

2023-2024 ACT Budget Submission

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum

24 April 2023

Contact:

Dr David Marshall AM

Chair

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum

Email: Chair@tforum.com.au

Phone: 0418 631 780

2023-2024 ACT Budget Submission Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum

Introduction

This submission sets out the Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum's views and proposals for consideration in the setting of the ACT Government's 2023-24 Budget

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum Background

The Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum (Leaders Forum) is the ACT and region's peak tourism and events industry representative organisation.

The Leaders Forum is a not-for-profit representative body advocating for the ACT tourism and associated industry sectors in the National Capital and surrounding Canberra Region. The Leaders Forum's focus is on promoting the value of these sectors to the ACT visitor economy and acting as a 'think tank' and policy generator.

The Leaders Forum comprises heads of representatives of the leading tourism, business, sports, arts, cultural, aviation and educational sectors in the ACT, along with representation from Destination Southern New South Wales. A list of Board Members is at Appendix 1.

The ACT Government's Overarching Goals and Mission

The ACT Government is in many respects forward thinking and willing to commit to longer term investment to facilitate the city's growth. The challenge the Government has is matching this progressive stance with the reality of the industry's 'on the ground' experience. Canberra is not an easy place to do business, its layers of bureaucracy and a plethora of complex legislation is a major inhibitor.

In the 2030 Tourism Strategy Discussion Paper ACT Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, outlined three missions for the city, missions the Leaders Forum strongly supports:

- to *'be a city that gives people back time – a city that prioritises **wellbeing and liveability**'*;
- to *'move towards a net zero emissions city and beyond - with environmental responsibility and concrete actions'*, and
- to *'prioritise the further knowledge-based economic growth – positioning Canberra as a global destination'*.

A Global City

This third key mission is one the Leaders Forum particularly supports. Global cities, such as Singapore, look and feel like a world-leading metropolis. Even Adelaide boasts *'it effortlessly combines the benefits of a global city with a competitive cost base and ease of doing business'*. Canberra does not match this ambition and our city also **needs an overarching vision, one it currently does not have. This should be a priority.**

If Canberra wishes **to emulate the characteristics of a 'global city'** it will take a large **capital investment and dynamic thinking from the ACT Government and its administration**, coupled with the need to work collaboratively with the Federal Government.

The Leaders Forum's View on A 'Global City': What is missing in Australia's National Capital

Every 'global city' has first class meeting and convention facilities. These centres are often spectacular in their design, highly functional, and are a showcase of the city's commitment to welcoming the world. Canberra has neglected one of the most important symbols of what makes a city a truly international destination.

The tourism industry acknowledges and applauds the ACT Government's stated missions however with this in mind **it should take immediate steps to remedy the status quo on building a new convention, meeting, entertainment, multi-functional facility** to address a major inhibitor to Canberra's rightful place as one of the world's great national capitals.

To achieve this 'global city' status, the Leaders Forum believes it will take a re-focussed approach from the ACT Government to:

- Insist on new developments aspiring to excellence in design.
- A streamlined but rigorous planning system (taking into account the industry and other stakeholder comments from the recent review of the Planning Act).
- A renewed commitment to the cleaning up and beautification of the city.
- A more outcome-focussed, collaborative approach from ACT Directorates.
- A better decision-making framework around planning and industry development to encourage businesses to invest in the National Capital.
- Implement the outcomes of the Better Regulation Report that states the ACT Government *'want to support businesses to start, run and grow by putting in place better regulatory settings, and simplifying interactions between business and Government'*.

The ACT Government's Commitment to a Wellbeing Framework

The Leaders Forum supports the ACT Government's approach to developing this **wellbeing framework**, with its stated objective to *'measures what matters to Canberrans and our quality of life, so that we can focus on what the community cares about in our decision making'*.

The Leaders Forum makes a number of observations in this submission that impact on the **wellbeing** of Canberrans and visitors to the ACT. These are clearly highlighted.

Economic Development: The Key Areas for Consideration

We now turn to some specific areas of priority and proposed actions.

