



ACT
Government

ACT EVENTS POLICY

DISCUSSION PAPER



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ABOUT THIS DISCUSSION PAPER

The ACT Government is committed to building and nurturing Canberra's events calendar through event delivery, event funding, event attraction and ongoing event development.

This discussion paper seeks to underpin the development of an ACT Events Policy – a policy that will serve as a blueprint for enhancing Canberra's events calendar and for maximising the associated economic, social and cultural benefits for the Canberra region.

The paper specifically seeks community views on a set of guiding principles for an ACT Events Policy, along with proposed supporting actions designed to help realise the full potential of Canberra's events sector. This includes events managed and delivered by the ACT Government, along with those events operated or owned by community groups, commercial event organisers and associations, but does not include business meetings or conventions.

In addition, a series of questions are posed for further consideration and as a means of promoting positive and forward-thinking stakeholder dialogue.

In embarking on this journey, we encourage and welcome your ongoing collaboration and feedback.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR AN ACT EVENTS POLICY:

1. Supporting events that grow the ACT economy.
2. Supporting events that deliver strong social and community benefits – including social cohesion, growing community pride and local participation.
3. Supporting events that enhance local, national and international recognition of Canberra's vibrancy, liveability and sense of place.
4. Strengthening Canberra's position as an 'event friendly city'.

SETTING THE SCENE

Canberra has consistently proven its capacity to leverage a broad range of event opportunities and to demonstrate its outstanding event hosting credentials.

Events bring life, colour and vitality to the Canberra region. They help build a strong sense of community pride, they provide a wealth of opportunities for community participation and they play a key role in formulating and shaping Canberra's identity.

Events also generate positive benefits for the ACT economy through tourist visitation and associated visitor spending, along with population attraction and a range of tangible legacy outcomes for the city.

The extent to which small, medium and large events can deliver on each of these key elements will always vary, but it is important that their inherent potential to do so is recognised and harnessed.

'CAPITAL AMBITION': A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our vision for events should reflect the essence and personality of Canberra.

This is a city of brilliant possibilities. It is collaborative, contemporary, genuine, forward-thinking, vibrant and influential.

Canberra seeks to be recognised globally as a leading events destination that:

- provides a high quality, enticing suite of event experiences which enhance the Canberra brand and positively profile the Canberra region.
- reflects, engages, benefits and binds its diverse communities.
- drives economic growth by attracting increasing numbers of event-based visitors.

THE ROLE OF THE ACT GOVERNMENT

Given the broad array of economic, social and community outcomes that continue to be created and delivered through events, it is important for the ACT Government to have an active role in the Canberra region's events sector.

While many events are initiated, funded and organised quite successfully without direct ACT Government support, there are instances where some events would be unlikely to be initiated, held, continue or succeed in Canberra without the assistance of the ACT Government.

In fostering Canberra's events calendar, the ACT Government is cognisant of the importance of establishing a range of support structures and mechanisms which can help facilitate organic event development and growth (i.e. in number, size, stature or quality) without long term reliance on ACT Government funding.

While in certain cases ACT Government investment is essential and highly beneficial, particularly in the early stages of an event's lifecycle, focus must be placed on encouraging and supporting events that are or can grow to become self-sustaining in their own right.

UNLOCKING OUR POTENTIAL

From world-class exhibitions, to major sporting contests and a unique blend of innovative festivals and community events, Canberra's event scene has continued to evolve and flourish.

On the back of a highly successful program of events during Canberra's 2013 Centenary celebrations, along with the city's acclaimed 2015 involvement in the Asian Cup football tournament and the Cricket World Cup, there is now potential to firmly establish Canberra's reputation as a world-class events destination. This would provide Canberrans with a reason to be even prouder of their city and would help place Canberra at the forefront of thinking for event-based visitors.

Canberra's enhanced standing as an event host and the introduction of direct flights between Canberra, Singapore and Wellington further support an exciting range of opportunities to position the nation's capital as progressive, modern, dynamic, globally relevant and internationally connected.

Direct flights will elicit substantial change for the ACT economy and Canberra's events sector, with work already underway to identify and establish viable international partnerships. This will enhance access to new leisure/tourism markets overseas, while also highlighting critical leveraging opportunities tied to the city's strong government, diplomatic, education, sporting, trade and investment links.

