



Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Minister for the Night-Time Economy

In relation to: NTE targets & reforms

Hearing: 13 May 2026

Answer Due: 27 May 2026

1. What are the ACT Government's average turnaround times, and target turnaround times, for applications for different categories of liquor licences and other licences?
2. What is the average turnaround time, and target turnaround time, for enquiries made to the Access Canberra Business Assist team?
3. Why aren't any liquor license concessions in place for venues with capacity for over 350 people, and is this being reconsidered?
4. The City Centre Entertainment Precinct was established in November 2023. What specifically has the ACT Government done to activate this precinct?

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

1. Liquor licence applications have a 90-day target processing time from receipt of a complete application. This allows for required suitability assessments and public consultation, where community feedback may inform the decision.

Average processing times for liquor licences in the 25/26 FY to date:

- a. General (7)– 113 days;
- b. Club (1)– 37 days;
- c. On (38) – 118 days;
- d. Off (9) – 107 days;
- e. Special (1) – 115 days;
- f. Catering (4) – 138 days; and
- g. Weighted average of all licence types (60): 115 days.

**Note – Timeframes reflect actual processing from first contact to completion. A decision on a licence may take longer when an application is lodged without complete information (e.g. a Certificate of Occupancy)*

and Use confirming the premises are legally fit for occupation). Access Canberra accepts those applications and works with the applicant to obtain necessary approvals and information.

2. Business Assists service commitment is that initial advice be sent to the client within **five business days** of receiving an enquiry. If this is not possible due to the complexity of the proposal, a holding response or status update to the client within five business days.
3. The ACT Government has delivered a significant number of reforms to support night-time economy businesses. These were informed by extensive public consultation and designed to be achieved without compromising the objects and harm minimisation and community safety principles of the *Liquor Act 2010*.

A venue's annual licence fee is 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. Licensed venues with a capacity of 350 people or more can currently access:

- Automatic extensions to trading hours for declared special events from 12am to 2am, free of charge. A recent declaration included 47 special events.
- An increased number of free extended trading authorisations across any 12-month period, for business-led events (licensee events) or special events.
- An increased number of free authorisations to change a floor plan across any 12-month period, for business-led (licensee) events or special events with approval from the landlord.

Any amendment to the suite of liquor licensing reforms as they relate to occupancy levels of 350 people or more is subject to future government decisions.

4. The ACT Government introduced the City Centre Entertainment Precinct in 2023 to deliver regulatory settings that provide more certainty for existing businesses, make it easier to set up a new business, and to host live music and entertainment within the precinct. This involved planning and noise standard changes to ensure new development supports and enables entertainment uses.

ACT Government initiatives in the city including major events, City Renewal's year-round programming, targeted activations, and launch of the InTheCity website, all contribute to the precinct's activation. Recent liquor licensing reforms, including annual licence fee reductions for venues that regularly showcase artists and musicians, additionally encourage and support the important role nightlife establishments play in activating the city.

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

Signature: 

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

Date: 29/5/20