1. Complete the business case for a new National Convention Centre

- a. The business events sector in Canberra is significantly constrained by a lack of infrastructure. The Convention Centre is already operating at pre-pandemic levels, turning away business from Canberra due to lack of size and flexibility. These constraints are the most significant limitations on capitalising on the opportunities the business events sector delivers for Canberra.
- b. The Bureau has identified \$126m in business that cannot be held in Canberra due to exhibition, meeting or gala dinner capacity constraints.
- c. As a 'needs analysis' is being undertaken on building a new Convention Centre and Entertainment Pavilion, we urge the Government to also immediately complete a business case in partnership with industry.
- d. The business case will then facilitate an approach to the Commonwealth Government for infrastructure funding. We know the Commonwealth Government will not provide funding without a business case.
- e. The concept for a new facility proposed 20 years ago has been watered down to simply replacing the existing Convention Centre. The initial creative brief focussed on the building of a 'Kennedy Centre' style complex, reflecting each Australian State and the Northern Territory.
- f. There are a multitude of reports and financial analyses that proves convention centres stimulate private sector investment. The city of Adelaide is a case in point, where Ernst & Young estimated the State Government's investment to extend the existing Centre would generate an additional \$1.92 billion in economic benefit over the next 25 years. Private sector investment, including hotel development have soared in Adelaide since the Convention Centre's expansion: the Sofitel, the GPO Hotel run by Marriot International, the Hyatt Regency, the Wyndham Grand and the Vibe Hotel.
- g. The Leaders Forum also supports the Canberra Convention Bureau's request for bid funding to be continued as an incentive to attract conferences.

The Canberra Convention Bureau included the table below in their submission to this budget consultation process. It is a telling reminder of how Canberra's Convention Centre facility has slipped significantly in quality and amenity compared to other States and the Northern Territory.

Their submission stated:

The National Convention Centre Canberra is the second oldest centre in Australia and one of the few remaining centres that has not expanded since construction.

CITY	OPENED	COST	REFURB \$	YEAR	DELEGATES	EXHIBITION	FUNDED
Sydney	2016	\$1.5B	N/A	N/A	8,000	32,600	PPP
Melbourne	1996 2009 2018	\$129M \$413M \$305M	\$305M	2018	5,541	40,000	PPP
Brisbane	1995	\$170M	\$140M	2012	3,958	20,000	Govt. w Mgt.
Adelaide	1987	\$39M	\$350M	2017	3,500	10,400	Govt. w Mgt.
Cairns	1996	\$80M	\$11M \$6.3M \$179M	2005 2011 2021	5,000	4,000	Govt. w Mgt.
Canberra	1989	Unknown	\$30M \$5M	2007 2017	2,500	2,000	Govt. w Mgt.
Darwin	2008	\$110M	N/A	N/A	1,500	4,000	PPP w Mgt.
Gold Coast	2004	\$167M	\$40M	2009	6,020	6,345	Govt. w Mgt.
Perth	2004	\$225M	N/A	N/A	2,500	16,600	Private w Mgt.
Geelong	2025	\$200M w City Deal	-	-	1,000	2,000	-
Wellington	2023	\$179M	-	-	1,100	10,000	-
Christchurch	2021	\$475M	-	-	1,400	3,300	-
Auckland	2025	\$750M	-	-	2,850	8,100	-