Capturing this potential will play a major role in further showcasing Canberra as a vibrant, dynamic, creative city for people to work, live, visit, study and invest. We can indeed become the 'coolest little capital city' in the world.

The ACT Events Policy will provide a framework to help us achieve this goal.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

1. SUPPORTING EVENTS THAT GROW THE ACT ECONOMY

Supporting events as key drivers of the visitor economy has been identified as one area of focus for realising the ACT's tourism potential.

The ACT's *2020 Tourism Strategy* sets out to grow the value of overnight visitor expenditure in the Territory to \$2.5 billion by the year 2020.

Events have a proven capacity to generate significant economic outcomes for the ACT. A vibrant event offering can help drive population attraction and growth by positioning Canberra as an attractive place to reside. Events also play a crucial role in profiling the destination and providing compelling new reasons to visit.

This is exemplified by annual tourism events including Floriade and Enlighten, a recent suite of exclusive blockbuster exhibitions and Canberra's successful involvement in major international sporting events such as the 2015 AFC Asian Cup Australia and the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015.

The Asian Cup and Cricket World Cup provided local and visiting fans alike with the opportunity to witness world-class sporting action in the nation's capital, played amidst a vibrant atmosphere. Our proud emergence as a key player on the international sporting stage was capped by an attendance in excess of 100,000 at Canberra's matches across both tournaments and a combined \$40 million economic benefit for the ACT.

Since 2011, the ACT Government's Special Event Fund (SEF) has supported ten completed blockbuster exhibitions and events – which have attracted in excess of 1.6 million attendees and delivered an estimated \$328 million in economic return. On average, 70% of visitors to these funded activities have come from interstate or overseas, reinforcing the Fund's standing as a key tourism and economic driver.

TO FURTHER BUILD THE CONTRIBUTION OF EVENTS TO CANBERRA'S ECONOMY, THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS ARE PROPOSED:

- a. Research, analyse and understand Canberra's event environment and natural competitive advantages as an events destination.
- b. Release a Major Events Strategy for the ACT which provides a framework for identifying, acquiring, developing and funding new and existing major events that maximise return on investment and best support the visitor economy.
- c. Deliver and support a diverse, year-round calendar of events that minimises calendar gaps and attracts regional, national and international visitors to Canberra.
- d. Facilitate links between Canberra's events sector and the broader cultural, tourism and hospitality sector to diversify the visitor experience, increase visitor length of stay and maximise visitor spending.
- e. Develop a consistent means of measuring and evaluating economic and visitation outcomes from major events and the broader event sector.

GROWING THE ACT ECONOMY – QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATION:

- What are Canberra's competitive advantages as an events destination?
- What current factors limit Canberra's potential to be a leading events destination, and to be widely recognised as such?
- What areas of the current Canberra events calendar need further development (including schedule and content gaps)?
- What types of events should be considered as priority additions to Canberra's events portfolio?
- What types of events should be considered as priorities for government support as a means of enhancing economic growth?

CASE STUDY: FLORIADE – “AUSTRALIA’S CELEBRATION OF SPRING”

Floriade is intrinsically woven into Canberra’s cultural fabric and identity. After arriving on the Canberra events scene in 1988, it has successfully grown into the largest festival of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere – and it continues to generate significant tourism and economic benefits for the Canberra region.

A stunning floral display of over one million bulbs and annuals is complemented by a diverse, ever-expanding event program featuring music, cultural activities, food and wine offerings, horticultural workshops, market traders, cooking demonstrations, artistic displays and entertainment.

Floriade’s reputation as a truly immersive and unmissable festival experience was further enhanced with the addition of Floriade NightFest in 2008, which provides the opportunity over five special nights to see garden bed designs transformed into an illuminated wonderland of vibrant colours and stunning light shows.

Floriade’s broad ranging appeal has put Canberra on the national and international map as a tourism drawcard in spring. High visitor satisfaction levels and repeat visitation year after year are testament to the event’s enduring appeal and quality.

Floriade 2014 saw the event achieve its highest attendance result on record, attracting 481,854 attendees over 30 days. A total of 103,290 unique interstate or international visitors came to Canberra specifically for Floriade, with an average length of stay just under 3 nights. On the back of a record attendance, the 2014 event also generated the largest economic impact in the event’s history, with a \$47 million increase in direct expenditure and a \$69 million increase in Gross Territory Product.

