



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Economics,
Industry and Recreation

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Submission number: 002

Submitter: Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)

Date authorised for publication: 28 January 2026



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Submission to the Standing Committee on Economics, Recreation and Industry

Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Submitted by:

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9 December 2025

1. Introduction

The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Standing Committee's Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy. We acknowledge the Committee's leadership in initiating a forward-looking inquiry that recognises the night-time economy as a vital component of Canberra's cultural identity, economic health, and social cohesion.

As President of AMAN, I bring the lived perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, seniors, people with disability, young people, language networks, and multicultural small-business operators across the ACT. Our organisation's work in health, palliative care, volunteering, climate and energy sectors, ACT Government directorates, national peak bodies such as FECCA, and language associations including ALAA, ALTANZ, AFMLTA, and CLS networks provides us with a comprehensive understanding of how diverse communities experience Canberra after dark.

For many multicultural families, young people, seniors, shift workers, and new migrants, the night-time economy is not merely recreational — it is a touchpoint of social belonging, safety, cultural expression, employment, wellbeing, and economic participation.

This submission presents practical, innovative and inclusive recommendations that align with the Committee's Terms of Reference and position Canberra to build a safer, more vibrant, culturally rich and economically strong night-time ecosystem.

2. Economic Performance, Employment and Sustainability

2.1. Growing a multicultural night-time workforce and enterprise ecosystem

A significant number of night-time workers — from hospitality to rideshare, security, health support, international students, and gig economy workers — are from multicultural



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backgrounds. Their safety, wellbeing, and economic stability are essential to the ACT's night economy.

Recommendations:

- Develop a **Multicultural Workforce Strategy** focusing on fair work conditions, transport access, cultural safety, and leadership development for CALD workers.
- Provide micro-grants and mentorship for **CALD small-business owners**, including late-night food operators, cultural cafés, arts collectives, and language-based enterprises.
- Expand partnerships between government, community organisations and training providers to create **pathways for young migrants and international students** into creative, hospitality, and live-entertainment sectors.

2.2. Strengthening business resilience

- Introduce “Night Economy Innovation Vouchers” to support digital transformation, safety upgrades, waste management improvements, and multilingual customer outreach.
- Incentivise businesses that provide **family-friendly and culturally diverse night-time services**.

3. Regulatory Environment: Licensing, Planning, Noise, Safety and Transport

3.1. Safety as the foundation of a thriving night-time economy

Safety perceptions among CALD communities can differ significantly due to language barriers, past trauma, unfamiliarity with policing systems, and geographic isolation.

Recommendations:

- Co-design a **Multicultural Night Safety Framework** including translated resources, safe-transport options, trauma-informed signage, and culturally capable community liaison officers.
- Improve **late-night public transport** reliability, including rapid routes from town centres to suburbs with high CALD populations.

3.2. Licensing and planning reform for cultural vibrancy



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- Modernise regulations to support **small cultural venues**, such as poetry spaces, cultural performance rooms, sober socialising spaces, intergenerational cultural cafés, and late-night learning hubs.
- Create “**cultural exemption zones**” for low-impact multicultural performances, ensuring noise rules remain balanced but not prohibitive.

4. Role of Live Music, Special Events, Hospitality and Venues

4.1. Unlocking cultural live music and performing arts

AMAN strongly advocates for the establishment of a **Multicultural Live Performance Program** that activates Canberra's unique linguistic and cultural talent.

This could include:

- South Asian classical and folk nights
- African drumming and dance
- Middle Eastern performance art
- CALD-led jazz, fusion and experimental music
- Language-based open mic and storytelling circles

These initiatives contribute to intercultural understanding and tourism, while supporting CALD artists who are currently underrepresented in Canberra's formal entertainment venues.

4.2. Family-friendly and alcohol-diverse nightlife

Many CALD families seek night-time environments not centred on alcohol culture.

Recommendations:

- Incentivise venues to offer **late-night multicultural food markets**, sober events, arts workshops, and intergenerational activities.
- Support the establishment of “**Night Hubs**” featuring food, music, wellness sessions, language pop-ups, cooking demonstrations, and youth-led cultural entrepreneurship.



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5. Diversification and Enhancement of Night-Time Offerings

5.1. Responding to the changing preferences of young people

Young Canberrans, especially those from multicultural backgrounds, desire:

- safe socialising options
- creative and digital entertainment spaces
- flexible transport
- cultural pride and belonging through events

Innovative directions:

- Late-night **creative studios**, gaming lounges, start-up collaboration spaces, and cultural digital-arts labs
- Pop-up cultural street markets and rotating night bazaars across each town centre
- Night-time wellness offerings (dance, yoga, mental health circles, storytelling therapy)

5.2. Tourism activation

A culturally rich night-time economy supports year-round tourism. Canberra can become a **national leader in multicultural night culture**, building on events like the National Multicultural Festival.

6. Governance and the Case for a Night-Time Economy Coordinator

AMAN strongly supports establishing a **Night-Time Economy Coordinator or Office**, as outlined in the Terms of Reference.

This role must include multicultural representation, equity planning, community safety expertise, and close partnership with CALD organisations.

Key responsibilities should include:

- Embedding multicultural inclusion and accessibility across all night-time policies
- Coordinating data collection on CALD participation and safety



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- Leading partnerships with venues, community groups, transport providers, ACT Policing, and emergency services
- Advising on regulatory reform and innovation pathways
- Ensuring lived experience voices shape the design of night-time infrastructure

7. Best-Practice Principles for Inclusion and Cohesion

Drawing from international examples, AMAN recommends the ACT adopt principles such as:

- **Co-design with multicultural communities**, not consultation after decisions
- **Multilingual communication** for all major night-time policies and safety information
- **Universal design and accessibility standards** for seniors and people with disability
- **Sober and youth-friendly nightlife options**
- **Transport systems that operate with cultural and geographic fairness**
- **Strengthened community-police trust-building models**

These principles will elevate Canberra as a welcoming and globally forward city.

8. Additional Insights

Beyond the Terms of Reference, AMAN emphasises:

- The night-time economy must serve **shift workers**, including cleaners, carers, health staff, delivery drivers, taxi and rideshare workers — many of whom are CALD and invisible in traditional planning.
- Safety initiatives must recognise the intersection of **gender, disability, language, migration history, and cultural norms**.
- Digital inclusion and connectivity at night (lighting, CCTV with privacy protections, accessible apps, multilingual alerts) are essential.

9. Conclusion

Canberra's night-time economy is a living expression of who we are as a community. A thriving night economy is not measured only by spending or foot traffic but by **how safe**,



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welcomed, connected, and visible people feel — especially those whose voices have historically been marginalised.

AMAN stands ready to support the ACT in building a night-time economy that:

- reflects and celebrates our multicultural identity
- strengthens social cohesion
- enhances safety and wellbeing
- expands economic opportunity
- embraces creativity and innovation
- and ensures every resident, visitor, worker and artist feels they belong.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to contribute and welcome further engagement, dialogue, or evidence sessions.

Signed

Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy

President, Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)