

ACT Legislative Assembly

Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation

INQUIRY INTO CANBERRA'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canberra's night-time economy (NTE) is at a critical juncture. Over the past five years the city has experienced superficial growth in venue numbers and overall turnover, yet beneath these headline figures lies a shrinking labour market, declining spending in key sectors, rising operating costs, and growing structural barriers that prevent diversification.

The Ingenium Research analysis published in *The Canberra Times* shows that more than 2,600 jobs were lost across core night-time economy industries:

- an 8% fall in employment
- in contrast to national growth of 1.4%

At the same time, the number of businesses grew by 4% and sales increased by 6%, revealing a worrying dynamic: more operators competing for less labour, less revenue per venue, and a market characterised by chronic under-employment and productivity compression.

The ACT Government's Night-Time Economy Review acknowledges these problems, noting persistent barriers such as licensing complexity, high regulatory costs, limited late-night retail, insufficiently flexible planning and building requirements, and most critically outdated noise standards inconsistent with a modern mixed-use city

Canberra's NTE is not failing due to a lack of demand or creativity. It is constrained by regulation that has not kept pace with changing consumer behaviour, modern live music standards, or the emergence of small multi-purpose venues that rely on flexible activation.

Young people are driving demand for:

- late-night food and alcohol-free experiences
- creative performance and live music
- outdoor social spaces
- interactive venues (gaming, VR, arts, comedy, hybrid retail-hospitality)

Yet the regulatory system continues to favour an outdated model of night-time activity oriented around traditional pubs and bars, and reactive noise management that prioritises individual complainants over whole-of-precinct vibrancy.

This submission argues for an integrated regulatory reset that includes:

- modern, precinct-based noise regulation with relaxed limits in core zones, mixed use and suburban entertainment precincts
- agent-of-change protections that require new residential developments to mitigate noise, not existing venues (Order of occupancy issues need serious consideration in this area)
- harmonisation with NSW risk-based licensing

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- expansion of fee reductions and smaller club venue incentives
- a dedicated Night-Time Economy Office to coordinate planning, licensing, noise and events
- improved transport, lighting and safety infrastructure to support late-night activation
- greater support for live music and creative industries, noting that clubs have been rejected after applying for licences after midnight.

The ACT has already taken several constructive steps including fee reductions, extended trading allowances, and entertainment precinct planning, but these reforms are fragmented and incomplete and have failed to recognise or benefit licensed clubs.

Canberra's night-time economy is increasingly constrained not only by regulatory settings, but by declining public-realm amenity. Evidence provided to the Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Municipal Services demonstrates that deteriorating lighting, graffiti, rubbish accumulation, damaged footpaths, unsafe access routes and inconsistent policing presence are materially reducing perceptions of safety after dark, particularly in the CBD and town centres. These conditions suppress visitation, deter workforce participation, and undermine investment confidence in night-time venues.

The ACT should adopt a formal order-of-occupancy and reasonable-expectation framework for noise management so that new development in active precincts is designed for existing night-time conditions, rather than progressively constraining established lawful venues.

The ACT should recognise policing visibility, active CCTV coverage and coordinated precinct response capability as essential enabling infrastructure for a safe and growing night-time economy, rather than treating them as matters separate from economic development.

The recent ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Municipal Services has some relevance to the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry. Accordingly, we have included reference to some common issues in this submission and attach a copy of our earlier submission to that Inquiry to this submission for reference **(Appendix D – attached document)**

A modern, competitive night-time economy requires structural change. Canberra must adopt a regulatory framework that reflects contemporary expectations, supports diverse offerings, and protects the city's cultural heartbeat.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Canberra's night-time economy is a foundational part of the Territory's social identity and economic life. It provides thousands of jobs, supports local businesses, offers cultural and entertainment options for residents and visitors, and contributes significantly to the Territory's attractiveness as a place to live, work, study and invest.

Yet Canberra's NTE is facing intensifying pressures:

- rising costs across labour, insurance, interest rates, utilities and compliance
- falling alcohol consumption among younger people
- limited late-night transport and entertainment options
- insufficient retail activity after dark
- increasingly mixed-use areas generating noise conflict
- planning controls not designed for creative industries
- slow approvals for Liquor and planning approvals, events and outdoor activation
- Restrictive Alcohol Risk Assessment Management Plans that often don't reflect legislation

At the same time, neighbouring jurisdictions, particularly NSW, have relaunched ambitious night-time reforms, including:

- a Night-Time Economy Commissioner
- relaxed noise controls in entertainment precincts
- expanded small bar models
- revitalised cultural activation strategies
- streamlined licensing and approvals

Canberra cannot afford to fall behind. We must learn from best-practice nationally and internationally and adopt a future-focused regulatory approach.

The Terms of Reference for this inquiry provide a broad, comprehensive foundation to examine the structural and cultural forces shaping the NTE. This submission addresses each TOR in detail and recommends a suite of changes that will enable a vibrant, safe and sustainable NTE for the next decade.

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2. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

(Terms of Reference 1)

2.1 A Night-Time Economy Under Stress

The Ingenium Research report reveals a disconnect between venue numbers and workforce stability:

- 2,600+ jobs lost in 2023–24
- 8% decline in employment in the NTE
- national average: +1.4% employment growth
- ACT business numbers: +4% growth
- ACT population growth: strong in 18–35 age bracket (core NTE demographic)
- spending in drink establishments fell by 0.8%, outpacing national decline

This combination, more businesses, fewer workers, declining venue spending, indicates a sector under significant strain.

2.2 Expansion Without Capacity

Two-thirds of ACT business growth was driven by micro-businesses with no employees

This reflects:

- rising compliance and staffing costs
- operators substituting labour with owner-operators
- market fragmentation and competition for limited customers
- inability to scale operations
- shrinking margins in food service and entertainment

This is not healthy sectoral growth; it is survival-driven downsizing.

2.3 Post-COVID Structural Shifts

Consumer behaviour has shifted dramatically:

- young people drink alcohol at “historic lows”
- visitation patterns favour early evening and late-night food
- People are increasingly staying at home for entertainment due to lack of transport, rising costs, lack of safety and police presence
- patrons seek experiences beyond drinking

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- People staying at home for entertainment due to lack of transport, rising costs, lack of safety and police presence

These shifts demand more:

- late-night retail
- large, safe, well run, affordable hospitality spaces
- flexible multi-use venues
- creative industries integration
- safe, walkable, well-lit public spaces

Current regulation inhibits this necessary diversification.

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3. REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT: NOISE, LICENSING, PLANNING, TRANSPORT, SAFETY

(Terms of Reference 2)

Canberra's night-time economy will not diversify at scale unless the regulatory system is recalibrated for a modern, mixed-use city. At present, the system is too complaint-driven, too fragmented across agencies, and too inconsistent between precincts. The result is uncertainty: operators self-censor programming, investors defer capital upgrades, and new entrants choose lower-risk concepts rather than culturally valuable offerings.

3.1 Noise Regulations: The Single Greatest Barrier to a Vibrant NTE

Noise settings are the single most determinative constraint on night-time activation in Canberra. They set the ceiling on when venues can operate, whether outdoor areas can be used, whether live music is viable, and whether new small-format venues can take a chance on cultural programming.

The current approach has four structural flaws:

• Outdated standards that assume near-silence in locations that are, by design, mixed-use and active.

• Complaint-driven enforcement that creates unpredictable risk for compliant operators and rewards strategic complainants.

• Limited differentiation between source types (live amplified music, background music, patron noise, outdoor activation) and limited recognition of cumulative ambient sound in city environments.

• Poor alignment between planning intent (activation) and enforcement practice (suppression), leaving venues exposed to conflicting signals from government.

Operationally, this drives risk-avoidance: venues reduce live programming, restrict outdoor seating, pull back on late trading, and divert resources from activation into compliance and dispute management.

3.2 Precinct-Based Noise Reform

A precinct-based approach is the most practical path to certainty and vibrancy. The principle is simple: Canberra should clearly designate where higher night-time activity is expected and supported, and then regulate noise accordingly—upfront, transparently, and consistently.

ClubsACT supports a three-tier precinct framework:

• Core entertainment precincts with higher allowable thresholds that reflect intended character and existing ambient conditions.

• Transition / frame zones with intermediate standards to manage edge effects and guide building design responses.

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• Residential and quiet zones where lower limits apply and where activation policy should prioritise earlier-evening formats.

This model only works if it is accompanied by clear public noise maps, consistent measurement methodology, and a compliance approach that focuses on outcomes and proportionality rather than punitive, ad hoc responses.

Where precincts are planned for activation, the default policy stance should be: 'design for activity', not 'regulate toward silence'.

3.3 Agent-of-Change, Order of Occupancy and Reasonable Expectations

If Canberra wants a more vibrant night-time economy without constant conflict between entertainment uses and residential growth, it must move beyond a loose statement of agent-of-change and adopt a practical order-of-occupancy framework.

The core principle is straightforward: where lawful clubs, hospitality venues, live music venues and other evening-economy uses already operate in an established activity area, later residential development should not progressively regulate those uses into silence. That is not sound planning. It is effectively retrospective down-zoning by complaint.

Canberra's mixed-use growth strategy depends on accepting that some precincts are intended to be active, social and audible after dark. In those places, the planning system should not proceed on the fiction that new residents can reasonably expect suburban-style quiet conditions. Rather, reasonable expectation should be defined by precinct character, lawful existing use, ambient activity levels, and the Territory's stated economic and cultural objectives for that area.

A workable ACT model should therefore combine agent-of-change with a clear order-of-occupancy principle:

- existing lawful venues should retain protection for their established operating profile, subject to ordinary compliance
- new sensitive development in or near recognised activity precincts should be required to absorb and manage the interface through acoustic design, building treatment and purchaser disclosure
- complaints processes should recognise whether the complained-of activity pre-dated the sensitive use and whether the activity is consistent with approved trading, precinct intent and existing ambient conditions

This is not an argument against amenity. It is an argument for allocating responsibility properly. Residents should be protected through better design, disclosure and clearer standards. Venues should be protected from being retrospectively constrained simply because surrounding land use intensifies.

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3.3.1 A Proposed ACT Order of Occupancy Process for Noise Management

ClubsACT proposes that the ACT adopt a formal order-of-occupancy process within planning, environment protection and liquor regulation for designated night-time and mixed-use precincts.