2. Invest in Growing the Visitor Economy

- a. The economic goals outlined in the 2030 Tourism Strategy are the generation of \$3.1 billion in visitor expenditure by 2025 and an employment of 19,640 people, and \$4 billion by 2030 employing 22,750 people. The 2030 Tourism Strategy's modelling also shows international visitor levels to the ACT are expected to rebound to 2019 levels by 2026 and increase by 363,000 visitors per year by 2030.
- b. **The Leaders Forum believe these results above will not be achieved without significant investment in marketing, promotion, events and infrastructure development.**
- c. The Strategy states the '*visitor economy will be a critical enabler of the ACT's broader economic recovery and growth*'. The Leaders Forum believes this will only occur if there is substantial investment in marketing and promotion, a focus on developing new attractions and experiences, a commitment to excellence in service levels and a more positive approach to enticing investors and developers to choose Canberra above other Australian and international destinations.
- d. The development of new and exciting products and experiences that support and complement the Territory's existing offerings is essential if we are to maximise the pull-factor to entice more visitors to the National Capital.
- e. The 2030 Tourism Strategy's aim was to '*have a say on how we can collectively reinvigorate, rebuild and grow the ACT's visitor economy out to 2030*'. This objective will however require a substantial investment, and this objective appears to be at odds with the ACT Treasury's aim to reduce expenditure and investment in industry sectors generating significant income for the city.
- f. Tourism Research Australia's 2019 visitors survey showed 5.48 million visitors came to the Nation Capital in the year to June 2019
 - 2.9 million were overnight visitors from Australia.
 - 2.31 million domestic travellers made the trip to Canberra for the day.
 - 266,000 tourists in the 12-month period were from overseas.

Over this period tourists spent a combined \$2.82 billion in the ACT:

- overnight domestic visitors spent \$1.87 billion.
- overseas visitors spent a combined \$605 million.

The 2030 Tourism Strategy's modelling also demonstrated that in our visitor economy, every \$152,000 in visitor spend generates a job — achievable from 240 overnight stays.

Invest in Growing the Visitor Economy (cont.)

- g. Austrade's presentation to the Tourism Advisory Forum in Canberra on Friday 3 February 2023 quoted Tourism Research Australia's 2022 National Visitors Survey year ending September 2022, showing the ACT relies heavily on business travel, with business travellers contributing a much higher share of domestic overnight visitors to the ACT than nationally. The downturn in business travel nationally is a structural concern.
- h. Domestic overnight visitors to the ACT remains around 1 day less than the national average. Austrade stated a one day increase in average length of stay would have the potential to add nearly 40% to domestic overnight spend in the ACT each year.
- i. Austrade's report stated '*planned scheduling of festivals, activities, blockbusters and collaborate packaging will increase opportunities to extend stays*'. **This again requires investment to enable the ACT to compete with the aggressive marketing campaigns and investment in events and infrastructure mounted by other States and the Northern Territory.**
- j. We also note the release of Thrive 2030 – the Federal Government's 2030 strategy, and its very recent re-release. The opportunities and issues identified in Thrive formed part of the thinking in the development of the ACT's 2030 Tourism Strategy.
- k. Finally, the Tourism 2030 Strategy noted the high and continually rising reputation and quality of Canberra Region wineries and wines. The Leaders Forum has recently engaged with the local industry body, the Canberra District Wine Industry Association, to assist that body and its members review and strategise on its current visitor offering, services and facilities. **We would welcome ACT Government participation and support for the ultimate outcomes of this process.**

3. Competition for Travellers and Commitment to Marketing and Branding

- a. The intense competition for visitors between the ACT, other states and the Northern Territory must be met with well targeted marketing campaigns. If tourism already injects \$2.5 billion into the visitor economy, an increase in investment can only grow that contribution to the ACT economy.
- b. Where the ACT's tourism marketing budget is around \$12m annually, our closest competitor Tasmania has \$30m. **We therefore recommend an ACT Government commitment to increased marketing funds for Visit Canberra to match those of the Tasmanian Government, a state we continually compare the ACT with.**
- c. In comparing these two jurisdictions:
 - Tasmania's population is 541,000, while the ACT is 455,000 plus 1 million in our surrounding region and tourism catchment area.
 - The Gross State Product for Tasmania is \$34.08b, while the ACT's is 33.74b.
 - The Tasmanian Government's tourism budget for 2022-2023 was \$43.2m, while the ACT's for tourism and events was \$33m, assumed 50% of this is tourism focussed.
- d. A report compiled by Austrade in their '*July 2022 news on tourism policy, research and programs*' published State and Territory governments budget for tourism for 2022/2023. These figures present a contrasting picture for the ACT:
 - Western Australia has committed \$111.2m to revitalising its visitor economy, including \$70m of measures to boost tourism and \$41.2m for the international education sector.
 - Northern Territory announced \$86.4m in funding, which includes allocations for marketing, major events and measures to alleviate workforce shortages.
 - Tasmania is investing \$240.7m to help its visitor economy recover, including investments in infrastructure, National Parks, and increased promotion of the State to key markets.
 - South Australia has committed \$45m over four years to market the State as a tourism destination, and \$40m for major events.
 - New South Wales announced \$364m to build resilience and accelerate the recovery of the visitor economy.
 - Queensland committed \$66.4m over three years to tourism recovery measures, including allocations for First Nations tourism, ecotourism and music trails.