The 2015 event provided equally strong attendance (480,451) and economic impact figures (\$46.9m direct spend, \$68.8m GTP). This was largely attributable to 106,000 specific interstate or international visitors and a record attendance in excess of 40,000 for Floriade NightFest (on the back of three sell-out nights).

Floriade provides a valuable platform for showcasing a range of other Canberra region products, experiences and talent on-site and actively encourages visitors to get out and explore beyond the realms of the event precinct.

This is critical for generating repeat visitation and longer length of stay, while providing exposure to every sector of the local tourism industry – including accommodation, attractions, restaurants, new city precincts, retail outlets, tours and transport.

All this re-affirms Floriade’s reputation as a major economic driver and the city’s largest annual tourism event.



2. SUPPORTING EVENTS THAT DELIVER STRONG SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS – INCLUDING SOCIAL COHESION, GROWING COMMUNITY PRIDE AND LOCAL PARTICIPATION.

Events serve as a key mechanism for bringing the Canberra community together, capturing our interests and our imagination.

Canberra's recent event successes have provided further momentum for harnessing our rich community spirit and engendering a sense of ownership and pride in our city and its event offerings.

Canberrans recognise the value of events and the importance of investing in the events sector. Community surveys over the past four years have consistently highlighted support for government involvement in events, with the most recent data showing that 87% of locals support ACT Government involvement in attracting and securing events, while 92% believe it is important for Canberra to host major events in any given year.

Community support and participation is a critical factor in determining the success of an event. If an event is not embraced by the community, it typically results in the event's failure, or at the very least, inhibits growth.

As such, a good cultural and strategic fit with the destination, its brand and its community is imperative.

TO FURTHER BUILD THE CONTRIBUTION OF EVENTS TO CANBERRA'S COMMUNITY, COHESION AND PRIDE, THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS ARE PROPOSED:

- a. Utilise events as a platform for local content and showcasing local talent to a regional, national and international audience.
- b. Harness a range of internal and external communication channels to more effectively promote opportunities for community participation (i.e. as event participants and spectators).
- c. Identify opportunities for strategic capacity building across a range of key community groups to support quality event planning, promotion and delivery – i.e. forums for knowledge sharing and partnership development.
- d. Clearly articulate the benefits and legacies of event investment to the Canberra community to enhance local enthusiasm, participation and pride.
- e. Undertake ongoing research with Canberrans to gauge community sentiment and insights related to the events sector – including satisfaction levels, perceived benefits, demand and the contribution of events to community building and engagement.

SUPPORTING SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS – QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATION:

- What are the priority areas for community sector development that could help address knowledge gaps on event planning and delivery?
- How can we best collate and promote the broad range of event opportunities open to the Canberra community (i.e. as content providers, supporters, participants, volunteers or spectators)?
- What are the obvious event partnership opportunities across Canberra’s community sector?
- What are some priority additions to Canberra’s community events calendar?
- What can be done to ensure existing local community events, festivals and celebrations remain relevant and sustainable?
- Does the ACT Government need to develop a specific strategy for community events?

CASE STUDY: NATIONAL MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

Held in February each year, the National Multicultural Festival provides Canberra with a kaleidoscope of cultural sights, sound, colour, food, dancing and free entertainment across a three day extravaganza.

The nation's capital was built on a firm foundation of multiculturalism (with our population hailing from more than 170 culturally diverse backgrounds), and for two decades, the Festival has enabled the Canberra community to come together to celebrate its unique cultural heritage.

From humble beginnings, it is now recognised as one of the most successful multicultural festivals in Australia – built on the strength of its extensive network of community participation and local support.

Each year, a growing number of community groups are excited to come on board to showcase their food and culture as part of the Festival program. Recent event data indicates that the National Multicultural Festival now draws on some 4,500 community volunteers and has more than 800 participating community groups.

The event's popularity is also demonstrated through huge crowds, with an estimated 280,000 attendees converging on the city centre for the 2016 Festival.



3. SUPPORTING EVENTS THAT ENHANCE LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF CANBERRA'S VIBRANCY, LIVEABILITY AND SENSE OF PLACE.