Under this model, the ACT would identify precincts or corridors where evening activity is an intended planning outcome, including Civic, Braddon, Dickson, Manuka, Kingston, Woden, Belconnen, Tuggeranong town centres, and relevant suburban entertainment and all club precincts. For those areas, the following process should apply.

1. Precinct character statements and noise expectation maps
Government should publish precinct-level character statements that make clear where higher evening activity is expected. These should be accompanied by public-facing noise and activity maps identifying:

- core entertainment areas
- mixed-use transition areas
- primarily residential quiet areas

This provides clarity to regulators, developers, purchasers and operators before disputes arise.

2. Mandatory acoustic design obligations for new sensitive development
Any new residential, hotel, serviced apartment, aged care or other sensitive use proposed within or adjacent to an identified activity precinct should be required to demonstrate, at development approval stage, that it can achieve appropriate internal amenity outcomes through building design rather than by relying on future restrictions on surrounding venues.

This should include matters such as:

- façade and glazing performance
- mechanical ventilation or alternative ventilation solutions where windows are not the primary mitigation strategy
- balcony and outdoor-interface treatment
- building orientation and bedroom placement
- acoustic attenuation for patron-dispersal and traffic noise as well as music

The burden should sit with the incoming sensitive use, not the pre-existing venue.

3. Disclosure and purchaser awareness requirements
Planning approvals for new residential development in designated activity precincts should require plain-language disclosure to buyers and tenants that they are moving into an active night-time environment where lawful entertainment, hospitality and associated patron movement can reasonably be expected.

This disclosure should not be symbolic only. It should form part of sales and leasing documentation so that market participants make informed decisions. A person choosing to live in an entertainment or mixed-use precinct should do so with clear notice of the precinct's intended character.

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4. Recognition of lawful existing use in complaint assessment
When regulators assess noise complaints, they should be required to consider:

- whether the venue or use pre-dates the complainant's development or occupation
- whether the complained-of activity is within approved trading hours and licence conditions
- whether the activity is consistent with precinct character and mapped expectation
- what mitigation has already been installed by the venue
- whether the new development was approved with knowledge of the surrounding activity context

This would reduce the current tendency for complaint volume alone to drive enforcement outcomes.

5. No retroactive burden-shifting absent material intensification
Established venues should not be forced into major retrofitted compliance upgrades merely because new residential development has occurred nearby, unless the venue itself has materially intensified beyond its historic or approved operating profile.

That distinction matters. If a venue substantially changes its mode of operation, a fresh assessment may be warranted. But where the venue is broadly continuing an established pattern of lawful trade, the planning system should not use subsequent residential encroachment as a basis to ratchet down activity over time.

6. Safe-harbour provisions for low-risk activation
For identified precincts, the ACT should introduce safe-harbour settings for low-risk activity such as:

- soloists, duos and small acoustic acts
- low-scale outdoor music at limited times
- community events and seasonal activations
- lawn-based recreation, outdoor screenings and food-led activation

Where a venue operates within a prescribed safe-harbour pathway, enforcement should focus on persistent, significant non-compliance rather than one-off or marginal complaints.

7. Single-front-door regulatory coordination
Order-of-occupancy will only work if planning, liquor regulation and environmental regulation operate consistently. The ACT should establish a coordinated assessment pathway, ideally through a Night-Time Economy Office or concierge function, so venues and developers are not subject to contradictory expectations from different arms of government.

This is particularly important where one regulator encourages activation while another effectively suppresses it through inconsistent interpretation of noise or design requirements.

3.3.2 Reasonable Expectation in New Developments

A "reasonable expectation" test should sit alongside order-of-occupancy in ACT policy.

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In practical terms, this means that new developments in or near designated entertainment and mixed-use precincts should be assessed on the basis that some level of evening sound, patron movement, music, traffic, outdoor conversation and event-related activity is normal and foreseeable. The legal and planning question should not be whether noise can be reduced to suburban background levels. The question should be whether the development has been designed to accommodate the known and intended function of the precinct.

This approach would better align Canberra's planning system with how successful mixed-use cities operate. It would also provide fairer guidance to tribunals, regulators and decision-makers when disputes arise. The test should not reward strategic objections to long-standing lawful activity in areas that government itself has designated for activation and urban intensification.

3.4 Licensing and Risk-Based Regulation

The ACT's recent fee and trading reforms are constructive, but the licensing system remains overly complex for a market trying to diversify beyond the traditional bar model. In particular, Canberra needs a clearer, more risk-based pathway for: small performance venues, food-led venues with occasional entertainment, and community venues that operate at scale with strong governance and harm-minimisation practices.

Reform priorities include:

• Harmonisation with NSW-style risk-based licensing concepts, so conditions and assessments better reflect actual risk and operating history.

• Streamlined approvals for low-risk entertainment (e.g., acoustic sets, comedy, small-format performances) without repeated re-applications.

• Reducing duplication between licensing, planning, and events approvals—particularly for outdoor areas and temporary activations.

• Reviewing the design and application of RAMP conditions to ensure they are evidence-based, proportionate, and consistent with legislative intent.

3.5 Planning and Building Rules

Planning and building settings are currently a hidden handbrake on night-time diversification. Small and mid-sized operators routinely encounter compliance requirements that are disproportionate to risk and cost-prohibitive relative to expected returns.

Common barriers include:

• Inconsistent interpretation of outdoor dining and public realm interfaces across agencies and projects.

• Upgrades triggered by minor use changes (e.g., bathrooms, fire safety) that are not calibrated to occupancy, hours, or actual risk.

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• Unclear pathways for creative uses (performance, rehearsal, mixed retail-hospitality) within existing building stock.

• Compliance contradictions that force operators to choose between activation outcomes (open-air formats) and regulatory requirements (noise abatement, smoking area rules, CCTV obligations).

A practical solution is an integrated 'NTE approvals pathway' for designated precincts: pre-agreed performance standards, template conditions, and a single coordination function to avoid serial, inconsistent redesign.

3.6 Transport and Safety

Night-time participation is shaped as much by safe access and public realm conditions as by venue offerings. If patrons and workers do not feel safe travelling to and from precincts after dark, the market will not expand—regardless of demand.

The ACT's NTE settings should treat late-night transport, lighting, walkability, and rapid maintenance as core economic infrastructure, not optional amenity.

3.6.1 Municipal Amenity as Night-Time Economic Infrastructure

Evidence from venues operating in the CBD and town centres indicates that declining municipal standards—particularly poor lighting, graffiti accumulation, rubbish build-up, damaged footpaths and inconsistent enforcement—are directly undermining perceptions of safety and reducing visitation after dark.

These conditions also shift costs onto operators through increased security requirements, vandalism repair, and informal 'safety refuge' responsibilities when other services withdraw.

3.6.2 Business Community Experience

Concerns about public realm conditions are shared beyond the club sector. Business community evidence has described a cumulative 'air of decay' arising from persistent graffiti, damaged infrastructure and poor maintenance, which undermines confidence and suppresses activity—particularly in the city centre and major precincts.

This cross-sector alignment matters: it indicates the constraint is systemic and requires a coordinated, whole-of-government response.

3.6.3 Implications for Night-Time Economy Policy and Governance

Fragmented responsibility for night-time precinct conditions is incompatible with a vibrant NTE. Regulatory reform (noise, licensing, planning) will not deliver its intended benefits unless it is paired with precinct-level delivery of: lighting, cleaning, graffiti removal, safe access routes, and visible coordination of safety responses.

A functional night-time economy therefore requires a governance model that can align planning intent, regulatory enforcement, municipal services, and safety operations in real time.

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3.6.4 Safety, Policing and Public Confidence

A successful night-time economy is not created by licensing reform alone. It depends on public confidence that entertainment precincts are well-managed, visible, and safe to use after dark. That confidence is not abstract. It is shaped by lighting, cleanliness, transport, passive surveillance, visible guardianship, CCTV capability and the practical certainty that anti-social behaviour, violence or disorder will receive a timely response.

For patrons, workers, performers, visitors and families, safety surety is integral to participation. People do not meaningfully utilise night-time precincts if they believe access routes are poorly lit, disorder goes unmanaged, incidents will not attract a prompt response, or they will be left unsupported when leaving venues late at night. In this respect, policing resources are not external to the night-time economy; they are part of the enabling infrastructure that underpins visitation, trade, workforce confidence and precinct growth.

This is particularly important in Canberra, where the success of the night-time economy depends less on extreme density than on confidence and predictability. In a smaller city, perceptions of disorder or weak response capacity can suppress visitation quickly and disproportionately. By contrast, visible and coordinated safety settings increase willingness to stay longer, attend more often, disperse safely and support a broader mix of uses, including food-led, cultural, family-friendly and alcohol-light activity.

The ACT should therefore treat safety and policing as a core pillar of night-time economy policy. This requires a shift from passive reliance on general policing and fragmented municipal responses toward a precinct-based operating model in which government, ACT Policing, venues, city services and transport providers work to a shared safety framework.

At minimum, that framework should include:

Visible policing presence in entertainment areas
Designated entertainment precincts should have a consistent and identifiable policing presence during peak night-time periods. The point is not over-securitisation. It is confidence, deterrence, rapid de-escalation and early intervention. A visible presence reduces uncertainty for patrons and workers and signals that government is actively standing behind the activation it seeks to promote.

A dedicated entertainment precinct response capability
The ACT should examine a dedicated night-time or entertainment-areas response team model for peak periods, focused on rapid attendance, de-escalation, venue liaison, patron dispersal and coordination with ambulance, transport and municipal services where required. This need not mean a wholly separate permanent unit; it may begin as a rostered operational function tied to identified precincts and high-demand trading windows.

Expanded and actively managed CCTV coverage
CCTV should be expanded in identified night-time precincts, but expansion alone is not enough. Best practice points to actively monitored systems, clear governance, direct reporting pathways and integration with police and emergency response. The ACT should move toward a precinct CCTV

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model that prioritises entry and exit routes, taxi and rideshare zones, pedestrian links, car-park interfaces and known disorder hotspots, with regular review of coverage gaps.

