



Inquiry into Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Fiona Carrick MLA

Addressed to: Minister for the Night-Time Economy

In relation to: Night Time Economy in the town centres and town centre - planning for activation

Hearing: 13 May 2026

Answer Due: 27 May 2026

1. How and when will planning for town centre entertainment precincts be undertaken, and how will this align with major projects (e.g. Woden Southern Gateway, Molonglo town centre) to ensure integrated, place-based outcomes?
2. What specific actions can be delivered across short (0–12 months), medium (1–3 years), and long term (3–10 years) to create active, safe, and inclusive night-time precincts consistent with ACT design guidance?
3. How is the government ensuring that public spaces (including town squares and plazas) are planned, designed and managed in coordination with adjacent landowners and businesses to achieve continuous activation and high-quality place outcomes?
4. What role will ongoing placemaking, events, and activation programming play in delivering vibrant precincts, and how will these be funded and sustained over time?
5. How are planning approvals, lease variation charges and other policy tools being used to require or incentivise outcomes such as active ground floors and high-quality public domain interfaces from the private sector?
6. What governance model is required to coordinate planning, delivery and ongoing activation of town centre precincts, and what level of authority, resourcing and cross-agency coordination is needed to achieve successful outcomes?

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

1. Work to investigate other entertainment precincts across the ACT will commence following completion of the review of the City Centre Entertainment Precinct. This review will be completed in the first half of 2026. The implementation of other entertainment precincts is subject to future government decisions.

Recent Machinery of Government changes have consolidated agencies within the City and Environment Directorate that will further contribute to the strategic alignment of major planning projects and the Government's commitment to investigate other entertainment precincts across the Territory.

2. See response to Question 1 above. This is to be determined as part of the further work to investigate other entertainment precincts across the ACT referenced in the response to Question 1.
3. The Planning Strategy 2018 and District Strategies support diverse centres by encouraging a mix of community, commercial and cultural uses in our centres for all to enjoy. This is supported by directions to support public realm safety, placemaking activities and pedestrian infrastructure to make our centres attractive and well-connected places to be. The strategies are operationalised in part through the provisions of the Territory Plan, associated Technical Specifications and the suite of Design Guides that guide development to achieve appropriate, high quality outcomes within our centres.

Coordination with adjacent landowners, businesses and the community is supported at multiple stages:

- **Strategic planning and policy development**
 - District Strategies are informed by extensive community and stakeholder engagement, ensuring local priorities, business perspectives and place-based opportunities are reflected.
 - Broader place-based frameworks, such as the Southern Gateway Framework, are developed through engagement with landowners, businesses and the community to inform the alignment of public and private investment and support coherent place outcomes.
- **Development and project delivery**
 - At the project level, proponents are required through the planning and development assessment system to respond to site context, integrate with adjoining development, and contribute positively to the public realm, supported by Design Guides and planning controls.
 - Engagement with adjacent landowners and stakeholders typically occurs through development application processes and project design stages, supporting coordinated design, access, and activation outcomes across sites.
- **Ongoing activation and management**
 - The Territory's planning and design framework promotes active frontages, adaptable ground floor uses and high-quality public domain design, enabling continuous activation of town squares and plazas.
 - Landowners, businesses and community organisations are also supported to contribute to activation through events and placemaking initiatives. This includes access to funding programs such as the ACT Event Fund (refer Question 4), which support ongoing activation and vibrancy in centres and public spaces.

Together, these mechanisms support a coordinated approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces, aligning government investment, private development and community activity to achieve high-quality, activated place outcomes.

4. Placemaking, activation and events are key elements of creating vibrant precincts and are supported through District Strategies, the Territory Plan, Technical Specifications and Design Guides.

The ACT Government supports ongoing event activation across Canberra's town centres and suburban precincts through the ACT Event Fund, an annual competitive grant program administered by Events ACT. Applications are assessed against a range of criteria, including their contribution to a geographically diverse events calendar across Canberra. This means that location is an active consideration in funding decisions. SouthFest, held in the Tuggeranong Town Centre, is an example of a suburban precinct event supported through the Fund.

Funding for these events is contingent on applications being received from eligible event organisers. Any organisation, group, or individual with the capacity to deliver an event is encouraged to engage with Events ACT regarding future funding rounds.

Activation and placemaking within the Urban Renewal Precinct – the declared areas of City Renewal's remit – which spans 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). The program is intended to be sustained over time through this shared funding model, with CCMIL supporting activation, beautification, marketing and additional city services within the levy area, alongside broader ACT Government investment in the city's long-term economic, social and cultural vitality.

5. Most developments in commercial zones, including those within the City Centre Entertainment Precinct and developments containing night time economy uses, are required to have active frontages in areas facing primary public realm frontages. These active frontages are identified in the Territory Plan. Design responses to this requirement may include having openable facades, glass or other transparent materials and other treatments which promote visual interest and connection between the public realm and inside private buildings.
6. The City Centre Urban Design Guide supports safe, accessible and interesting streetscapes within the City. This can be achieved through building design and siting considerations and high-quality architectural treatments to building facades.

The review of the City Centre Entertainment Precinct will inform further consideration of what governance model/s may be appropriate for entertainment precincts. This review will be completed in the first half of 2026.

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:

29/5/26