

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum Half Yearly Report: 1 July – 31 December 2024

Introduction

This document reports on actions undertaken by the **Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum** (Leaders Forum) in the period 1 July – 31 December 2024 against the priorities set out in the Forum 2025 – 28 Strategy.

The Leader's Forum is the Canberra Region's peak tourism body. The Forum comprises the heads of associations and organisations representing the tourism and wider industry sectors in the ACT and Canberra Region (see Appendix). The forum is focused on facilitating the growth of the visitor economy and working with Government on policy development and providing expert advice on matters that directly impact our industry sectors. The Forum has strong industry support through its Supporting Partners program (see Appendix).

Executive Summary

The Leaders Forum) undertook the following activities during the first six months of the 2024 - 25 financial year.

1. Five Tourism Advisory Forums were held at the Convention Centre over the past 6 months with 15 guest speakers. These Forums attracted an average of 165 attendees, thanks to Visit Canberra and our 18 Supporting Partners.
2. Many meetings were held with ACT MLA's and political leaders leading up to the ACT Election on Saturday 19 October. Leaders Forum members also met with ACT Directorate heads and senior executives, and many tourism attraction owners and operators. Major topics of discussion included the ACT Election and the changes to the make up of the new Assembly, and the proposed merger of four ACT Directorates into two.
3. The major focus of the Leaders Forum was the ACT Government's initiative to commence consultation on the design and functionality of the planned new NCCC and Entertainment pavilion. The Government was urged to complete the business case for this precinct and fast track the construction of a new Civic pool in Commonwealth Park to free up the space for this development.
4. Other matters of concern were the over regulation of our industry, the high costs of doing business, the slow progress made in the area of regulatory reform, the reduction of red tape and stimulation of the night-time economy.

5. Still to be addressed by Government is the unkempt state of the city centre and surrounding suburbs and the litter accumulating along the approach roads to the National Capital and the proliferation of graffiti across the ACT.
6. In the sports sector, the development of a new Canberra Stadium at the AIS in Bruce, the lack of netball, basketball and tennis courts and the degrading of sporting infrastructure across the Territory was raised as a major inhibitor to the growth of participation sport and the hosting of major events.
7. The Leaders Forum actively engaged in discussion on the antisocial behaviour now rampant in the city centre and some suburbs. Discussion with ACT Policing and Government Minister's will hopefully result in a solution.
8. Discussions were held with National Institution Directors on funding pressures and planned capital works investment. The Leaders Forum also engaged regularly with the NCA Chief Executive
9. The Leaders Forum is a member of the Australian Chamber – Tourism Board and serves on the ACT 'Business and Economic Development Stakeholder Consultative Forum' convened by Kareena Arthy.
10. Forum Members attended many business forums, multiple functions, exhibition openings and award ceremonies. Details on all these activities are detailed in the following report.

Half Yearly Report

This report is divided into 6 sections to align with the Leaders Forum Strategic Plan:

Industry Forums, Industry Leadership, Policy Development, Industry Liaison, Media Coverage, and Governance & Management.

1. Industry leadership

Canberra Region Tourism Advisory Forums

Forums were held:

- Friday 2 August
- Thursday 5 September
- Friday 4 October
- Wednesday 6 November
- Monday 2 December

Speakers at the Tourism Advisory Forums were:

1. Andrew Barr MLA: ACT Chief Minister and Minister for Tourism
2. Neil Hobbs: Chair Canberra Art Biennial
3. Rhys Treloar: Tourism Manager Sapphire Coast Destination Marketing
4. Chris Steel MLA: Minister for Transport, Planning and Skills & Training
5. John Hart OAM: Executive Chair Australian Chamber - Tourism
6. Ross Triffitt: Executive Branch Manager Events ACT
7. Her Excellency Vicki Treadell: High Commissioner of the United Kingdom
8. Karen Doran: CEO National Capital Authority
9. Jodie Cunningham: Director of the Craft + Design Canberra Festival
10. Rachel Yangoyan: QantasLink CEO
11. Doug Boudry: ACT Deputy Chief Police Officer
12. Darren Pearce: CEO Canberra Racing Club Thoroughbred Park
13. Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher: Federal Finance Minister and ACT Senator
14. Kathrine McMahon: Director National Museum of Australia
15. Jonathan Kobus PSM, Director Visit Canberra

The Leaders Forum hosted a Supporting Partners cocktail function with Forum members and Supporting Partners in November 2024.