A coordinated safety partnership model
Clubs, hotels, live music venues and other operators should be incorporated into a formal precinct safety partnership rather than left to absorb safety burdens informally. This should include structured liaison between venues, ACT Policing, municipal services and the Night-Time Economy Office, with agreed escalation pathways and routine information sharing on local risks, trading peaks and public-realm issues.

A broader public-safety lens
Night-time safety policy should not be framed only around intoxication or enforcement. It should also address women's safety, vulnerable patrons, younger workers, older Canberrans, visitors unfamiliar with the city, and people participating in alcohol-free or low-alcohol activities. Safe use of the city after dark depends on visibility, support, ease of movement and confidence that help is available when needed.

This is not a call for blunt law-and-order framing. It is a practical recognition that a modern night-time economy requires credible safety architecture. If government wants more people out later, spending more, attending events and using mixed-use precincts with confidence, then it must ensure the after-dark operating environment is visibly and reliably managed.

National and international models support this approach. Better-practice night-time frameworks emphasise visible policing, active CCTV, welfare support, taxi and dispersal management and multi-agency coordination as core features of successful precincts. The lesson for the ACT is clear: safety confidence is not a by-product of a strong night-time economy. It is one of the conditions that makes one possible.

Hospitality Workers the Frontline Public Safety Responders

A further point should be recognised explicitly in the ACT's night-time economy framework: hospitality workers, duty managers, security staff and licensed venues are already performing a frontline public-safety role. In practice, they are often the first to identify escalating behaviour, manage refusals of service, de-escalate conflict, assist intoxicated or vulnerable patrons, coordinate safe departures, call emergency services and maintain order until formal responders arrive. This is not incidental to the operation of the NTE. It is part of the city's after-hours safety architecture, and it should be treated as such in policy and resource allocation.

This role is becoming more demanding. ACT Policing attended more than 51,000 incidents in 2024–25 and has identified illicit drug use, mental health incidents, and domestic and family violence as ongoing operational challenges. The same reporting notes targeted enforcement activity in the City and Braddon precincts, with Operation City Safe resulting in 45 arrests and 59 cautions or move-on notices, demonstrating the concentration of risk in key entertainment areas. These are precisely the environments in which venue staff are expected to absorb immediate behavioural risk, often before police or other services can attend.

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Recent drug-market evidence sharpens this concern. The ACIC's wastewater monitoring program reports that national methylamphetamine consumption increased by 21 per cent in 2023–24 to 12.8 tonnes, with capital-city consumption at record levels in 2024. The same report states that the combined picture across wastewater and other market indicators shows concerning growth, particularly in illicit stimulant markets. While these data do not isolate harms within venues, they clearly indicate a more drug-saturated operating environment for nightlife precincts and for the workers required to manage patron behaviour in real time.

In this context, clubs and well-managed hospitality venues should be understood not only as regulated businesses, but as practical safe harbours within the city at night. They are supervised, lit, staffed environments with responsible-service obligations, surveillance capability, incident procedures and direct links to police, transport and emergency services. For many patrons, particularly late at night, they are the places where help is sought, conflict is contained, welfare is monitored and safe exit is arranged. Much of this contribution is invisible in formal crime statistics because it is preventative: it stops vulnerable situations from becoming assaults, public disorder incidents, missing persons matters or medical emergencies. The ACT's NTE policy should recognise this preventive function and support it more deliberately.

Accordingly, safety policy for the NTE should move beyond a narrow compliance lens and adopt a more operational understanding of shared responsibility. If venues and their workers are expected to carry growing frontline safety burdens, government should back that expectation with targeted support: stronger visible policing in entertainment precincts, faster peak-period response capability, better-integrated CCTV and communications systems, and co-funded training and safety infrastructure for venues performing an important public-protection role. That is not a substitute for policing; it is a realistic acknowledgement that a successful night-time economy depends on coordinated, place-based safety capacity across both public agencies and frontline operators.

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4. THE ROLE OF LIVE MUSIC, SPECIAL EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

(Terms of Reference 3)

Live music and cultural programming are not discretionary 'nice-to-haves'. They are the differentiator between a city that is merely open late and a city that attracts visitors, retains young people, and builds a distinctive identity.

4.1 Live Music Is a Strategic Economic Asset

Live music drives repeat visitation, supports creative employment, and generates spill-over spending across hospitality, transport and accommodation. It also anchors precinct identity—helping Canberra compete with larger jurisdictions for events, students, and workforce attraction.

4.2 Barriers to Live Music Growth

Canberra's live music potential is constrained by intersecting barriers: noise limits that do not align with precinct intent; approvals complexity; high production and compliance costs; and operating models that are under pressure due to changing alcohol consumption patterns and affordability pressures.

Without targeted reform, the market will continue to drift toward low-risk, low-culture offerings—reducing diversity and weakening Canberra's brand.

4.3 Proposed Live Music Support Measures

ClubsACT supports a practical package to rebuild live performance capacity:

• Precinct-based noise settings that enable predictable, compliant live music programming.

• A low-risk entertainment pathway for small-format performance (including simplified approvals and template conditions).

• Targeted cultural micro-grants for programming, especially in shoulder hours and for emerging artists.

• Support for rehearsal and production infrastructure (shared spaces, equipment pools, partnerships with education providers).

• Event approval processes that are time-bound, transparent, and coordinated across agencies.

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5. OPPORTUNITIES TO DIVERSIFY CANBERRA'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

(Terms of Reference 4)

Diversification is the central economic opportunity for Canberra's NTE. Demand is shifting toward food-led experiences, alcohol-light and alcohol-free formats, interactive entertainment, and safe, inclusive public spaces that support social connection beyond traditional late-night drinking.

5.1 Changing Preferences of Young People

Younger cohorts are signalling clear preferences: affordability, safety, late-night food, creative experiences, and venues that are welcoming without requiring alcohol consumption as the primary driver of participation.

The policy implication is straightforward: Canberra needs a regulatory framework that enables diverse formats, not one that assumes a single model of night-time activity.

5.2 Diversification Barriers

The main barriers are structural and policy-driven:

• Noise and outdoor activation limits that reduce viability of many formats.

• Uncertain and duplicative approvals across licensing, planning and events.

• Limited late-night transport confidence and perceptions of safety after dark.

• High operating cost pressures (security, compliance, insurance, staffing) that disproportionately affect new and smaller entrants.

5.3 Priority Diversification Initiatives

ClubsACT supports priority initiatives that can broaden participation and increase precinct resilience:

• Late-night food precinct development and incentives for extended kitchen trading.

• Event-friendly outdoor activation frameworks (markets, pop-ups, performance) with standardised approvals.

• Clear pathways for mixed retail-hospitality formats (e.g., galleries, VR/interactive venues, comedy/theatre, hybrid community uses).

• Pop-up licensing mechanisms and short-term approvals that allow experimentation without prohibitive upfront cost.

5.4 Amenity as a Precondition for Diversification

Diversification will not succeed without clean, well-lit, safe public environments. Municipal neglect disproportionately deters women, families, older Canberrans and younger workers from participating, constraining precisely the growth segments that policy seeks to unlock.

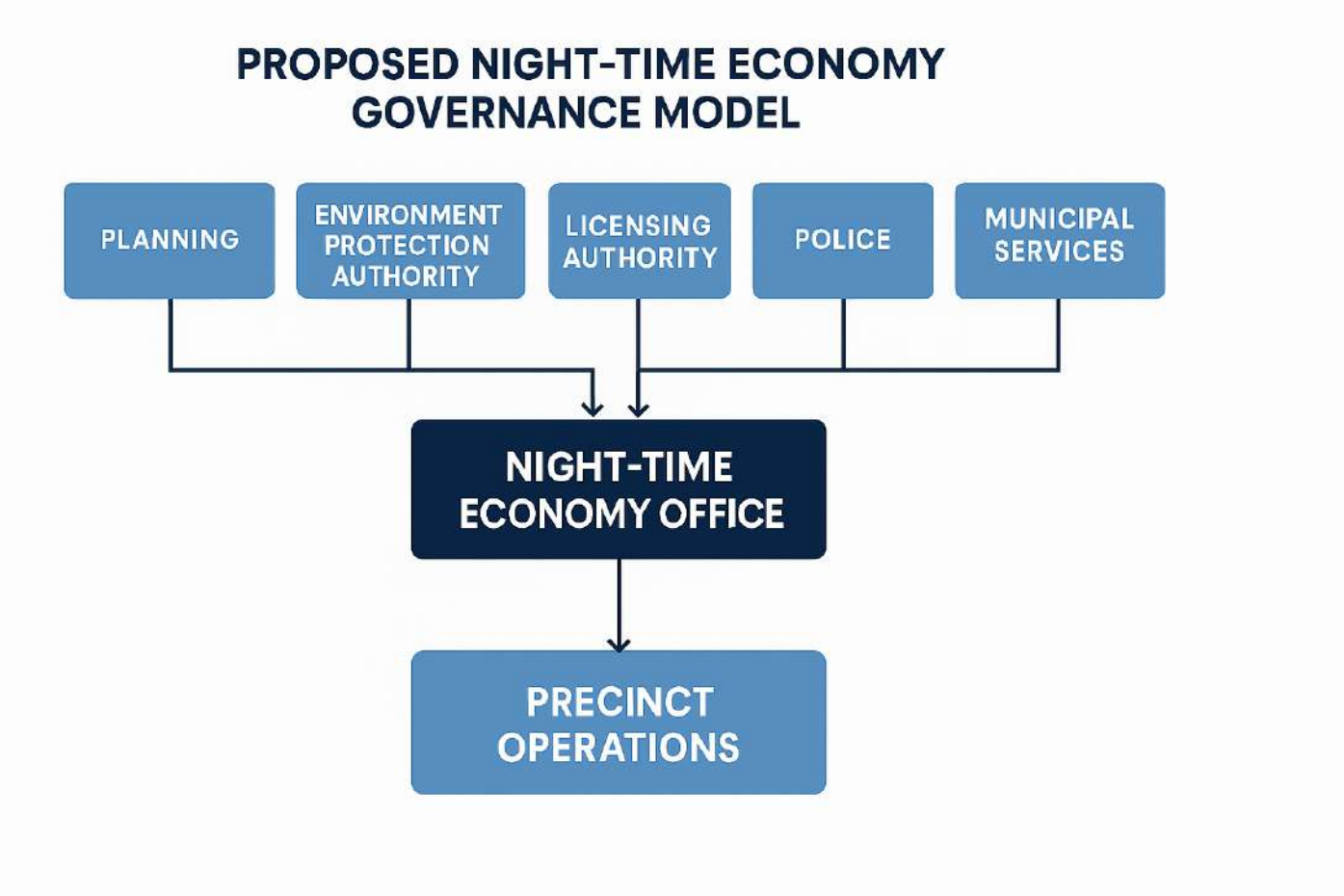
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Precinct revitalisation therefore requires municipal services to be treated as a delivery partner in NTE strategy, not a background function.