Canberrans widely acknowledge the strengths and advantages of Canberra's planned and spacious city layout. However, many also recognise that this should not come at the expense of city vibrancy. In recent times, Canberra has made significant progress in shaking off the unjustified tag as a place that is sterile, soulless and boring.

In 2014, Canberra was ranked the world's most liveable city by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In 2013, Canberra was also named in the top 10 of TripAdvisor's *Travellers' Choice Awards (South Pacific region)* for Destinations on the Rise. This accolade served as a clear indication of the city's burgeoning international reputation for providing high quality tourism and event experiences for visitors.

Events feature at the core of Canberra's image, life and personality. They help shape public perceptions of Canberra and they showcase and share the very best of ourselves and our city.

A vibrant city needs a bold and diverse events portfolio that incorporates a range of artistic, cultural, sporting, community and special interest pursuits throughout the year.

As the national capital, we are home to an array of world-class cultural institutions that tell the story of Australia's freedom, spirit, achievements and aspirations – while also providing an appropriate sense of place and a natural home for a variety of events.

Yet Canberra's cultural personality and its identity as an events destination extend well beyond its national attractions.

Through the city's urban renewal portfolio, the way people use and relate to places is changing. City activation initiatives have created new focal points for energy, vibe and events in urban spaces – including New Acton, Braddon and the Kingston Foreshore. The ACT Government's *Urban Sounds* discussion paper further explores the management of the city's mixed use areas and options for enhancing the planning framework to support the development of events and activities.

Looking ahead, the *City to the Lake* project aims to further transform and connect central Canberra, providing strategic sites for a new convention centre, cultural facilities and a new city stadium. Similarly, the development of the Kingston Arts Precinct will provide a focal point for many local cultural organisations and associated events.

TO FURTHER BUILD THE CONTRIBUTION OF EVENTS TO CANBERRA'S VIBRANCY, LIVEABILITY AND SENSE OF PLACE, THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS ARE PROPOSED:

- a. Develop a balanced and diverse annual events portfolio (including major events and community events) which harnesses the city's competitive advantages as an events destination and aligns with our city brand positioning.
- b. Support and/or develop a suite of anchor events that align with Canberra's four distinct seasons and that enhance national and international exposure of Canberra's people, places and way of life.
- c. Ensure the planning and design of public spaces/precincts supports creative use and a broad range of activation opportunities for events, while also aligning with relevant place principles.
- d. Work with creative industries to enhance the contribution of events to Canberra's diverse cultural life.
- e. Further investigate new opportunities for showcasing the city's cultural personality, including better positioning Canberra as a regional hub for cultural and event activity.

SUPPORTING VIBRANCY, LIVEABILITY AND SENSE OF PLACE – QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATION:

- Do we have the right mix of event facilities, spaces and places in the city and key town centres to demonstrate and leverage Canberra's liveability, vibrancy and sense of place?
- What are some of the unique aspects of Canberra's cultural personality that you believe could be showcased more effectively through its events portfolio?
- How can we better support event organisers, artists and creatives to establish and develop events that reflect our brand and harness our key competitive advantages?
- Do you endorse the approach of fostering anchor events tied to Canberra's four distinct seasons?
- What are some of the challenges and opportunities that this seasonally-based approach presents for the Canberra region?

CASE STUDY: ENLIGHTEN

Since its inception in 2011, Enlighten has firmly established its position as an increasingly popular component of the ACT events calendar.

Showcasing Canberra's cultural gems over nine nights in early March, the event invites visitors to see the nation's capital in a brand new light.

As the event's centrepiece, many of Canberra's iconic national attractions are illuminated via stunning architectural projections, while also playing host to an array of surprising experiences and exclusive after-dark activities. These have traditionally included live music, rare film screenings, stand-up comedy, dining events, special tours and exhibition openings.

Enlighten plays an essential role in bringing Canberra's Parliamentary Triangle to life, showcasing the value of the precinct as an event space and as a place for all Australians to proudly experience and share. Visitors continue to be captivated by the colour, movement and hands-on fun delivered as part of the event each year.

In 2015, Enlighten attracted a record attendance of 287,874. From this total, an estimated 10,434 visitors from interstate or overseas came to the ACT specifically for the event, a 97% increase on the previous year.