Competition for Travellers and Commitment to Marketing and Branding (cont.)

- e. The ACT remains in 7th position as a preferred destination for Sydneysiders behind the Hunter Valley, NSW North Coast, NSW South Coast, and even Melbourne. **Marketing investment is needed to lift our position as a preferred destination.**
- f. If we are serious about growing the ACT visitor economy, we also need to be competitive and ensure Visit Canberra is appropriately funded not just for marketing, but for product development and other functions to drive this growth.
- g. **In regard to international carriers choosing to fly directly into the ACT, Visit Canberra needs a significant increase in marketing dollars to promote these services in each of these source markets. A minimum of \$2m is required over the next two budget cycles.** (See also Aviation Access on Page 14).

4. Investment in new attractions and facilities

- a. **Continuing investment in the development of new arts and cultural facilities and experiences across the city is essential to our success as an attractive visitor destination.** We welcome the Government's commitment to the new Canberra Theatre, and investment in Gorman House, Calthorpe House and Lanyon Homestead.
- b. For Canberra to fulfill Minister Cheyne's statement of ambition to become '*Australia's arts capital*', our territory-funded theatre and gallery need to be world-class and dovetail into the City Renewal Authority's visionary '*Civic and Cultural Precinct*' plans.
- c. The Kingston Arts Precinct project needs a firm date for completion after multiple delays.
- d. **Continued investment in activities and facilities at Stromlo Forest Park and the National Arboretum is essential** to develop new and exciting visitor experiences. At Stromlo further developing high yield mountain biking opportunities and commencing to implement the master plan for the entire precinct should be a priority. The Arboretum also has an ambitious master plan, and its approval will see this major attraction enter a new league as one of Australia's most striking visitor attractions.
- e. ACT Parks and Conservation's review of the tourism potential in ACT parks and reserves is a positive move, and any recommendations need to be considered as providing a balance to our culture-heavy visitor offering. This objective could be enhanced by releasing the draft '*Nature-Based Tourism Strategy*' which provides a useful source of further proposals and ideas. Also work undertaken on reconsidering Tidbinbilla's role as a nature-based attraction has yet to be actioned.

Investment in new attractions and facilities (cont.)

- f. We recommend the consultation exercise underway by ACT Parks and Conservation with Canberra tourism operators on a proposed new regulatory and licensing system be made more transparent, inclusive and open to a wider range of stakeholders for input and engagement.
- g. **Investment in new Indigenous tourism products and services** would provide a significant lift to the ACT's current suite of attractions. This would fit within the broader ACT Government policy around valuing and raising awareness of the Territories Indigenous heritage.
- h. In like manner, **there are many opportunities for further development of the accessible tourism market.** Local firms such as Getaboutable provide a model for what could be done to capture a larger portion of this large and growing market. This would again fit within the broader ACT Government's focus on disability, equity and accessibility. It also dovetails into the ACT Government's **wellbeing framework.**
- i. Destination Southern NSW has recently released its own 2030 strategy, a rich source of information and perspectives on tourism and event development in our surrounding region.

5. Tourism attractions connectivity

- a. **The reintroduction of the 'Culture Loop' should be a priority for the ACT Government.** This initiative, originally funded by the National Attractions, should be the responsibility of Transport Canberra. The service commenced as a trial in December 2018, and ran until February 2020, fully funded by the National Institutions which are already budget constrained.
- b. The seven day a week one-hour loop ran from 9am to 5pm with 10 stops attracting just under 70,000 passengers, with the NMA's passenger research showing approximately 80% of patrons were visitors to the ACT (56% interstate, 23% overseas, 21% local). Very high satisfaction levels indicated the service is needed to lower frustration visitors experience finding parking spaces and navigating the ACT road network.