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6. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR NTE DEVELOPMENT

(Terms of Reference 5)



A recurring theme across all NTE reforms is fragmentation. Businesses currently navigate multiple agencies, unclear responsibilities, and inconsistent timelines. This undermines confidence and slows investment.

6.1 Need for a Night-Time Economy Office

Canberra has policy intent, but it lacks an operational centre of gravity. A dedicated Night-Time Economy Office would provide a single coordinating function to integrate licensing, planning, noise, events, transport and precinct amenity—so reforms translate into on-the-ground outcomes.

6.2 Why a Coordinator or Office Matters

Where other jurisdictions have established a dedicated coordinator function, outcomes improve because responsibility becomes visible, timeframes become predictable, and precinct identity can be actively managed rather than left to reactive processes.

For Canberra, the test should be practical: does government make it easier or harder to open, operate and safely activate a venue after dark? A coordinator function is the mechanism to make the system work as one system.

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6.3 Night-Time Economy Delivery Requires Municipal Coordination

The Night-Time Economy Office should be explicitly empowered to coordinate municipal service delivery in designated precincts. This includes rapid-response maintenance protocols, precinct-based cleaning and lighting schedules, integrated incident response, and transparent performance reporting.

A workable model would include:

• A Night-Time Rapid Response Protocol (48–72 hours) for graffiti, lighting failures, dangerous footpaths and rubbish hotspots in designated precincts.

• Joint precinct audits involving the NTE Office, municipal services, policing and industry representatives, focused on night-time conditions.

• Public benchmarking of response times and amenity standards to build confidence and accountability.

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7. BEST-PRACTICE MODELS (DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL)

(Terms of Reference 6)

Canberra does not need to invent reform from scratch. Best-practice approaches already exist across Australian jurisdictions and comparable cities, and the common thread is integrated, precinct-based policy backed by clear operational coordination.

7.1 South Australia's Small Venue Licence

South Australia's small venue licensing approach is widely regarded as an example of how regulatory simplification can unlock low-risk, culturally valuable venues. The key lesson is that small-format venues need a fit-for-purpose pathway that reduces red tape while maintaining clear safety and compliance expectations.

7.2 NSW's NTE Transformation

NSW reforms demonstrate the value of combining regulatory change (noise and licensing) with an explicit coordination function and targeted activation support. For Canberra, the transferable lesson is that policy settings must be aligned across agencies and applied consistently within precincts.

7.3 Melbourne's Agent-of-Change Success

Melbourne's adoption of agent-of-change has been central to protecting live music and cultural venues in growth areas. The core lesson for the ACT is that mixed-use development can coexist with cultural activity—if planning and building design standards allocate responsibility correctly.

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8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are designed to be practical, precinct-focused and deliverable. They emphasise partnership, certainty, and a transition pathway that supports both community safety and economic vitality.

8.1 Noise Regulation

1. Implement precinct-based noise settings with clearly designated core entertainment precincts, transitional frame zones, and residential/quiet zones, supported by public noise mapping.

2. Modernise noise measurement and compliance practice to distinguish between live music, background music, patron noise and outdoor activation, with proportional enforcement focused on outcomes and repeat non-compliance.

3. Enable predictable outdoor activation in designated precincts through standard conditions and time-bound approvals.

3A. Embed a formal order-of-occupancy principle within ACT noise management for designated entertainment and mixed-use precincts, so that complaint assessment and compliance responses must consider lawful pre-existing use, precinct character and existing ambient conditions.

8.2 Licensing

4. Adopt a more explicitly risk-based licensing approach, drawing on NSW-style concepts, to ensure conditions reflect venue history, governance capability and actual risk profile.

5. Create a low-risk entertainment pathway for small-format performance and cultural programming (including simplified approvals and template conditions).

6. Review RAMP application and consistency to ensure conditions are evidence-based, proportionate, and aligned with legislative intent.

8.3 Planning

7. Integrate night-time economy objectives into relevant planning instruments for designated precincts, including explicit support for mixed-use activation and creative industries.

8. Develop an 'NTE approvals pathway' for designated precincts to reduce duplication between planning, licensing and events approvals, with clear timeframes and a single coordination function.

9. Establish fit-for-purpose guidance for building upgrades triggered by minor use changes, calibrated to risk and occupancy, to avoid cost-prohibitive barriers for small and mid-sized operators.

9A. Require new residential and other sensitive developments in or near designated entertainment and mixed-use precincts to meet mandatory acoustic design and interface standards at approval stage, with the mitigation burden placed on the incoming development.

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9B. Introduce mandatory disclosure requirements for purchasers and tenants of new developments in designated night-time precincts, so that reasonable expectations of evening activity are clearly understood.

9C. Establish a "reasonable expectation of activity" test in planning and noise decision-making for designated precincts, recognising that active mixed-use areas cannot be assessed against suburban quiet-zone assumptions.

9D. Prevent retroactive imposition of major new noise mitigation burdens on existing lawful venues unless there has been a material intensification or substantive change in the venue's own operating profile.

8.4 Governance

10. Establish a Night-Time Economy Office with authority to coordinate licensing, planning, noise, events, transport and municipal service delivery within designated precincts.

11. Introduce an NTE Concierge function to provide consistent advice, triage approvals and reduce 'black-box' bureaucracy for operators.

12. Publish performance measures and annual reporting on approval timeframes, precinct amenity response times, and activation outcomes.

12A. Create a single coordinated ACT pathway for planning, EPA and liquor-related assessment of night-time noise and activation issues, to eliminate contradictory regulatory directions and provide a clear front door for operators and developers.

8.5 Activation

13. Expand event-friendly public realm activation frameworks (markets, pop-ups, small performances) supported by streamlined approvals and micro-grants.

14. Support live music and cultural programming through targeted grants, rehearsal/production support and shoulder-hour activation initiatives.

15. Strengthen late-night food and alcohol-light participation pathways through precinct planning, incentives and clear approvals for extended kitchen trading.

8.6 Municipal Services Integration for Night-Time Precincts

16. Implement a Night-Time Rapid Response Protocol (48–72 hours) for graffiti, lighting failures, dangerous footpaths and rubbish hotspots in designated precincts.

17. Conduct regular CBD and town-centre night-time safety and amenity audits involving the NTE Office, municipal services, policing and industry.

18. Benchmark night-time amenity performance and publicly report response times and standards for entertainment precincts.

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19. Formally recognise major venues, including clubs, as safety anchors within precinct safety planning and integrate partnership arrangements rather than relying on unfunded burden-shifting.

8.7 Policing and safety focus for Night-Time Precincts

20. Establish a precinct-based night-time safety framework for Civic, town centres and other designated entertainment areas, integrating policing, municipal services, transport, venue liaison and public-realm maintenance into a single operating model.

21. Provide dedicated peak-period policing resources for designated entertainment precincts, including an entertainment-areas response capability focused on visibility, rapid response, de-escalation, venue liaison and safe patron dispersal.

22. Expand CCTV coverage in identified night-time precincts and require that new investment be based on best-practice governance, active monitoring, clear operational objectives, direct police coordination and regular public evaluation.

23. Prioritise CCTV and surveillance resourcing to entry and exit corridors, rideshare and taxi pick-up points, pedestrian links, parking interfaces and known disorder hotspots rather than relying on ad hoc or legacy camera placement.

24. Formalise a precinct safety partnership model involving ACT Policing, venues, the Night-Time Economy Office, municipal services and transport operators, including regular liaison, incident review and coordinated responses to recurring safety risks.

25. Undertake regular night-time safety audits in designated precincts that assess not only lighting and amenity, but also policing visibility, CCTV coverage, dispersal routes, patron vulnerability points and women's safety.

26. Recognise major venues, including clubs, as supervised safety anchors within precinct planning, and support that role through coordinated operating arrangements rather than unfunded burden-shifting onto venues.

27. Formally recognise hospitality workers, duty managers, security staff and licensed venues as frontline contributors to public safety within the ACT night-time economy. ACT policy should explicitly acknowledge that venues are already performing essential functions in de-escalation, patron welfare, incident prevention and safe dispersal, and should reflect that role in precinct planning, interagency coordination and night-time economy strategy.

28. Establish a dedicated **Night-Time Economy Safety Support Program** to assist clubs and hospitality venues to manage the growing frontline safety burden associated with late-night trade. Funding should be available for practical safety capability, including CCTV upgrades, duress alarms, interoperable communications, incident-reporting systems, patron welfare spaces, first-aid capability and specialised staff training in de-escalation, mental health first response, intoxication management and drug-affected patron response.

29. Commit additional, visible and specifically allocated policing resources to Canberra's entertainment precincts and late-trading hospitality areas during peak periods. This should include a

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dedicated night-time response capability to ensure serious incidents receive timely operational backup, improve deterrence, strengthen public confidence and reduce the extent to which venue staff are left managing high-risk situations without immediate support.

30. Develop and fund a formal **Safe Harbour Partnership Model** for clubs and other appropriate late-night venues that provide supervised, regulated and welfare-oriented environments for patrons at night. This model should integrate venues more directly with ACT Policing, transport providers, outreach services, the Night-Time Economy Office and relevant agencies, and should recognise that venues performing patron protection, safe-exit coordination and early intervention functions are delivering a genuine community safety service.

31. Improve ACT data collection, reporting and policy attention in relation to worker-facing harm in the night-time economy. Government should develop a clearer evidence base on assaults, threats, abuse, drug-related incidents, emergency interventions and other serious patron-management events affecting hospitality workers and venues, so that safety policy and resource allocation are grounded in the real frontline burden carried by the sector.

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9. CONCLUSION

Canberra's night-time economy is not constrained by a lack of demand or creativity. It is constrained by a system that has not yet aligned regulation, planning intent and precinct delivery with the realities of a modern mixed-use city.

