberra, Pedro Rivera, provided his experiences with parking:

The parking. Even before the tram destroyed what little incentive there was to venture into the city, the parking situation was dire. The parking on the far side of the legislative assembly has been halved for reasons I still do not fully understand, while over 1/3 of the Mooseheads-adjacent parking is reserved for MLAs and their staff, and yet another half of the parking across Northbourne is now gone for the tram. And this is not to mention the dire situation that has unfolded in Braddon where what little parking was left has been effectively removed to no real effect [...] When one eventually finds a park within walking distance, they are gouged for a significant portion of what they intend to spend that evening, thereby reducing the amount available to spend at various bars and restaurants.¹³¹

- 4.11. In a recent media report from August 2026, it was reported that Canberra city centre parking was ranked cheapest in Australia, however its overall rating for customer satisfaction was lowered due to several factors including ‘unclear payment processes, inadequate signage and poor facility maintenance’.¹³²

Committee Comment

- 4.12. The Committee understands that some businesses have felt that consultation around parking reductions was insufficient, and that the loss of parking spaces in the CCEP is negatively impacting accessibility and visitation.
- 4.13. The Committee acknowledges the ACT Government support of musicians with access to loading zones for free up to 30 minutes to load and unload music equipment.¹³³
- 4.14. The Committee also acknowledges the changes ACT Government has made in May 2025 to three pay parking areas in the City Centre to provide free parking after 5:30pm from Wednesday to Sunday, which will ‘carry through until the end of June 2027’.¹³⁴

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise measures to maintain access to the City precinct — including parking supply, accessible (disability) parking spaces, and alternative transport options — to offset the loss of capacity resulting from the closure of the Theatre Lane and Law Courts carparks.

¹³¹ Pedro Rivera, *Submission 3*, p 1.

¹³² Claire Fenwicke, ‘[Canberra city parking ranks among the nation’s cheapest \(yes, we’re as shocked as you are\)](#)’, Regional News, 26 August 2026 (accessed 28 August 2026)

¹³³ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 14.

¹³⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 14.

Transport

- 4.15. Expanding on ideas of accessibility, public transport was raised as a concern from witnesses.
- 4.16. The impact of Canberra's inherent design of a system of urban centres and city zones that are geographically dispersed means that visitors may need to travel between places of entertainment.
- 4.17. Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT explains:
- [...] And not just because of the construction but, generally speaking, I think a lack of integration between Braddon, the city area, and the new other areas that you are talking about. They have all been done piecemeal and there is no strategic sort of linkage in the way those are developed and planned.¹³⁵
- 4.18. Mr Ross McQuinn, Director of Such and Such restaurant focused on an example of a recent visit himself and the comparison to other cities:
- To me, that links to the night-time economy, because it makes it harder to go from place to place and it means that people are sort of stuck in one zone. It is difficult to come from here, in this little Constitution Place precinct or the theatre, and then walk to Braddon, because people do not actually feel fantastic about walking to Braddon. You walk past the building with graffiti and broken windows, and then there is the wayfinding. This is a slightly tangentially related point, but the wayfinding is not amazing. It is not a particularly pleasant experience. People come and do their one thing and then they go home. There is not a lot of wandering around. I was in Melbourne not that long ago. Public transport is better, and there is how far we travelled over the course of one evening and how many different venues we visited.¹³⁶
- 4.19. Further to Mr Shannon's and Mr McQuinn's evidence, accessibility and transport between city zones was also raised by other witnesses and within submissions.¹³⁷

Committee Comment

- 4.20. The Committee acknowledges that the ACT Government implements temporary timetable adjustments and additional services to support engagement with major Night-Time Economy events including New Year's Eve Drone Skyshow, the Night Markets, the National Multicultural Festival, Spilt Milk Festival and other major cultural and sporting events across the Territory, however these should be longer term.
- 4.21. The Committee notes that the ACT Government previously, in 2016, introduced a free bus service for the Central Business District, including the City Bus Station, Canberra Centre,

¹³⁵ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 53.