Visit Canberra Conference and Workshop forums

- The Destination Canberra Conference held on 24 July at the Rex Hotel attracted around 200 tourism industry members including a number from the Leaders Forum.
- Leaders Forum members also attended the Canberra & Region Visitors Centre and National Capital Exhibition open night on Thursday 5 September.
- A 'Special Tourism Workshop' was hosted by Visit Canberra on how industry members could deliver a better experience to Canberra visitors on 30 October.

2. Industry Leadership

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forums held over July to December 2024.

Two meetings were held: Friday 2 August and Wednesday 6 November

The Leaders Forum members are joined at each Forum by executives from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. These executives include Kareena Arthy, Deputy Director-General, along with Kate Starick, Executive Group Manager, Economic Development Division, Daniel Bailey, Executive Group Manager, Operations, Economic Development, Karen Stewart-Moore Executive Branch Manager, Communications & Engagement.

Business and Economic Development Industry Stakeholder Consultative Forum

- The ACT Economic Development Directorate convenes a 'Business and Economic Development Stakeholder Consultative Forum' to advise the Government on all matters relating to business activity in the Territory. The Leaders Forum was one of seven membership organisations involved. This Forum met on 21 August.

Issues Addressed by the Leaders Forum

ACT Related Matters

Major Projects Canberra

- In August the Leaders Forum were briefed by Major Projects Canberra on the progress of Stages 2A and 2B of light rail to Woden

Transport Canberra and City Services: the Look of the City and Territory

- On 29 July members of the Leaders forum met with Transport Canberra executives as a follow-up to our meeting with Minister Steel earlier in the year.
- During the year the Leaders Forum continued to engage with Minister for City Services Tara Cheyne and her office on the proliferation of rubbish accumulating on the sides of Canberra approach roads and main thoroughfares across the Territory, and the replacement of fading, peeling and graffitied directional and specific tourist signage.
- The Leaders Forum again lobbied the Government to significantly increase the resources devoted to maintaining the Territory's urban environment.
- In September TCCS advised both the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) has been reviewing the vegetation within the Nature Reserves surrounding prominent lookouts at Red Hill, Mount Ainslie and Black Mountain and are assessing these sites to balance the environmental values on site with the need to maintain views.
- TCCS briefed the Tourism Leaders Forum's November meeting on the new Myway2 ticketing system and the benefits to visitors to the National Capital

ACT Policing Crime Related Matters

- Leaders Forum members attended an ACT Police Consultative Group Meeting with Deputy Police Commissioner Lee Scott and other officers on 21 August. This followed the 4 week 24/7 'City Safe' police operation in Civic and Braddon across July/August to address crime and antisocial behaviour.
- The Deputy Chief Police Officer Doug Boudry also addressed the Tourism Advisory Forum on 6 November
- In December the 'City Action Group' met with Police Minister Paterson to discuss anti-social behaviour still prevalent in the city. Attending was Leaders Forum members Gary Steward and David Marshall

ACT political meetings

- Prior to the ACT Election on 19 October Leaders Forum members met with the Leaders of the ACT Labor Party, ACT Liberal Party, the ACT Greens and Independents for Canberra
- Leaders Forum members met with ACT Chief Minister's staff throughout the year on matters impacting on the tourism and hospitality sectors the Leaders Forum represents.
- On an ongoing basis, the Chair briefed members of the ACT Labor Government, Greens and ACT Liberals on Leaders Forum activities, policy development and related matters impacting our industry sectors.
- Many Leaders Forum members also met with ACT MLA's representing their respective memberships.
- A meeting was convened with Rebecca Vassarotti Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services relating the antisocial behaviour in the CBD.