If the ACT wants a safe, inclusive and competitive night-time economy—one that retains young people, supports culture, and grows the visitor economy—then reform must be structural, coordinated and precinct-based. Noise, licensing, planning, transport and municipal services must operate as a single, integrated system rather than a series of disconnected processes.

ClubsACT's recommendations are deliberately pragmatic: they strengthen harm minimisation and certainty while enabling diversification and activation. They also recognise that successful reform is a transition—built on partnership, clear rules, and accountable delivery.

The evidence supports action now. With coordinated reform, Canberra can build a night-time economy that is vibrant, safe, culturally rich, and economically sustainable.

Yours sincerely,

Craig Shannon
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Tourism & Budget Alignment Addendum: Strengthening the Night-Time Economy as Visitor Economy and Community Infrastructure

Executive Summary

This Addendum aligns the ClubsACT Night-Time Economy (NTE) Submission with the ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030 (T2030) and the ClubsACT ACT Budget Submission 2025–26. It demonstrates that reform of Canberra's night-time economy is essential visitor-economy and community infrastructure, not discretionary cultural policy.

The ACT Government's Tourism Strategy targets a $4 billion visitor economy by 2030, driven by business events, major festivals, arts and cultural experiences, and increased overnight visitation. These outcomes rely heavily on the availability, diversity and safety of night-time activity. Dining, live performance, post-event dispersal, and late-night transport and amenity are decisive factors in visitor satisfaction, length of stay and repeat visitation (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030*).

Community clubs and night-time venues operate as anchor institutions within this ACT economic and Tourism ecosystem. They provide large-scale, publicly accessible facilities, host live entertainment, deliver alcohol-light and alcohol-free evening options, and have increasingly functioned as informal safety refuges after hours. Their stability reduces downstream fiscal risk by preventing infrastructure loss, increasing perceptions of safety, and avoiding greater reliance on government-delivered services (*ClubsACT ACT Budget Submission 2025–26*).

This Addendum confirms that targeted regulatory reform, integrated governance through a Night-Time Economy Office, and budget-aligned cost and transition support are necessary to realise tourism growth, community wellbeing outcomes and medium-term fiscal sustainability. Without a functional night-time economy, the ACT's tourism, economic and liveability objectives cannot be fully achieved.

1.The Night-Time Economy as Visitor Economy Infrastructure

1.1 Alignment with ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030

The ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030 establishes a clear ambition to grow the Territory's visitor economy to $4 billion in annual expenditure by 2030. Achieving this target depends not only on daytime attractions, but on the depth, quality and safety of Canberra's night-time offer.

T2030's four missions—developing Canberra as a global destination, celebrating its distinct character, contributing to community wellbeing, and delivering iconic experiences—are all disproportionately realised during evening and night-time hours. Live music, dining, festivals, cultural performance and social interaction are core components of the visitor experience and primary drivers of discretionary expenditure (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030*).

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1.2 Business Events, Dispersal and Length of Stay

Business events are identified as a high-value growth segment within T2030, supporting knowledge exchange, innovation and international engagement. Delegate satisfaction and retention, however, are shaped as much by after-hours experience as by formal conference programming.

A resilient night-time economy enables effective dispersal beyond conference venues, increases per-capita spend, and encourages extended stays before and after events. Jurisdictions with constrained night-time offers consistently underperform in event retention, placing Canberra at a competitive disadvantage without reform (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030*).

1.3 Major Events and Shoulder-Hour Activation

Major events and festivals generate concentrated peaks in visitation. Without complementary night-time activation, economic benefits are compressed into narrow time windows, increasing congestion and safety risks.

Noise reform, precinct-based planning, late-night transport and venue diversity enable shoulder-hour activation, spreading visitation across time and space and improving overall visitor experience and expenditure outcomes (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030*).

2. Community Clubs as Night-Time Anchor Institutions

2.1 Recognition as Infrastructure Providers

The ClubsACT ACT Budget Submission 2025–26 establishes that community clubs operate as de facto providers of social, sporting and recreational infrastructure at a scale that would otherwise require direct government provision.

In the night-time economy, clubs operate large, publicly accessible venues, host live entertainment, maintain sporting facilities used after hours, and provide food-led, alcohol-light and alcohol-free evening options (*ClubsACT ACT Budget Submission 2025–26*).

2.2 Role in Night-Time Safety and Amenity

Evidence before the Legislative Assembly demonstrates that declining public-realm amenity—poor lighting, vandalism, graffiti and inconsistent cleaning—has materially reduced perceptions of safety after dark. In this context, clubs increasingly function as anchor institutions, providing staffed and supervised environments when other services withdraw.

Integrating clubs into precinct planning, safety strategies and event coordination improves outcomes for visitors, workers and residents, and supports the Tourism Strategy's objective that tourism deliver a net positive impact for the community (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030; ClubsACT ACT Budget Submission 2025–26*).

3. Operating Cost Pressures as a Constraint on Night-Time Activation

3.1 Cost-of-Service Pressures

Both the Tourism Strategy and the ClubsACT Budget Submission recognise supply-side constraints as a key risk to sustainable growth. For night-time operators, energy, insurance, compliance, security and staffing costs are amplified by extended trading hours.

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These fixed costs disproportionately affect smaller venues and community operators, undermining diversification and discouraging investment even where demand exists (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030; ClubsACT ACT Budget Submission 2025–26*).

3.2 Budget Alignment and Fiscal Risk Reduction

The ClubsACT Budget Submission frames targeted relief and transition funding as preventative investments that reduce medium-term fiscal exposure. In the night-time economy, stabilising operators avoids venue closures, loss of cultural infrastructure, increased safety incidents and greater reliance on government-delivered services.

Treating night-time venues and clubs as infrastructure providers aligns NTE reform with Treasury's invest-to-save and wellbeing-led budgeting framework (*ClubsACT ACT Budget Submission 2025–26*).

4. Alcohol-Light and Inclusive Night-Time Pathways

4.1 Changing Consumption Patterns

Consumer behaviour has shifted markedly over the past decade, particularly among younger cohorts. Declining alcohol consumption, affordability pressures and changing preferences have reduced reliance on traditional late-night drinking models.

T2030 positions Canberra as a progressive and inclusive city and links tourism growth to wellbeing outcomes. Supporting alcohol-light and alcohol-free night-time activity—such as food-led venues, performance, comedy, fitness and cultural experiences—is consistent with these objectives (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030*).

4.2 Regulatory Implications

Current licensing and planning frameworks continue to assume alcohol as the primary driver of night-time activity, creating unnecessary barriers to diversification. Reform that enables multi-use venues and low-risk cultural programming broadens participation, improves community sentiment and reduces concentration risk within the night-time economy.

5. Integrated Governance and Delivery

5.1 The Night-Time Economy Office

Both T2030 and the ClubsACT NTE identify coordination as a prerequisite for success. A dedicated Night-Time Economy Office provides the operational mechanism to integrate tourism, events, licensing, planning, noise regulation, safety and municipal services.

Experience in other jurisdictions demonstrates that central coordination improves approval timeframes, reduces conflict and increases private-sector confidence (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030*).

5.2 Municipal Amenity as Economic Infrastructure

The Tourism Strategy explicitly states that tourism must enhance liveability. Clean, safe, well-lit and well-maintained public spaces are therefore economic infrastructure underpinning night-time participation, workforce attraction and visitor confidence.

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Aligning municipal services delivery with night-time precincts supports tourism outcomes, community wellbeing and fiscal sustainability (*ACT Tourism Strategy 2023–2030; ClubsACT ACT Budget Submission 2025–26*).

Conclusion

This Addendum demonstrates that the reforms proposed in the ClubsACT NTE Submission are necessary to deliver the ACT Government's tourism, wellbeing and economic objectives. Treating the night-time economy as visitor-economy and community infrastructure strengthens the fiscal case for reform and reduces medium-term budget risk.

No new policy direction is required. What is required is explicit alignment, coordinated delivery and recognition that without a functional night-time economy, Canberra's ambition to be a vibrant, inclusive and globally competitive city cannot be fully realised.

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Appendix A: Municipal Services Issues Mapped to Night-Time Economy Inquiry Terms of Reference

Inquiry Terms of Reference	Municipal Services Evidence (ClubsACT Submission)	Implications for the Night-Time Economy	Required NTE Reform Response
ToR 1: Economic performance, employment and business sustainability	Declining public amenity, safety concerns, vandalism costs, reduced visitation to CBD and town centres; workforce access and parking constraints	Suppressed night-time visitation; reduced trading confidence; workforce attraction and retention challenges; increased operating costs for venues	Integrate municipal service delivery into NTE economic strategy; recognise amenity and safety as productivity enablers
ToR 2: Regulatory environment (including safety, transport and infrastructure)	Poor lighting, damaged footpaths, graffiti accumulation, rubbish build-up, inconsistent enforcement, fragmented agency responsibility	Safety perceptions deter patrons after dark; regulatory reform alone insufficient without public-realm improvement	Night-Time Economy Office empowered to coordinate municipal services, policing, transport and precinct maintenance
ToR 2: Transport and access (implicit within safety and infrastructure)	Closure of nearby car parks; unsafe access routes for staff and patrons; limited late-night transport confidence	Reduced staff availability; earlier venue closures; constrained programming and diversification	Integrated night-time access planning, including parking, pedestrian safety and transport reliability
ToR 3: Live music, entertainment and events	Graffiti, vandalism and disorder around venues; venues acting as informal safety refuges	Reduced willingness to host live music and events; reputational risk for cultural programming	Precinct-based amenity standards to support live performance and night-time activation
ToR 4: Diversification of the night-time economy	Municipal neglect disproportionately deters families, women, older Canberrans and alcohol-free participants	Limits growth in late-night retail, family-friendly evening activity, alcohol-free and cultural experiences	Clean, well-lit, safe precincts recognised as a precondition for diversification

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ToR 5: Governance and coordination arrangements	No single point of accountability for cleaning, lighting, graffiti removal or safety; slow and inconsistent responses	Persistent disorder; loss of confidence in precinct management; ineffective implementation of reforms	Establish a Night-Time Economy Office with authority over precinct coordination and service delivery
ToR 6: Best-practice models (domestic and international)	Absence of benchmarking, public KPIs or response-time transparency for municipal services	ACT lags behind Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in managing night-time precinct amenity	Introduce benchmarking of night-time amenity standards against leading jurisdictions
ToR 7: Any other related matters relevant to the NTE	Clubs maintaining adjacent public spaces and acting as de facto safety providers without support	Cost-shifting to venues; diversion of resources from community and cultural activity	Formal recognition of venues as safety anchors; municipal partnership frameworks for night-time precincts

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Appendix B: Case Study – Issues Provided by the Canberra Labor Club

The Canberra Labor Club operates four licensed club venues across the ACT which includes the Central Social Club located on City Walk and has been directly impacted by the decline in the night-time economy.