¹³⁶ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 31.

¹³⁷ Mr Nesh Nikolic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 10; Property Council of Australia, *Submission 18*, p 3; Australian Hotels Association, *Submission 14*, p 27.

Braddon precinct, Northbourne Avenue, the Australian National University and the New Acton precinct.¹³⁸ This free service no longer runs.

- 4.22. The Committee also notes ACT Government initiatives including the now-concluded year-long fare-free Friday trial for public transport, and free public transport after 6pm on Fridays and Saturday.

Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider reinstating the City Loop free bus service, and expanding it to the Parliamentary Triangle.

- 4.23. An identification of a poor current transport timetable, and request for improved late-night transport services was repeatedly heard by the Committee. The importance of reliable, regular and extended hours for public transport for NTE staff was emphasised by local businesses and industry groups¹³⁹

- 4.24. Mr Benjamin Johnston, Managing Director, The Meem Collective, discussed how better connectivity could improve business:

With Bruce, you go there and there are some new apartment buildings adjacent to it and the result, if anything, is that maybe the Old Canberra Inn gets a little bit of a kick on sometimes with the Raiders and the Brumbies. But, really, it does not have a net benefit. It is, as we talked about before, people going to a thing and then going home. That is not what we want. In Canberra, we need to connect everything.¹⁴⁰

- 4.25. The ACT Multicultural Council highlighted that 'International students, temporary migrants and shift-workers in multicultural communities often rely on night-time services for food, transport, social connection and remittance or support services.'¹⁴¹

- 4.26. Mr McQuinn, Director of Such and Such restaurant, provided an example of how the lack of current night-time public transport system impacts on workers:

We have one chef who does not drive and she has to run and grab the light rail because it is the last light rail. We are obviously not a very late-night business, but sometimes she will miss it and she has to catch an Uber or someone gives her a lift. They do not really view it as particularly viable. I do not know anyone that really catches public transport to and from work. It is either cycling or driving.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Jana Black, [Free city bus loop service launched in Canberra](#), ABC News, 4 July 2016; ACT Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, '[Canberrans get on board with City Loop](#),' Media Statement, January 2018.

¹³⁹ Australian Multicultural Network, *Submission 2*, p 2; ClubsACT, *Submission 10*, pp 15, 20; Ms Ahmad, MusicACT, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 45; Mr Dotta, Fiction Club, ONE 22 and Vent nightclub, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, pp 5, 7; Mr Shannon, Clubs ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 65.

¹⁴⁰ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 34.

¹⁴¹ ACT Multicultural Council, *Submission 8*, p 2.

¹⁴² *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 32.

- 4.27. Within MusicACT's submission, 30.4 percent of respondents identified late-night transport access as a barrier to earning an income from night-time music work.¹⁴³
- 4.28. The ACT Government acknowledges, in their submission to the inquiry, the importance of safety of Canberrans in working in the NTE.¹⁴⁴

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government extend its bus service operating hours to include late-night services on weekends.

Lighting

- 4.29. A number of stakeholders raised concerns over the lack of lighting in the city and town centres, which lead some in the community to feel unsafe.¹⁴⁵
- 4.30. The Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber submission notes that 'many parts of the city (and Town Centres) are considered unsafe. Partly this is due to poor lighting, but is exacerbated by other factors, such as antisocial behaviour particularly individuals gathering and drinking in public places at night'.¹⁴⁶
- 4.31. Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT explained how lighting and police visibility are 'a significant inducement for people to want to go into areas when they might otherwise feel threatened in the night-time environment.' He explained that:

There is plenty of research in regard to this, but, anecdotally even, particularly because of the nature of some of the activities [...], where people are more prone to get attacked by somebody who might otherwise be under the influence of substances¹⁴⁷

- 4.32. Woden Valley Community Council's submission included a request for a 'comprehensive lighting and safety audit of the Woden Town Centre' together with recommending upgrades to lighting, CCTV, wayfinding, and passive surveillance.¹⁴⁸
- 4.33. Mr Josh Dotta, a local businesses owner of Fiction Club, ONE 22 and Vent Nightclub, gave an example of how construction work is further impacting on businesses and visitors to the city:

You have all these works happening here in Garema Place and they cut out power for one weekend. It was only one weekend, but still, the whole of Garema Place

¹⁴³ MusicACT, *Submission 16*, p 3.

