



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: 006

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From: [David Caffery](#)
To: [LA Committee - Economics](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: NTE Submission
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Dear Committee

Forgive the brevity of this submission, for want of more time.

I volunteered in a few leadership roles in MusicACT since 2012 and oversaw the always-constructive but sometimes-contentious campaigning for Entertainment Precincts in the ACT. Thank you for helping to make those a reality before residential buildings change our city's skyline, when it would have been too late to protect music venues.

My small event and placemaking company is the 'City Place Manager' of City Renewal Authority and we activate the city on their behalf. This submission does not represent the views of CRA, only my own.

With the utmost respect, and to directly talk to the reasons for this enquiry:

- The 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.
- Our CBD needs to become a Central Experience District, otherwise the growing vacancies in inner-city commercial property will make Canberra even more of a 'doughnut city,' leaving a hole in our heart.
- The CRA are good at activation but I understand a night-time activation strategy is not in their remit nor their medium-term outlook. I believe it is therefore not on any department's agenda.
- I therefore repeat the recommendation made in the Cool Little Capital Report (2015), which was echoed in various reports including the Entertainment Action Plan 2019, for a Night-Time Manager. (Please note: not a 'Night Mayor,' as the translation from Dutch makes the role sound like a bad dream).
- The ACT Government is unlikely to find internal people with the right expertise and relationships to activate the city at night. Sorry, this is a blunt but important consideration. Most government staff with the right skills for this role rarely go out after 9pm in the city. That's why it has taken so long to even be considered. The role needs someone young and smart who can relay information and understand strategic goals whilst having experience and connections to late-night establishments. Otherwise there will be a rift between the NTE Manager and their ability to navigate a steep path.
- Therefore I suggest this Manager role, which could either be one person or a company of like-minded people, should be a specialist contractor procured to activate the NTE and managed by an agile department or agency. This might be CRA, in the same way they ably manage the City Place Manager role, or perhaps the new role would report to the Better Regulation Taskforce and the NTE remains a taskforce issue until the activation path is paved.
- Agility and openness to new methods of working with local businesses will be key

factors of success for both the Night-Time Manager and their contract manager within government.

Changing the habits of how Canberrans engage with the NTE – to make it more mature, which means to be reputed as vibrant and safe for young and old – will be a leap for the economy and attractiveness of our city. It would be nice if we had numbers on the potential growth opportunity it presents, but that study hasn't even been commissioned (I tried but the LGA splits make it a worryingly negative headline for the ACT if not carefully treated).

One day, we will look back at Canberra's evolution and laugh at the contrast between the reputation of today's nightlife and its inevitable future development. My only question is: will it be after many decades of delays and mistakes in governance, or soon after issues and recommendations were articulated? It's already been one decade.

I write this with great respect for the ACT Government and a passion to see our evolution continue toward becoming a great city of the 21st century.

I welcome a further conversation. Thank you for your time.

Dave

David Caffery

Director

(He / Him)


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This is Ngunnawal country.

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