ACT Commissioner for International Engagement

- The Leaders Forum members met with the ACT Commissioner for International Engagement Brendan Smyth to discuss the trade missions undertaken to India, Fiji, Singapore, New Zealand and the United States during the year.
- Leaders Forum members attended the Chief Minister's Diplomatic Reception on 9 December hosted by Commissioner Smyth at The Marion.

National Zoo and Aquarium

- In October the Leaders Forum again lobbied the ACT Government to clear the build up of vegetation around the perimeter of the National Zoo, in particular along the Tuggeranong Parkway. ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer Rohan Scott was proactive in visiting the Zoo with key ESA executives to review the risks and provide solutions to the current situation.

National Wine Show

- On 15 September Leaders Forum members met with the Chair and executives for a briefing on the National Wine Festival planned to follow this prestigious National Wine Show in June 2025.
- A special meeting was convened on 18 December to finalise the launch of the new National Wine Festival in Canberra in March for the Festival to be run in June 2025

University of Canberra

- Meetings throughout the year were held with executives of UC, including Acting VC Stephen Parker, Chancellor Lisa Paul, Professor Uwe Dulleck Executive Dean in the Faculty of Business, Government and Law, Professor Lorne Cummings Head of the Canberra Business School, Brent Jackson MBA Director of the Canberra Business School, and Martin Greenwood Director of the Centre for a Better Canberra.
- The Leaders Forum arranged a meeting with the GM AHA ACT and Uwe Dulleck on a new hotel research project, and Questacon's Jo White connected with Uwe on science based opportunities.

ACT Inquiry into Micro, Small & Medium Businesses in the ACT Region

- The ACT Government is yet to respond to the recommendations flowing from its 'Inquiry into Micro, Small and Medium Businesses in the ACT Region'. Last year the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality, tabled the Committee's report that made 12 recommendations relating to the regulatory environment, ACT Government assistance, and building skills and training opportunities.

Destination Southern NSW

- Leaders Forum members Brian Weir and Richard Everson attended the Sapphire Coast Tourism Industry Briefing and Product Showcase in Merimbula on 4 December

Wollaroo Solar Farm

- Destination Southern NSW General Manager Richard Everson and Leaders Forum Chair David Marshall visited the site of this proposed Solar farm on 15 July and met with winery owners Nick O'Leary and Brindabella Hills Winery owner Michael Anderson.
- Richard also attended the NSW Independent Planning Commission Public Meeting on Thursday, 18 July 2024 in Murrumbateman and prepared a submission on behalf of Destination Southern NSW expressing concern at the development.

Letters of Support

- The Leaders Forum supported the 'WISE Sustainability Technology Demonstration Project' to install sensors and software to assist hotels to reduce energy and plan for electrification transition.
- In October the Forum supported the NCA's 'Drone Show on the Australia Day weekend' submission for a 2024 tourism award
- In November the Forum supported the ACT Government's application for federal funding through the Urban Precincts and Partnerships Program for the Canberra Convention and Entertainment Centre Precinct

National Matters

National Capital Authority

- Regular meetings were held during the year with the NCA CEO to canvass a number of matters pertaining to the Parliamentary Triangle.

Australian Chamber – Tourism

- The Chair represents the Canberra Business Chamber on the Australian Chamber – Tourism Board chaired by John Hart. The Board met twice over the past six months and produced a number of papers and submissions on issue impacting the tourism and associated sectors in Australia:

National Cultural Attractions

- Meetings were convened throughout the year with some of the National Institution Directors to explore the many issues facing these organisations.

Meetings with Federal Politicians and Government Departments attended by Tourism Leaders Forum Members:

- On 11 September the Capital Region Showcase at Parliament House arranged by the Parliamentary Friends of the Capital Region, the NCETP, the NCAA and supported by the Department of Parliamentary Services.
- The Canberra Business Chamber CEO and Leaders Forum Chair met with Senator Pocock's office on 19 September to discuss various matters relating to the ACT Government's infrastructure framework and the request for Federal Government support funding.