¹⁴⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 9*, p 13.

¹⁴⁵ Ms Ashlee Berry, ACT and Capital Region Executive Director, Property Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 78; Mr Greg Harford, Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Business Chamber, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 51; Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 62; ACT Multicultural Council, *Submission 8*, p 2; Mijica Lus, *Submission 5*, p 2.

¹⁴⁶ Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber, *Submission 12*, p 4.

¹⁴⁷ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 62.

¹⁴⁸ Woden Valley Community Council, *Submission 21*, p 3.

was unlit. You had no lights. As a female, as a young family walking through there, it would be one of the scariest things you would have to deal with. Late night; no lights at all.¹⁴⁹

Committee Comment

- 4.34. The Committee acknowledges recent that there have been lighting additions in City Walk near Garema Place, however lighting remains an issue for the city and town centres.¹⁵⁰

Vandalism

- 4.35. Vandalism was also raised as another factor leading to the community feeling unsafe.¹⁵¹ It was also raised in the context of greater perceptions about Civic and town centres, with the Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber outlining in their submission:

Crumbling and poorly maintained privately-owned buildings at street level in the city centre and town centres reflect poorly on the National Capital. Vandalism and graffiti not remediated adds to the dilapidated and unsightly state of some areas, particularly in Civic and the town centres [...] Graffiti on public (and some private) buildings and other infrastructure is both unsightly and adds to a look that the city is unkempt and rundown¹⁵²

- 4.36. Mr Craig Shannon, from ClubsACT, expressed disappointment on the current state of Civic:

Quite frankly, you would not know that if you walked across the road today and around that area. I mean, it is almost a national disgrace that that is the CBD of the national capital, and it looks like a ghost town. On a Saturday night, you can walk from one end of the civic area to the other and it looks like it has been abandoned.¹⁵³

- 4.37. In addition to this, he also raised the cost of graffiti removal for businesses:

[L]ike graffiti removal, which is becoming an increasingly expensive cost for a lot of businesses, including our members, particularly around the CBD area. Every time someone puts a big tag on a premises, it will cost those premises several thousand dollars to remove it.¹⁵⁴

- 4.38. The Committee also heard that graffiti is ‘an ongoing problem in Woden.’¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 6.

¹⁵⁰ Ian Bushnell, <https://region.com.au/city-upgrades-continue-but-it-could-have-been-rock-and-roll-for-some/975534/> 20 June 2026 (accessed 24 September 2026).

¹⁵¹ Mr Nesh Nikolic, *Submission 1*, p 2; Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber, *Submission 12*, p 4; Mr Ross McQuinn, Director, Such and Such Restaurant, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 31; Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 64; Mr Nelson Tang, President, Woden Valley Community Council, 13 May 2026, p 88.

¹⁵² Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum and Canberra Business Chamber, *Submission 12*, p 4.

¹⁵³ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 53.

¹⁵⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 64.

¹⁵⁵ Mr Nelson Tang, President, Woden Valley Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 88.

- 4.39. Graffiti does have legal practice sites across Canberra which are located on ACT Government assets in public places, including the Woden drains.¹⁵⁶

Committee Comment

- 4.40. The Committee acknowledges that graffiti has both legal and illegal sites in the ACT and that it can take the form of murals through to tagging.
- 4.41. The Committee is concerned that vandalism, including tagging, impacts on the public's experience of feeling safe in areas of the ACT, and that remediation adds to the costs for businesses.