A key catalyst for increased attendance at Enlighten in 2015 was a strategic partnership between Events ACT, VisitCanberra and Fairfax Events to deliver the Enlighten Night Noodle Markets for the first time.

The Enlighten Night Noodle Markets are now situated at the core of a suitably vibrant event hub, which is also home to roving performers, bars and free entertainment from local and international artists.



4. STRENGTHENING CANBERRA'S POSITION AS AN 'EVENT FRIENDLY CITY'.

Engagement with events stakeholders has clearly identified the need for a more streamlined system for doing event business in the ACT. The creation of Access Canberra means that there is now a single point of contact within the ACT Government for event approvals. Access Canberra's Events Approval Team has taken a lead role in assisting event organisers and providing them with a seamless experience for liaison across government.

Events and event organisers continue to have links and synergies across a range of other ACT Government agencies – including those related to tourism, the arts, venues, sport and recreation, trade and investment, multicultural affairs, land development and urban renewal. Events held on designated national land are also subject to conditions imposed at the Commonwealth level by the National Capital Authority (NCA).

As part of enhancing Canberra's status as an 'event friendly city', it is important to ensure that events and their associated benefits for the Territory are acknowledged and supported by all government agencies in a cohesive manner.

This approach can assist events in reaching their full potential, it can support the ACT Government in better leveraging its investment in the events sector and it can encourage new event organisers to consider Canberra as a viable events destination.

This philosophy must of course be balanced with due diligence to manage risks and ensure that events remain safe for the local community and for visitors.

TO FURTHER BUILD CANBERRA AS AN EVENT FRIENDLY CITY, THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS ARE PROPOSED:

- a. Continue to develop a whole-of-government approach to event facilitation and support.
- b. Continue to enhance systems and processes for navigating the ACT's regulatory environment, including those linked to event applications, public place bookings, ACT Government charges and approvals.
- c. Provide better information and resources for event organisers, including a consolidated ACT Event Guide.
- d. Implement coordinated/consistent risk management systems and tools for events operating in the ACT.
- e. Review event-related infrastructure in the ACT to identify key requirements, gaps and priorities for enhancing Canberra's status as an events destination.

EVENT FRIENDLY CITY – QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATION:

- What do you believe are the current barriers inhibiting Canberra's status as an 'event friendly city'?
- What are the priority areas for further improving the regulatory environment in the ACT with reference to event operations and approvals?
- How can event information and resources in the ACT be enhanced or supplemented to support event attraction and activation?
- How can event infrastructure in the ACT be enhanced or supplemented to support event attraction and activation?
- What locations do you identify as being natural homes for events in and around the city centre, and/or in Canberra's various town centres and suburban areas?

CASE STUDY: ACCESS CANBERRA AND EVENT APPROVALS

Access Canberra has recently developed a process to enable approval for short term, low risk activities in the city centre, specifically the activation of the city's laneways and other hotspots like Garema Place and Civic Square.

The 'Events that Pop' process aims to make it easier for event organisers to apply for permits through a single form, with the risk thresholds set as such that either approval is not required or a decision (that can be semi-automated) is made in 24 hours.

A trial of this process on selected events will determine the appropriateness of the risk thresholds and the viability of the locations in and around the city.

Once this trial is completed, a notification will be sent to surrounding businesses and residents about the new process, which will operate for an initial period of four to six months before a comprehensive evaluation takes place with relevant stakeholders.



FEEDBACK

HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

The views of key stakeholders associated with the events sector in the Canberra region are critical to the development of the ACT Events Policy. Please fill in the survey that can be accessed on the Your Say website or send us your comments.

Visit: www.yoursay.act.gov.au

Email: events@act.gov.au

Mail: Events ACT

Cultural Canberra

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

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You are encouraged to comment on the key elements covered in this discussion paper or provide any additional thoughts or ideas you may have.

Comments submitted in response to this discussion paper are considered public and may be reproduced by the ACT Government unless requested otherwise.

Refer to the Your Say website for the closing date for feedback on this discussion paper.

NEXT STEPS

Your input will contribute to the development of an ACT Events Policy, which will serve as a blueprint for enhancing Canberra's events calendar and for maximising the associated economic, social and cultural benefits for the Canberra region.

This Policy will be developed for consideration by Government over the next six months.