Economic Performance

Safety

To be able to generate a lively night-time economy we first require a safe space for patrons to come and enjoy. The safety and enjoyment of our patrons is our number 1 priority and unfortunately the City region has not been a safe location in recent times for a number of reasons which include:

1. Poor lighting: The current quantity and quality of lighting within the city area is not sufficient and at night creates dark and unsafe locations. Improving lighting will significantly reduce the likelihood of unsavoury incidents occurring which in turn will improve the confidence of the community within the area.
2. Lack of visibility: There are numerous areas within the city region that are visually impeded and reduce the safety of the community. One example is behind the Merry-Go-Round on Petrie Plaza outside the Central Social Club. The Merry-Go-Round is a large obstacle and combined with the lack of lighting has created a major visual impediment and dark spaces outside our venue.
3. Increase in vacant tenancies: Since Covid there has been an increase in vacant tenancies within the city region. These vacancies have impacted the property owners and in turn safety as there are less people within the area and a number of tenancies have been accommodated by squatters; and
4. Decrease in foot traffic: With the growth in work from home, increase in online shopping and departure of several Government departments from the Canberra City has led to a large decrease in foot traffic. This drop in people accommodating this area has contributed to a drop in the level of safety in the region.

Development works

Whilst we acknowledge the long-term benefits from the development of the Light Rail Stage 2 A, Lyric Theatre and improvements to the Commonwealth Ave bridge the direct impacts being borne from the construction may be catastrophic. In every likelihood multiple business will cease to survive resulting directly from these works unless more is done from the Government than the current measures to ensure this does not occur.

We recommend that the government liaise further with the construction providers to reduce the large footprint of the Light Rail Stage 2 A and Lyric Theatre construction. We note the submission by *"Nesh Nikolic"* and support his recommendation to relocate the site sheds to the vacant office tenancies within the area. This is but one option and we implore for the Government and Construction providers to identify further initiatives to reduce the footprint.

Accessibility

For the City region and therefore the night-time economy to grow and thrive requires access to be easy. Unfortunately, with the current construction in progress this is not the case. It is difficult to access the city region and understand if and where car parking is available. Noting that the construction is projected to continue for another two years we recommend that there is a bigger

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investment into vehicular and pedestrian access and signage to improve access through the construction works.

We would also seek to understand in the long-term the number of car parks available after the completion of the construction as we understand there have been car parks lost directly attributable to these construction works.

Connectivity

With the ANU and UNSW both on the outskirts of the city there is the opportunity to bring a large number of younger people to the city region who could provide considerable benefit to the night-time economy. We recommend that the connectivity between the two universities is improved to incentivise these groups to come into the city region.

Recommendations:

1. Improve lighting within the City Region;
2. Reduce the construction footprint within the city region;
3. Introduce more open spaces;
4. Increase the police presence;
5. Financially incentivise landlords to assist them upgrade their facilities;
6. Improve car parking and signage from the construction;
7. Allocate a budget to support business during the construction phase;
8. Activate the Merry-Go-Round.

Regulatory

The Central Social Club has been seeking to improve the offering to patrons and add outdoor dining outside the venue. This has been a much larger challenge than should have been the case and it has still not yet come to fruition 3 years after the Club begun the process. There have been many ACT Government departments who have been involved and required several development changes which have all come with delays and a direct cost impact. Outdoor dining is very important for the City region and night-time economy to help it grow and improve demand within the city region.

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Appendix C: Case Study – The RUC and Regulatory Friction in Canberra's Night-Time Economy

Overview

The Canberra North Bowling and ACT Rugby Union Club (the RUC) provides a practical local example of how layered, overlapping and inconsistently applied regulation can suppress otherwise low-risk night-time activation. The issue is not whether regulation should exist. It should. The issue is whether the current framework allows proportionate, predictable and workable activation for established venues that have already invested in mitigation, compliance and good neighbour practices.

Why the RUC is a relevant case study

The RUC is not a new entrant attempting to establish an intensive late-night entertainment model. It is a long-standing community club operating bowling greens, hospitality, member services and affiliated sporting activity in an established mixed-use inner north precinct. In 2022, the RUC attempted to extend its trading hours due to patron demand, however, it encountered issues with Access Canberra.

In its 2022 response to Access Canberra, the club set out that it had already adopted extensive mitigation measures, including closing windows and doors by 10pm, moving patrons inside and off the deck at 10pm, installing double glazing, restricting live music to soloists and duets, employing security, purchasing noise meters and using baffles around smoking areas. The club also stated it had not been the subject of Environment Protection Authority or liquor licensing proceedings or breaches, and that it acted promptly when complaints were raised.

Regulatory friction in practice

First, licensing settings limited modest diversification. The club applied to extend trading from midnight to 2:00am, license the outdoor deck, remove an adults-only designation and increase occupancy. Access Canberra approved some administrative elements, but refused the extended trading hours and required all outdoor areas to close from 10pm each day. The decision was made after objections from nearby residents alleging anti-social and violent behaviour and excessive noise, with the decision letter noting comments and incident reports from AFP. Whatever the original concern, the practical effect was to constrain the club's ability to stagger patron departure, provide a late quiet drink for shift workers, or accommodate sport-viewing patterns linked to interstate and international fixtures.

Secondly, environmental regulation has constrained low-intensity programming that would ordinarily be seen as exactly the kind of place-based activation governments say they want. The examples provided are modest rather than extreme: a jazz trio on the greens for a Saturday afternoon function, a Motown DJ on the deck on Sunday afternoons, live music inside the club where soloists and duos may be tolerated but bands become materially more difficult, and even noise associated with the smoking area. These are not examples of a high-risk nightclub model. They are examples of small-scale,

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community-based entertainment encountering regulatory settings that are difficult to navigate with confidence.

Thirdly, the current framework creates operational contradiction. On the club's account, the EPA prefers the smoking area to be enclosed to contain sound, while Access Canberra requires it to remain open so smoke can escape. This places the venue in an impossible position: complying with one objective can undermine compliance with another. A venue cannot invest with certainty when different regulators apply different risk lenses to the same physical space.

Fourthly, the cumulative compliance risk suppresses otherwise family-friendly and low-harm activity. The RUC has the infrastructure for summer activation, including lighting and glow-in-the-dark bowls, but has been deterred from pursuing barefoot lawn bowls at night because of the risk of an EPA fine. That is a direct example of regulation chilling activation before it occurs. The opportunity is lost not because demand is absent, but because the enforcement risk is too high relative to the modest commercial return.

A precinct problem, not just a single-venue problem

This example also highlights a broader structural issue. Noise-setting changes in the central zone do not automatically extend to other entertainment precincts, including the Turner/O'Connor club and commercial area. Yet this precinct already contains clubs, restaurants, a late-opening pharmacy, a pub and heavy pedestrian movement associated with nearby civic destinations and the Australian National University. In other words, the place already functions as a genuine evening economy corridor, but the regulatory settings do not consistently recognise it as such. This creates a gap between how a precinct actually operates and how policy treats it.

Order of occupancy and modern noise regulation

The ACT should treat the RUC example not as an isolated dispute, but as evidence of a broader structural failure to reconcile established community venues with surrounding urban change. In precincts where clubs, hospitality venues and other evening-economy uses were already operating, later residential and mixed-use intensification should trigger stronger acoustic obligations on incoming development, not a gradual reduction in the practical operating envelope of existing venues. Without that reset, the Territory creates a one-way ratchet in which lawful venues carry increasing regulatory burden simply because they remained in place while the planning context around them changed.

The case for reform is strengthened by the need to embed a clearer order-of-occupancy principle in Canberra's noise framework. Where entertainment venues, clubs and hospitality uses are long-established within an identified activity corridor, later residential encroachment should not result in those pre-existing lawful uses being progressively regulated into silence. A more workable approach is to recognise that those who choose to live near established venues do so in the context of an existing pattern of trade and activity, and that planning and noise rules should allocate appropriate

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responsibility to new development to manage that interface. That principle gives venues greater certainty to invest, while still protecting residents through modern building standards, acoustic treatment and clear operating conditions.

Relatedly, Canberra would benefit from a more commercially realistic set of noise regulations that reflect best practice from other jurisdictions. In practical terms, that means precinct-based standards rather than one-size-fits-all settings, clearer decibel thresholds and compliance pathways, recognition of cumulative ambient noise in mixed-use entertainment areas, and an explicit distinction between low-risk activation and genuinely high-impact entertainment. It should also include practical safe-harbour settings for small-scale outdoor music, time-limited event approvals, and a coordinated 'single front door' approach between licensing, planning and environmental regulators. The objective is not deregulation for its own sake; it is a modern regulatory model that protects amenity without making ordinary community activation commercially unworkable.

What this demonstrates for the Night-Time Economy

The RUC case demonstrates that Canberra's night-time economy can be stifled not only by headline restrictions, but by cumulative friction: narrow licensing decisions, rigid outdoor curfews, uncertain noise thresholds, conflicting agency expectations, and inconsistent precinct treatment. Each requirement may appear manageable in isolation. Together, they reduce confidence, deter programming, limit diversification and suppress exactly the small-scale live music, casual activation and community-led evening uses that make a city feel active, safe and socially connected.

This is particularly significant because the activities affected are relatively low-risk, local and socially valuable. They are the kinds of offerings that broaden the night-time economy beyond late trading and alcohol-heavy models: live acoustic music, lawn-based recreation, afternoon-to-evening events, and low-key food and beverage trade in established community venues. When regulation makes even these formats too hard, the result is a flatter, less diverse and less resilient night-time economy.