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review opportunities to enhance the City and Town Centres precincts' appeal, accessibility, and safety, including through vandalism remediation, improved lighting, and other public safety measures.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- 4.42. In addition to the factors discussed in inhibiting visitors for the Night-Time Economy, antisocial behaviour was also raised by local businesses and industry groups.¹⁵⁷
- 4.43. There was a view by some witnesses that a 'higher visibility of policing' particularly at night, gives a 'sense of surety' and safety to people about embracing NTE activities.¹⁵⁸
- 4.44. Mr Craig Shannon, from ClubsACT, expressed concern over police numbers, saying that Canberra has the lowest number per of police per capita in Australia:

The public should be stunned when they realise that we have less than 200 sworn officers in the ACT for a growing population. If you break that up amongst multiple shift rotations, and small, dedicated teams amongst that, in terms of, for instance, child protection and other areas, we have a very limited number of general duties police available to respond to matters.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ ACT Government, City Services, *Legal graffiti practice walls*, <https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/graffiti/legal-graffiti-practice-walls>, (accessed 29 September 2026).

¹⁵⁷ Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 62; Mr Nesh Nikolic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 10; Mr Josh Dotta, Director, Fiction Club, ONE 22 and Vent Nightclub, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 6.

¹⁵⁸ Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 62; Mr Nesh Nikolic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 10; Mr Josh Dotta, Director, Fiction Club, ONE 22 and Vent Nightclub, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2026, p 6.

¹⁵⁹ *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 61.

Recommendation 27

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase community policing within City and Town Centre precincts to address concerns relating to safety and anti-social behaviour.

Support for multicultural events

- 4.45. Multicultural community groups expressed concerns in relation to inclusiveness and expressed the importance of cultural activities in the NTE, as the President of the Australian Multicultural Action Network, Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy explained:

I think that community-led cultural initiatives and activities are the preferred approach. We always talk about the disability area; that applies to the CALD diversified community as well. Supporting these CALD communities by organising music, dance, arts and storytelling events and sessions is one other way to encourage more of them to come forward and do community leadership and culturally authentic programs.¹⁶⁰

- 4.46. The ACT Multicultural Council called for ‘alcohol-diverse and family-friendly precincts and events, including options where alcohol is secondary or absent, to encourage participation by families, elders, faith-based groups and youth from CALD communities.’ The Council went on to explain in their submission that these events could be linked to ‘support faith- and culture-sensitive programming, including consideration of key religious and cultural calendars (e.g. Ramadan, major cultural new year celebrations) in planning late-night transport and events.’¹⁶¹

Committee comment

- 4.47. The Committee believes that promoting more diverse Night-Time Economy activities, especially ones which do not predominantly feature alcohol, could be an effective way of encouraging businesses to grow their offerings to different demographic groups.

Recommendation 28

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, in the Night-Time Activation Strategy, encourage and support a greater range of multicultural events in the City and Town Centres, incorporating food, music, and cultural experiences.

¹⁶⁰ Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, President, Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Committee Hansard*, 13 May 2026, p 74.

¹⁶¹ ACT Multicultural Council, *Submission 8*, p 2.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. The Committee thanks the many community members, organisations, and the former Minister for the Night-Time Economy and government officials who participated in this inquiry.
- 5.2. The Committee makes 28 recommendations.

Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA

Chair, Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation

14 October 2026

Appendix A: Submissions

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
1	Nesh Nikolic	05/12/25	10/12/25
2	Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)	09/12/25	28/01/26
3	Pedro Rivera	26/01/26	28/01/26
4	Gang Gang Café	17/02/26	04/03/26
5	Mijica Lus	19/02/26	04/03/26
6	David Caffery	24/02/26	04/03/26
7	Alcohol and Drug Foundation	27/02/26	04/03/26
8	ACT Multicultural Council	17/03/26	01/04/26
9	ACT Government	17/03/26	01/04/26
10	ClubsACT	17/03/26	01/04/26
11	Retail Drinks Australia	25/03/26	01/04/26
12	Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum & Canberra Business Chamber	27/03/26	01/04/26
13	Tadija Miladinovic	27/03/26	01/04/26
14	Australian Hotels Association (AHA) ACT	27/03/26	01/04/26
15	The Meem Collective	27/03/26	01/04/26
16	MusicACT	27/03/26	01/04/26
17	Fiction Nightclub, ONE22 Bar, and Vent Nightclub	27/03/26	01/04/26
17b	Fiction Nightclub, ONE22 Bar, and Vent Nightclub	10/04/26	22/04/26
18	Property Council of Australia (ACT & Capital Region)	27/03/26	01/04/26
19	Such and Such	02/04/26	22/04/26
20	Mill Theatre at Dairy Road	07/04/26	22/04/26
21	Woden Valley Community Council	17/04/26	22/04/26
22	Name Withheld	26/05/26	03/06/26

Appendix B: Witnesses

Tuesday, 12 May 2026

Individual

- **Mr Nesh Nikolic**
- **Mr David Caffery**

Fiction Nightclub, ONE22 Bar and Vent Nightclub

- **Mr Josh Dotta**, Director

Mill Theatre at Dairy Road

- **Ms Alexandra (Lexi) Sekules**, Producer

Gang Gang Cafe

- **Mr Samuel Conway**, Director

The Meem Collective

- **Mr Benjamin Johnston**, Director

Such and Such

- **Mr Ross McQuinn**, Director

Music ACT

- **Ms Sia Ahmad**, Director

Wednesday, 13 May 2026

Minister

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for the Night-Time Economy

ClubsACT

- **Mr Craig Shannon**, CEO

Australian Hotels Association

- **Mr Christopher Gatfield**, General Manager

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum

- **Dr Brian Weir**, Director Policy Coordination

Canberra Business Chamber

- **Mr Greg Harford**, Chief Executive

Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)

- **Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy**, President

ACT Multicultural Council

- **Mr Andrew Ng**, Chair

Property Council of Australia

- **Ms Ashlee Berry**, ACT & Capital Region Executive Director

Woden Valley Community Council

- **Mr Nelson Tang**, President

City and Environment Directorate

- **Mr Sam Engele**, Deputy Director General, Environment, Planning and Policy
- **Mr Josh Rynehart**, Head of Access Canberra

Appendix C: Questions on Notice and Questions Taken on Notice

Questions on Notice

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
1	13/05/26	Cheyne, Tara	NTE targets & reforms	29/05/26
2	19/05/26	Cheyne, Tara	Night Time Economy in the town centres and Town centre - planning for activation	29/05/26

Questions Taken on Notice

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
1	13/05/26	Australian Hotels Association	Skills and Apprenticeships	03/06/26
2	13/05/26	Australian Hotels Association	Risk Assessment Management Plans	03/06/26
3	13/05/26	Australian Hotels Association	Workplace Protection Orders - recommendations	03/06/26
4	13/05/26	Australian Hotels Association	Increase in insurance premiums	03/06/26
5	13/05/26	Canberra Business Chamber	Government response time - business assistance	05/06/26
6	13/05/26	Property Council of Australia	Creative Land Trust	31/05/26
7	13/05/26	Cheyne, Tara	City Renewal Authority engagement across ACT	26/05/26
8	13/05/26	Cheyne, Tara	Types of venues – data on incidents	29/05/26
9	13/05/26	Cheyne, Tara	Data on anti-social behaviour	29/05/26

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
10	13/05/26	Steel, Chris	Public Space and building limits	02/06/26

Appendix D: Gender distribution of witnesses

Beginning in April 2023, in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Committees are collecting information on the gender of witnesses. The aim is to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses.

Gender indication	Total
Female	4
Male	9
Non-binary	0
Gender neutral	0
No data	6