6. Telstra Tower

- a. The current dilapidated state of this iconic Canberra attraction is a sad reflection for the city and Telstra. **The Government with strong industry support must lobby the company and the Federal Government to restore stewardship to this public asset.**
- b. We recognise this could require some financial commitment from the ACT Government or other private sector investors, but only a strong representation and subsequent review of the facility will initiate action on this iconic and very visible part of the Canberra brand.

7. ACT Events Support

- a. Many of the events Canberra hosts need an injection of additional funding to reach their full potential. We specifically note that Floriade, Enlighten, the Multicultural Festival, Design Canberra Festival and the National Folk Festival all have potential to draw more interstate visitors but have languished due to limited investment in recent years. We **recommend increasing funding to these existing suite of festivals to deliver outstanding experiences for both Canberrans and visitors.**
- b. Some specific factors highlight the current under-funding.
 - **Floriade:** is a mature event and if it is to reach its full potential it needs a permanent site, and other satellite locations over and above the current location at Commonwealth Park. This has been discussed for the past 15 years without any resolution. There must be a review of its current budget allocation and an appropriate investment made in both infrastructure development and the running of the event. The results of the recent strategic review of Floriade (March 2023) did not present a strategic vision and only recommended more community involvement. This is not a solution to develop the event into a nationally or internationally significant festival.
 - **The Major Events Fund** mainly supports our National Institution blockbusters. This has proven to be a very successful initiative, and this fund needs to be reviewed and increased to maximise the economic return to the Territory. In 2022 \$1.5 million was invested and this should be increased and committed again for a minimum of three years.
 - **The ACT Events Development Fund** has also proved a strong incentive for event managers. It suffers from a limited budget, and dozens of applications are denied funding each year because the budget is well short of what is required. This should be reviewed immediately. Development of emerging events is a critical and proven generator of tourism growth and increased visitor expenditure.
 - **The Cooperative Marketing Fund and Product Development Fund** are excellent initiatives. This encourages attractions and events to apply for grants which are matched by the industry. **The pool of funds is limited and should be expanded to at least \$750,000 per annum and confirmed for 3 years.**

8. ACT sports infrastructure

- a. Nothing could demonstrate the Government's support for Canberrans **wellbeing** more than promoting sports activities.
- b. The two priorities are the reopening of the AIS arena and replacement of the Canberra Stadium. We commend the ACT Government on acknowledging these venues as critical infrastructure needing attention.
- c. We understand the importance of sport and sporting facilities generally for the effective attraction of sporting events and visitors to the ACT. We know many facilities in the ACT are underdeveloped.
- d. The cost of sports rights and upgrades to facilities can be prohibitive. As an example Perth is hosting five 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup games and is investing \$35m to upgrade the Perth rectangular stadium to FIFA standards. The ACT didn't submit a proposal to host any fixtures. It's a pity young ACT and regional women are denied seeing these sporting greats compete in an international event in their home city.
- e. **The ACT Government should focus on upgrading existing/building new sports facilities to match the standards that have emerged in other markets across Australia**, including increased focus on the provision of suitably contemporary facilities, including gender-inclusive change rooms.
- f. Identify additional sports facilities required to encourage community-based sporting events to emulate the success of the Kanga Cup in bringing national events to the ACT. **The ACT Government should also employ personnel to explore these opportunities, arrange bids, and compete with other jurisdictions for these events and then assist with the logistics of running them.**
- g. **The ACT Government should review the hiring charges placed on events that lift visitations to the ACT.** The Kanga Cup is given \$30,000 by the Government to assist running the event, but then charges more than this figure to hire ACT Government facilities.
 - **Multiple ACT Government charges** dramatically and negatively impact on events viability. Charges include the hire of facilities, policing and security, clearing, recovery of administrative overheads, licencing, road closure costs and mounting of banners and flags along arterial roads. **The Government needs to review its charges as this is an inhibitor to hosting events.**
 - **Insurance costs** for the running of events in many cases is prohibitive. **Governments across the country are being encouraged to underwrite this cost, and the ACT should do the same.** If the ACT Government is willing to assist there should be strict measures and controls in place to ensure event organisers are minimising risks and the likelihood of needing to claim on insurance. This initiative would provide a better oversight of events being planned and staged.