Policy implication

For the purposes of the submission, the RUC should be seen as a case study in favour of proportionate, precinct-based and coordinated regulation. The lesson is not that community safeguards should be removed. It is that well-managed venues in established entertainment corridors should have clearer pathways to low-risk activation, better alignment between regulators, and settings that recognise mitigation already undertaken. Without that, compliant venues will continue to self-censor programming, and Canberra will continue to lose practical, local and community-based night-time activity.

Conclusion

The RUC experience shows that Canberra does not just need more night-time economy ambition; it needs a regulatory framework that makes ordinary, low-risk activation possible in practice.

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Appendix D: ClubsACT Submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Municipal Services (attached)

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SUBMISSION

THE ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN THE ACT

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Executive Summary

Canberra's livability, community participation, and economic confidence depend fundamentally on the quality of our municipal services. When public spaces are clean, safe, and well-maintained, community life thrives children participate in junior sport; families feel safe in local centers; older Canberrans remain active; and businesses, including community clubs, invest confidently in their precincts.

But when municipal upkeep slips—when graffiti accumulates, footpaths fail, signage deteriorates, rubbish collects on verges, and public spaces appear tired or neglected—the impacts compound. ClubsACT shares the view of the Canberra Business Chamber that even "small" maintenance failures, when repeated across the city, produce "an air of decay and neglect," damaging perceptions of safety, reducing visitation, and undermining the attractiveness of Canberra as a destination to live, work, study and invest.

ClubsACT submits that municipal services are not cosmetic extras—they are foundational infrastructure underpinning community wellbeing, sporting participation, neighborhood identity, and economic vitality. Community clubs sit at the Centre of this ecosystem: as major providers of sport facilities, as managers of public green space, as safe gathering places, and as employers and investors in local communities. The quality of municipal services directly affects the viability and vibrancy of clubs, the activities they support, and the communities they serve.

This submission argues for a new whole-of-government approach to municipal upkeep—one that acknowledges that:

- Well-maintained public spaces are essential community infrastructure
- Municipal neglect disproportionately harms vulnerable groups, including older residents, women, families, and young people
- Sporting participation is structurally linked to the safety and quality of parks, footpaths, verges and active-travel corridors
- Clubs amplify, but cannot replace, government responsibility for baseline municipal standards
- The appearance and cleanliness of the city influence population attraction, the visitor economy, business confidence and community pride

We propose a comprehensive reform program including a City Standards Taskforce, a Rapid Response Municipal Maintenance System, stronger anti-vandalism enforcement, co-funded graffiti and property-damage support, and systematic benchmarking against comparable jurisdictions as required by the Terms of Reference.

The ACT Government has an opportunity to reset municipal expectations, rebuild public trust, and create a city that reflects the standards we claim for ourselves: clean, welcoming, safe, and worthy of the national capital. ClubsACT stands ready to partner in delivering that vision.

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1. Introduction

ClubsACT represents Canberra's community clubs: major employers, providers of sport and recreation, custodians of green and open space, and critical social infrastructure throughout the Territory. Canberra Clubs play a strong and vibrant role as part of the visitor economy and the quality of municipal service delivery across the ACT is of significant importance to our sector.

Our members support tens of thousands of participants in junior and senior sport, maintain hundreds of hectares of grounds, support thousands of volunteers, and serve as economic anchors in suburbs, town centres, and local shopping precincts.

The Terms of Reference require the Committee to consider:

- **The maintenance and upkeep of public spaces, including playgrounds, sportsgrounds, verges, waterways and local shops**
- **The geographic spread of active-travel infrastructure and parks**
- **Waste removal effectiveness**
- **Street art and graffiti policies**
- **Benchmarking ACT performance against comparable jurisdictions**

These are all issues directly affecting the viability and vitality of community clubs.

ClubsACT makes this submission to highlight how declining municipal standards impact the organisations responsible for much of Canberra's community life—and how a renewed municipal strategy can restore community confidence, participation and neighborhood cohesion.

2. Canberra's Municipal Environment Is a Foundation of Community Life

ClubsACT has repeatedly emphasised, in submissions to government, that community life begins with the quality of shared spaces. The condition of footpaths, verges, green spaces, local shops and waterways is not a peripheral concern—it is central to:

- **Sporting participation**
- **Club visitation**
- **Volunteer engagement**
- **Community safety**
- **Youth inclusion**
- **Economic activation**
- **Social connection and mental wellbeing**

Municipal systems are the "first tier" of infrastructure on which clubs rely to deliver community benefit. If the ACT Government wants Canberra to be Australia's most liveable city, then the municipal environment must reflect that ambition. At present, it does not.

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3. Evidence of Declining Standards: A City Showing Compounding Neglect

As has been widely reported and noted by the Canberra Business Chamber, across Canberra there are multiple small but cumulative failures that collectively create a sense of decay:

- **Graffiti on public and private buildings**
- **Damaged or poorly maintained signs**
- **Overgrown trees obstructing visibility**
- **Footpath damage caused by tree roots**
- **Rubbish accumulation and fly-tipping**
- **Dead animals left uncollected near roads**

ClubsACT concurs with this assessment. The same issues appear around club precincts, sporting fields, local shopping centres, and pathways used daily by children, families, older people and volunteers.

While each individual instance may appear minor, the cumulative effect is profound:

1. **Reduced perceptions of safety, especially at night**
2. **Declining community pride**
3. **Reduced visitation to local centres and clubs**
4. **Lower participation in sport due to degraded or unsafe routes and facilities**
5. **Higher operating costs borne by clubs and other businesses, which often step in to fill municipal gaps**
6. **Weakened volunteer morale**

In some areas, clubs and other businesses are effectively supplementing municipal services—mowing, pruning, maintaining adjacent green space—without recognition or structured partnership.

4. Impacts on Community Clubs and Sporting Participation

Municipal failures do not fall evenly across the community: clubs and sporting organisations feel them acutely.

4.1 Footpaths, Active Travel, and Sporting Access

Cracked paths, tree-root uplifts, poor lighting, and obstructed signage reduce safe access for:

- Children walking or cycling to training
- Older residents accessing clubs for social inclusion
- Families attending weekend sport
- Volunteers carrying equipment
- People with disabilities

Participation drops when the journey to the field or club feels unsafe.

4.2 Presentation of Local Centres and Club Precincts

A degraded public realm around clubs contributes to:

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- **Lower patronage**
- **Reduced family attendance**
- **Negative perceptions of night-time safety**
- **Economic decline in surrounding areas**

Clubs are economic anchors. When municipal maintenance slips, the entire precinct suffers.

4.3 Sporting Fields and Adjacent Green Space

Clubs already invest heavily in maintaining sporting surfaces and green areas. However:

- **Poor verge maintenance**
- **Inconsistent mowing**
- **Litter accumulation**
- **Damaged infrastructure around fields**

...all undermine the experience for players, spectators and volunteers.

The result: reduced community usage and avoidable financial pressure on clubs.

5. Safety, Graffiti, and Anti-Social Behaviour

ClubsACT notes that graffiti is “an ongoing issue” on both private and government-owned property and that the cost burden falls unfairly on owners.

ClubsACT experiences similar pressures:

- **Graffiti on club walls, fences, and signage**
- **Vandalised lighting or infrastructure**
- **Damage to playing-fields facilities**
- **Broken glass and rubbish from anti-social behaviour**

These issues erode public confidence and increase operating costs for clubs at a time when many are already financially constrained.

In recent times ClubsACT has raised directly with Government, as have our members, the declining appearance and perceived safety of the CBD/city area specifically. Whilst being mindful of the issues of homelessness impacting on a proportion of the ACT population, the accumulation of rubbish and graffiti in certain areas around clubs and hospitality venues has had a direct and negative impact on tourist and patron perceptions.

5.1 Reported Safety and Amenity Impacts on Clubs in the CBD Precinct in past 12 months

ClubsACT members operating within the CBD precinct have reported a significant escalation in safety, security, and amenity issues over the past 12 months. These incidents are no longer isolated or sporadic; rather, they reflect a sustained pattern of anti-social behaviour, criminal activity, and declining public amenity that is directly affecting club operations, staff safety, member confidence, and visitor perceptions of the city.

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Members have reported **multiple violent incidents**, including **stabbings**, with at least one occurring **in broad daylight** within close proximity to club entrances. In addition, there has been **rampant theft**, including shoplifting, vehicle break-ins, bicycle theft and the theft of personal property from patrons and staff. These incidents have materially undermined perceptions of safety and deterred casual visitation, particularly by families, older members and interstate visitors. Clubs have increasingly found themselves acting as **de facto safe havens**, frequently providing refuge to individuals fearing for their personal safety and contacting police on numerous occasions. This informal role, while undertaken out of community responsibility, places an unreasonable burden on clubs and their staff and underscores broader failures in public safety management within the precinct.

Anti-social behaviour has intensified, directly deterring customers and reducing foot traffic. In one serious incident, an **armed threat prompted a full lockdown of local businesses**, disrupting trade and reinforcing perceptions of a precinct under stress. Tragically, a **fatality occurred outside the main entrance of one CBD club**, an event that has had lasting impacts on staff wellbeing, member confidence, and the reputation of the surrounding area.

Clubs have also reported **persistent drug and alcohol use in areas immediately adjacent to club entrances**, including near family-oriented attractions such as a children's merry-go-round. This behaviour has further discouraged family attendance and raised serious concerns about the appropriateness and safety of public spaces intended for community use. We understand there have been increasing incidents of overdosing by users in this area in recent times.

The deterioration of amenity is compounded by **extensive graffiti**, in some cases covering entire buildings, significantly diminishing the visual appeal of the CBD and undermining Canberra's image as a safe and welcoming national capital. Ongoing vandalism—including damage to planters, fixtures and façades—has imposed direct financial costs on clubs, with graffiti removal alone exceeding **$3,500 in a single instance**.

Members have also noted that **public spaces surrounding clubs are increasingly monopolised for extended periods**, contributing to reduced accessibility, heightened safety concerns, and diminished shared use of the public realm. The **closure of nearby car parks** has further exacerbated these issues, increasing perceptions of risk for patrons and staff travelling to and from venues, particularly at night.