9. Government Fees and Charges

- a. As mentioned previously rates and taxes and Government fees and charges are having a major impact on the tourism and hospitality sectors. **These levies are considerably higher than NSW, and in some cases several times those charged in Sydney.**
- b. Costs associated with an array of government charges are oppressive: from liquor licences to outdoor dining through to significant delays in approvals for startups and changes of leases are all cost imposts on doing business in Canberra. The Regulatory Reform process underway has been made aware of these issues and the industry is hopeful of a review of these charges. **The Leaders Forum recommends an expedited review and one focussed on reducing the costs of doing business in the ACT to at least be comparable with our surrounding region and NSW.**
- c. Canberra's liquor licencing and levies are among the highest fees of any State. Other States/cities also have lower fees for venues wanting to stay open after 1am.
- d. The other main impost on hospitality businesses is staff costs due to staff shortages. When student visas revert to permitting work only up to 40 hours a fortnight (from July 2023) there will be an increased shortage of workers. Even the proposed lift to 48 hours a fortnight is too low. Because the ACT housing rental costs are the highest in the country many of those student visa holders will struggle to live. The ACT Government must lobby their federal colleagues to reverse this decision and **there should be a consideration from ACT Treasury on how the ACT Government can financially assist this cohort.**

10. Business closures

- a. The hospitality sector has seen iconic establishments close in March 2023: Pialligo Estate and the Zoo Bar. According to the Canberra Business Chamber Canberra has the highest rate of business closures in Australia. As the Canberra Times 3 April 2023 reported: *'the last week has seen two major losses to Canberra's hospitality industry, and both, nominally at least, COVID casualties. But for a great many people, COVID's long tail is a very real thing, especially in the hospitality industry'*.
- b. It is anticipated more hospitality business closures are expected over the next 12 months. The recommendations in this submission on lowering Government charges is even more critical.
- c. Taking all the factors into consideration, the financial and emotional impact on owners, staff and customers is significant and again the **wellbeing framework** must take these situations into account.

11. Office on International Engagement

- a. This Office has worked tirelessly with the tourism industry to consolidate the relationship with Embassies and High Commissions in the city and to arrange successful tourism missions to New Zealand and Singapore.
- b. The Commissioner has a proven track record, and much more could be achieved. **We therefore strongly recommend this office be expanded and more appropriately resourced to maximise its effectiveness.**

12. Aviation Access

- a. Aviation access is a critical part of diversifying Canberra's visitor economy and facilitating broader opportunities for trade and investment in the city. The growth in Canberra's domestic connectivity has been significant and we applaud the ACT Government and the Canberra Airport's commitment to ongoing dialogue with potential new carriers and destinations.
- b. However, we suggest there may be more the Territory tourism industry could do to further support these initiatives; we therefore propose: **The Government consider an industry consultation exercise to investigate and identify any further useful actions. This could include opportunities in freight movement and the development of warehousing infrastructure in the ACT to stimulate investment and activity in these industry sectors.**
- c. **We would urge the ACT Government continue to invest in overseas trade and tourism missions and to incentivise international carriers to again service the National Capital.**

13. Inbound road transport and motorhome accommodation

- a. The Territory's proximity to its major domestic markets of Sydney and regional NSW provides opportunities to capitalise on the demand for electric vehicles. Canberra is a 'one charge' destination from Sydney in most cases.
- b. **A priority for the ACT is the installation of thousands of charging points across the Territory** and working with NSW to ensure the Hume, Federal, Barton and Kings Highways have sufficient charging points at stopovers along the way to encourage visitation to the ACT.
- c. We also believe a recognition of Sydney and regional NSW as drive markets necessitates a re-examination of budget accommodation in the ACT. We recognise recent improvements such as at Stromlo Forest Park and Epic, but believe the ACT needs more. **This should include parks and facilities for travellers in caravan's and motorhomes.**
- d. The O'Connor caravan park has recently invested significantly in new and much-improved facilities and could act as a model. The rise in self-drive domestic travel provides an opportunity for the Territory, particularly given the current under investment in these facilities.

Inbound road transport and motorhome accommodation (cont)

- e. **Canberra should strive to become an 'RV Friendly' city.** Canberra Park has applied to increase its number of caravan sites by 25% as they often run at a 100% occupancy with the average visitor staying 4.5 nights.

14. Technology uptake

- a. The 2030 Tourism Strategy discussion paper states there is '*consumer expectations for the delivery of simpler, more cost effective and high-quality tourism services and products*'. Canberra is already blessed with many high quality, federally funded attractions providing free access to visitors and residents. The city also has many reasonably priced privately owned attractions, restaurants, cafes and other facilities.
- b. We believe there are opportunities to explore new technology to improve visitor awareness of and provide information on the city's tourism business and facilities. These could include QR Coded interpretative wayfinding within attractions, along with 'virtual reality' experiences.
- c. **The ACT Government should consider joint cooperative funding to encourage the private sector to embrace new technology. This could include incentives for industry businesses to collectively investigate new technological innovations to enhance their businesses and ultimately grow the visitor economy.**

15. Labour and Skills Shortages

- a. The ACT Government, Federal Government and the private sector are all actively working on this issue. In the ACT major inhibitors to enticing people to Canberra are housing shortages, the cost of rent and cost of living generally which is one of the top five barriers to recruitment.
- b. **We would urge the ACT Government to continue to invest in the 'Living and working in Canberra' campaign, their 'Skilled to Succeed' initiative and the development of a 'Workforce Attraction Strategy'.**
- c. The Leaders Forum commends the Fee Free TAFE initiative jointly funded by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The initiative provides tuition-free vocational education and training to ACT students wanting to train, retrain or upskill. Courses include:
 - Certificate III in Commercial Cookery
 - Certificate III in Hospitality
 - Statement of Attainment - Bar Service
 - Statement of Attainment - Customer Service
 - Statement of Attainment - Food Safety Supervision
 - Statement of Attainment - Responsible Service of Alcohol

16. School Excursions to the ACT

- a. Pre-pandemic, more than 160,000 school students from across Australia visited Canberra every year, bringing over \$130 million to the ACT economy.
- b. The ACT is a well-established national school excursion market. Canberra cannot take the schools excursion market for granted. An increase in the Commonwealth PACER program's financial subsidy for interstate students has just been announced. This will hopefully stimulate more schools visits to the National Capital. As an example:
 - Very remote schools 150 to 499 km from Canberra \$45, to between 2000 and 3,000km away \$750 and over 3,000km \$1,275
- c. **To maximise the schools excursion market a focus on supporting and expanding the ACT school accommodation property market in the ACT is required, as is further investment in digital booking platforms and marketing.**

City Services, the City Renewal Authority and Security

1. Investment in the 'Look of the City and Suburbs'

- a. Rubbish discarded on major road links and not picked up by City Services reflects poorly on the Territory. There has been a noticeable deterioration in the maintenance and upkeep of the city over the past few years. Canberra should be the showcase of the nation.
- b. This also applies to the weeds on roadway gutters and fading and peeling directional signs that reflects badly on Canberra's National Capital status and undermines the pride which the ACT Government is keen to engender among Canberra's growing population.
- c. **Transport Canberra and City Services need an immediate injection of funding to provide the resources to undertake the following:**
 - Remove the accumulation of rubbish along all major roads leading into and within the ACT on an ongoing basis.
 - Clean up graffiti across the city and suburbs. An example is 300 metres of hoardings on Northbourne Avenue covered in graffiti,
 - Urgently replace or repair the 6,000 wayfinding signs identified as a priority by City Services. Many are faded and peeling and are in desperate need of replacement.
 - Address the growth of weeds along roadways and footpaths.