Finally, clubs report that the **lack of accessible parking** in the CBD precinct is actively discouraging potential employees from accepting roles, compounding existing workforce challenges and impacting recruitment and retention. These operational pressures are reinforced by **growing concerns expressed by club members and interstate visitors**, many of whom have questioned their personal safety and expressed reluctance to return to the precinct.

Taken together, these incidents demonstrate that safety and amenity challenges in the CBD are no longer abstract or theoretical. They are tangible, recurrent, and materially affecting community clubs that play a critical role in activating the city, supporting employment, hosting visitors, and providing safe social spaces. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated, visible and sustained response that restores confidence, safety and shared ownership of the public domain.

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More particularly, there can also be seen to be a direct impact on the nighttime economy arising from these issues especially as they relate to perceived safety in some areas.

ClubsACT shares the broader view of the business sector that the city centre is perceived as "unsavoury and unsafe" by locals and visitors. This perception mirrors what clubs see in some suburban centres after dark, lower foot traffic, reduced family attendance, and heightened safety concerns.

ClubsACT strongly supports the Chamber's call for:

- **Greater police presence**
- **A stronger ACT Government campaign against property crime**
- **Clear consequences for vandalism**

Community clubs need municipal spaces that feel safe, well-lit, and well-maintained. Without this, visitation declines and communities disengage.

6. Economic and Social Consequences of Municipal Decline

Municipal decline affects three pillars upon which clubs and community life depend:

6.1 The Visitor Economy

Canberra hosts 5–6 million visitors annually, contributing $3–4 billion to the economy. Municipal neglect threatens this. ClubsACT shares the Chamber position that emphasises the importance of presenting Canberra as a well-kept city for visitors.

Clubs host tournaments, conferences, community events and sporting carnivals. Poor presentation of public spaces deters visitation and diminishes economic impact.

6.2 Business and Workforce Attraction

A degraded municipal environment diminishes:

- **Investor confidence**
- **Commercial precinct vitality**
- **Business relocation decisions**
- **Workforce attraction**
- **Campus and student experience for families relocating for work or education**

Clubs, many of which are major employers, rely on the Territory's ability to attract workers and maintain vibrant precincts.

6.3 Community Wellbeing and Social Cohesion

Clean, safe public spaces underpin:

- **Childhood development and outdoor play**
- **Community sport**

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- **Social inclusion**
- **Neighbourhood identity**
- **Crime prevention through active public presence**

Municipal neglect diminishes all these outcomes.

7. Geographic Equity and Suburban Fairness

The Terms of Reference require attention to the "geographic spread" of active-travel infrastructure and playgrounds.

ClubsACT submits that:

- **Some suburbs clearly receive less frequent maintenance than inner-city areas**
- **Older suburbs face greater infrastructure deterioration, yet receive no compensatory uplift**
- **Sporting precincts with high youth usage often have poor lighting or damaged paths**
- **Local shops surrounding clubs often show inconsistent graffiti removal, rubbish collection and verge maintenance**

A family in Kambah, Macgregor, Gowrie or Chisholm deserves municipal standards equal to those in Manuka or Braddon.

Suburban fairness must become a core principle of municipal reform.

8. Benchmarking, Transparency and Accountability

The Terms of Reference specifically direct the Committee to examine benchmarking against comparable jurisdictions.

ClubsACT strongly supports this and recommends that the ACT Government introduce:

- **Municipal performance scorecards, published quarterly**
- **Benchmark comparisons with:**
  - **City of Melbourne**
  - **City of Sydney**
  - **City of Parramatta**
  - **Leading planned urban municipalities internationally**
- **Response-time KPIs for:**
  - **Graffiti removal**
  - **Rubbish and dead-animal collection**
  - **Footpath repairs**
  - **Tree pruning**
- **Public heat maps showing maintenance schedules suburb-by-suburb**
- **Annual independent municipal audit**

This is consistent with our broader advocacy for evidence-based policy, regulatory transparency, and performance accountability across all government functions impacting community clubs.

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9. Clubs as Partners in Municipal Stewardship

ClubsACT is not simply identifying problems—we are offering partnership.

Clubs already:

- **Maintain sportsgrounds and open space**
- **Manage green assets adjacent to club precincts**
- **Facilitate community events that draw thousands into municipal areas**
- **Support recreational participation across the Territory**
- **Provide lighting, fencing, waste facilities and amenity infrastructure**
- **Deliver volunteer-based maintenance activities**

However, this work lacks formal recognition, co-funding structures, or integrated planning. We propose:

9.1 A Municipal Partnership Framework for Clubs

Under this model, clubs could enter voluntary agreements to:

- **Maintain green space adjacent to club precincts**
- **Support verge and litter management**
- **Undertake joint safety and lighting assessments**
- **Coordinate with TCCS seasonal maintenance cycles**
- **Improve access routes to junior sports facilities**

In exchange, government would provide:

- **Small grants**
- **Maintenance equipment support**
- **Waste-disposal credits**
- **Coordinated planning input**
- **Recognition as municipal service partners**

This mirrors partnerships already used successfully in NSW and regional Queensland.

10. Recommendations

ClubsACT proposes the Committee endorse the following reforms.

10.1 Establish a City Standards Taskforce

A multi-agency unit responsible for:

- **Proactive auditing of municipal defects**
- **Monthly reporting on standards**
- **Cross-government coordination with Sport & Recreation, Access Canberra and ACT Policing**
- **Targeted activation of club precincts, local centres and high-use sporting corridors**

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10.2 Create a Rapid Response Municipal Maintenance System

Including:

- **48–72-hour response time for graffiti on public assets**
- **Priority repair of damaged signage**
- **Prompt removal of dead animals and major street litter**
- **Immediate remediation of dangerous footpaths**

This echoes the Business Chamber's call for a dedicated taskforce and stronger municipal responsiveness.

10.3 Introduce a Co-Funded Graffiti & Vandalism Remediation Scheme

For private property owners including clubs.

Features:

- **Cost-sharing for graffiti removal**
- **Small grants for vandalism repair**
- **Insurance-gap coverage for repeated damage**
- **Support for anti-graffiti coatings and lighting upgrades**

10.4 Strengthen Community Safety Measures

Including:

- **Increased police visibility around local centres**
- **Expanded CCTV coverage to assist operational policing responsiveness**
- **Lighting audits around club precincts and playing fields**
- **ACT Government campaign signalling zero-tolerance for vandalism and property crime**

10.5 Improve Geographic Equity of Maintenance

Measures:

- **Suburb-specific service benchmarks**
- **Priority upgrades for older suburbs**
- **Higher frequency verge mowing in high-traffic areas**
- **A "Fair Suburbs" municipal renewal fund**

10.6 Establish Benchmarking and Transparency Framework

Required under Terms of Reference item (e).

Including:

- **Annual municipal performance report**
- **Independent audit of response times**

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- **Cross-jurisdiction benchmarking**
- **Public service dashboards**

10.7 Create a Municipal Partnership Framework with Clubs

Including:

- **Co-funded maintenance projects**
- **Green-space partnerships**
- **Active-travel access improvements**
- **Local-centre revitalisation collaborations**

11. Conclusion

Canberra is a beautiful city, but our municipal standards no longer reflect our aspirations. As the Business Chamber has observed, repeated small failures create a picture of a city that appears untidy, neglected, and at times unsafe.

For clubs, the consequences are real: reduced visitation, higher operating costs, declining community participation and a diminished sense of local pride. For families, volunteers, sporting participants, older residents, businesses and visitors, the municipal environment shapes whether Canberra feels welcoming, functional and safe.

Community starts in the places where people gather. When those places are clean, safe, vibrant and well-maintained, the community thrives. When they are neglected, the community suffers.

ClubsACT urges the Committee to recommend a new municipal strategy built on partnership, equity, accountability and pride of place.

We stand ready to contribute to a renewed vision for Canberra—one that honours the role of clubs, lifts community expectations, rebuilds public confidence and strengthens the social fabric of our suburbs.

Yours sincerely,



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18 December 2025

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Appendix A: Mapping of ClubsACT Submission Issues and Recommendations Against the Inquiry Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference	Key Issues Raised by ClubsACT	Relevant Submission Sections	Corresponding ClubsACT Recommendations
(a) Maintenance and upkeep of public spaces (playgrounds, sportsgrounds, local shops, verges, waterways)	Declining standards in public space maintenance; graffiti accumulation; damaged footpaths; poor verge and tree management; rubbish and fly-tipping; degradation around club and sporting precincts	Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 5.1, 6	**Establish a City Standards Taskforce; Rapid Response Municipal Maintenance System; Improved maintenance cycles for verges, footpaths and public domain; Fair Suburbs municipal renewal fund**
(b) Appropriateness of geographic spread of active travel infrastructure, parks and playgrounds	Unequal maintenance outcomes between inner-city and suburban areas; unsafe access routes to clubs and sporting facilities; poor lighting and path conditions affecting participation	Sections 4.1, 7	**Geographic equity benchmarks; Suburb-specific maintenance standards; Priority upgrades in older suburbs; Integration of active-travel planning with sporting access**
(c) Effectiveness of services related to waste removal	Rubbish accumulation around clubs and public spaces; fly-tipping; delayed removal of dead animals; impacts on amenity, safety and perceptions of neglect	Sections 3, 5, 6	**Rapid Response system for waste and dead-animal removal; Performance KPIs for waste services; Public reporting of response times**
(d) Effectiveness of policies relating to street art and graffiti removal	Extensive graffiti including full-building coverage; cost burden shifted to clubs and businesses; slow response times; vandalism reinforcing perceptions of disorder and insecurity	Sections 3, 5, 5.1	**Co-funded Graffiti & Vandalism Remediation Scheme; 48–72-hour graffiti removal targets; Stronger enforcement and deterrence; Public education campaign**
(e) Benchmarking ACT performance against similar jurisdictions	Lack of transparent service benchmarks; absence of comparative performance data; no public accountability framework for municipal services	Section 8	**Annual municipal performance scorecards; Cross-jurisdiction benchmarking (Melbourne, Sydney, Parramatta); Independent audits; Public dashboards**
(f) Any other related matter	Public safety failures; anti-social behaviour; impacts on night-time economy; workforce access and parking; clubs acting as de facto safety providers;	Sections 5, 5.1, 6, 9	**Strengthened policing and CCTV; Lighting audits; Parking and access considerations; Municipal Partnership Framework with Clubs**

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