2. Enhance the look of Canberra's city centre

- a. The visitor amenity is critical to the overarching visitor experience. Provide the City Renewal Authority with sufficient funds to revitalise the appearance of the city centre. The pavers are old and present many trip hazards. The overall cleanliness of the precinct and the many deteriorating concrete features need attention. The upgrading of Garema Place is welcome and will be closely watched as this work is undertaken.

3. Policing and security

- a. Demand for police services has exceeded supply in the ACT, spurring the ACT's Chief Police Officer to go public on the dire need for more officers as rising family violence and mental health-related cases put the squeeze on available resources (Canberra Times 21 December 2022).
- b. However, Deputy Commissioner Gaughan would not be drawn on the specifics of how many extra police he would be seeking, and what added funding would be needed to support that request.
- c. The January 2022 Report on Government Services (RoGS) revealed the ACT has a lower operational police-to-population ratio than anywhere else in the country, with 219 police per 100,000 people, compared with the national average of 284. The 2021-22 Productivity Commission confirmed this finding with data showing the ACT had 205 police per 100,000 against the national average of 281.
- d. The tourism and hospitality sector has been impacted by the growth in crime in our sectors. Accommodation properties, including the Hyatt, Kurrajong and Realm hotels have been hit in recent months by a spate of car break ins, dramatically impacting on the ACT's reputation as a safe destination.
- e. A Canberra hotel manager was held at knifepoint and police were unable to respond for several hours. As owners, employees and visitors are the targets of crime this falls directly into why the **wellbeing framework** is so important.

For further information

The Leaders Forum would be happy to provide additional information, or to be involved in further industry consultation exercises in the development of the 2023-2024 ACT Budget.

Contact: Dr David Marshall AM Chair, Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum

DR. DAVID MARSHALL AM

Chair Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum
Chair Canberra Region Tourism Advisory Forum

Phone: (02) 6291 4321 | Mobile: 0418 631 780



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTING PARTNERS



Appendix 1

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum 2023 Board Members

Member	Position
Richie Alan	Representing the Traditional Owners
Dot Barclay	President SKAL ACT & Proprietor Forrest Hotel & Apartments
Sally Barnes	CEO National Capital Authority
Vanessa Brettell	Owner Café Stepping Up representing social enterprise
James Hawketts	General Manager Australian Hotels Association ACT
Graham Catt	CEO Canberra Business Chamber
Rachael Coghlan	Assist Sec Parliamentary Engagement Parliament House
Richard Beere	Chair Destination Southern NSW
Russell Jackson	President National Capital Attractions Association
Jonathan Kobus	Director Visit Canberra
Noel Langdon	Tourism Australia Cultural Signature Series and Sec. CRTLF
David Marshall	Chair Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum
Michael Matthews	CEO Canberra Convention Bureau
Gordon Ramsay	CEO Canberra Museum and Gallery
Dash Rumble	Owner Operator Pilot and Such and Such Restaurants
Katie Russell	CEO Australian Museum and Galleries Association
Emma Shaw	Piquenique Wine representing Canberra District Wines
Gary Stewart	General Manager Canberra Centre
Rob Stefanic	Secretary Parliamentary Services Parliament House/NCETP
Michael Thomson	Head of Aviation Canberra Airport
Olivia Thornton	CEO Cricket ACT representing ACT major participating sports
Marg Wade	Head Canberra Tour Operators Alliance & ATEC Chair
Brian Weir	Lecturer, UC Tourism Program, representing education sector
Stephen Wood	General Manager National Convention Centre

Tourism Leaders Forum Supporting Partners:

University of Canberra / Enterprise Rent-a-Car / The Canberra Centre / Department of Parliamentary Services / Visit Canberra / Canberra Business Chamber / National Convention Centre Canberra / Encore / MIXFM / Parbery Consulting / SPA Accounting