3. Policy Development

ACT Government related matters

Run up to the 2024 ACT Election

- The Leaders Forum produced a '2024 ACT Election Manifesto' outlining priorities for action during the next four-year term of Government. The Manifesto was provided to all ACT candidates. This document included:
 1. Infrastructure
 2. Skills and workforce
 3. Business support and
 4. Marketing
- The Australian Hotels Association ACT and the Leaders Forum ran round tables for candidates in two of the ACT's five electorates leading up to election day. Regular meetings were held with AHA ACT General Manager Chris Garfield to ensure our joint objectives were aligned.
- Leaders Forum members met over lunch with each party leader and some candidates prior to the election: ACT Labor, ACT Liberals, ACT Greens and Independents for Canberra.
- Forum members attended the Canberra Business Chamber Election Forum on Tuesday 30 August and participated in a number of other meetings and discussions arranged by other organisations prior to 19 October.
- Chamber CEO Greg Harford also convened two meetings with leaders of the key representative body heads in the ACT to discuss policy objectives and strategic issues of major interest to these industry groups.
- The Leaders Forum was delighted when all three ACT political parties announced their support for a new Convention Centre to be located on the current ACT Pool site.

Post ACT Election Meetings

- Over November and December Leaders Forum members met with MLA's from the ACT Liberal Party, ACT Greens, ACT Independents and some ACT Labor Ministers and backbenches, providing each MLA and their Advisors with a copy of the Leaders Forum Manifesto detailing to the key priorities of the sectors we represent.

Direct International Flights

- In July Qantas gave its strongest indication yet it would introduce direct Canberra Singapore flights next year utilising its new A321XLR aircraft.
- QantasLink CEO Rachel Yangoyan addressed the Tourism Advisory Forum on 6 November.
- Fiji Airways now conducts three flights a week to Nadi and is considering lifting this to 4 a week in the new year due to increased demand..
- Indonesian carrier Batik Air commenced three direct flights from Canberra to Bali on 14 June this year and sadly announced it would suspend its services temporarily on 16 October.

ACT Events

- A number of meetings throughout the year were held with Events ACT to discuss their need for more funding, events timings, traffic management issues and the promotion of the ACT Events calendar to Tourism Leaders Forum members.

ACT Sport

- The issue of the lack of sporting facilities across the Territory was again discussed and upgrades to changeroom facilities to many are required to accommodate female participation.

4. Industry Liaison

Industry Members of the Leaders Forum were attendees at industry meetings, in particular:

- Canberra Convention Bureau membership networking nights.
- Canberra Business Chamber monthly Business after Business functions, and Kindred Organisation network meetings.
- The CBC's Business Roundtables: guests were David Pocock, Tara Cheyne, Elizabeth Lee, Senator Katy Gallagher
- SKAL monthly industry lunches.
- NCAA Members Meetings
- AHA Awards Dinner on 30 September
- Canberra Museum and Gallery Exhibition Openings.

- The Canberra Glassworks exhibitions
- Craft + Design Canberra exhibition functions and launch of the Craft + Design Canberra Festival on 29 August.
- National Attractions exhibition openings at MoAD, the NGA and NMA

Leaders Forum members attended further industry events and functions, including:

- The NCA's Xmas in July Festival in Parks Place
- The National Portrait Gallery's Darling Portrait Prize and National Photographic Portrait prize industry night on 9 July
- MoAD 'Strengthening Australian Democracy event with Hon Clare O'Neill MP, Minister for Home Affairs on 15 July
- National Film and Sound Archive Ghost Trees Installation launch on 9 August
- The JuiceIT 2024 'Next is Now' Technology Conference at Hotel Realm on 5 September
- The 'Tartans and Thistles: Burns Club 100 Years' exhibition launch at CMAG on 14 September.
- The Chair toured the National Dinosaur Museum Gold Creek with General Manager Carol Arulantu on 3 September
- The Chair toured the Canberra Contemporary Art Space on the lakefront on Friday 6 September with Director Janice Falsone
- Leaders Forum members attended the memorial service for Terry Snow at the Canberra Theatre on Monday 16 September
- Leaders Forum members attended the reopening of the refurbished public area of the Royal Australian Mint on 17 September
- The Chair met with Stuart Jeffress the new General Manager of the National Arboretum on 19 September
- The Canberra Business Chamber convened a meeting with the heads of major business associations on 26 September attended by the Chair.
- The welcome to the Indian junior cricketers on 30 September playing in the UC Cup
- The AHA ACT 2024 Hospitality and Accommodation Awards on 30 September
- On 25 October the Hyatt Hotel celebrated its Centenary with a Gala Cocktail function.
- A preview dinner at Chris Lucas's new Carlotta Restaurant on 17 October
- The University of Canberra's Aitkin Lecture with guest speaker Professor Chris Wallace on 28 October
- Attendance at the Diwali Gala Dinner at the Hyatt on 8 November
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- The Craft + Design Canberra Festival launch and exhibition openings on 31 October
- The Canberra Convention Bureau's AGM on 7 November
- UC's 'Shaping Canberra: A civic showcase of community-focussed research and partnerships at CBRIN on 12 November
- A meeting with Anne Denzer Director of the National Folk Festival on 13 November
- Canberra Racing Club's 'Canberra Community Chest Official Luncheon, on 24 November supporting 12 charity and community partners
- The 'Nature Photographer of the Year' opening at the National Archives of Australia on 27 November
- National Film and Sound Archive celebrating 40 years in their Acton deco building on 13 November
- The National Capital Authority's community forum outlining their strategic plans at the NLA on 14 November
- The CMAG exhibition opening of their Stromlo to the Stars exhibition with Nobel Laureate Brian Schmidt on 18 November
- The address by US Ambassador Caroline Kennedy at the National Press Club on 18 November
- The Salvation Army's Christmas Thank You Morning Tea on 20 November
- The CEW Bean Foundation Dinner at the AWM with Governor-General Her Excellency Sam Mostyn AC on 20 November
- Canberra Racing Club's Canberra Community Chest & Premiership Awards Luncheon on 24 November
- The '2024 Behind the Lines': No Guts, No Glory exhibition launch on 28 November at MoAD.
- The National Portrait Gallery's opening of the Carol Jerrems Portraits exhibition on 29 November
- The Canberra Region Tourism Awards on Friday 29 November.
- The PM X11 Cricket dinner on Friday 29 November 2024 at Parliament House
- HMAS Canberra's 'Freedom of Entry Parade' through the city to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the ship's commissioning on 30 November
- The ACT Chief Minister's 'Festive Season Diplomatic Reception' on 9 December at The Marion
- The 50th Anniversary of the DOMA Group was held on 12 December
- The opening of Pompeii exhibition on 12 December at the National Museum of Australia
- The launch of the Festival of Speed on Friday 20 December.

5. Media Coverage: interviews and activities

The Chair conducted 22 media interviews on tourism related issues on Radio 2CC, ABC Radio, amplifyFM (MIXFM and 104.7), and articles in the Canberra Times, the Riot ACT, and appearances on ABC and WIN Television news.

6. Governance & Management

Forum Review

- The Board continued to implement the strategic review recommendations made by Richard Beer from Fastrack into the Canberra Region's Tourism Leaders Forum's operations, the first since it was launched in 2018.

Forum Website: <https://www.tlforum.com.au/>

- The Forum's website continues to be developed thanks to Supporting Partner Parbery Consulting. Summaries of the monthly Tourism Advisory Forums are a key feature as are all the dates of the 2025 Tourism Advisory Forums

Appreciation

My sincere appreciation to the members of the Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum who provide their time freely for the benefit of our industry sectors.

Dr David Marshall AM
Chair Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum
31 December 2024

Appendix

The 2024 Leaders Forum Membership

Member	Position
Dot Barclay	President SKAL ACT & Proprietor Forrest Hotel & Apartments
Karen Doran	CEO National Capital Authority
Vanessa Brettell	Proprietor Café Stepping Stone representing Social Enterprises
Chris Garfield	General Manager Australian Hotels Association ACT
Greg Harford	CEO Canberra Business Chamber
Richard Everson	General Manager Destination Southern NSW
Naomi Dale	President National Capital Attractions Association
Mandy Hill	President Canberra Women in Business
Jonathan Kobus	Director Visit Canberra
David Marshall	Chair Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum
Michael Matthews	CEO Canberra Convention Bureau
Michael Milton	Australian Paralympic skier and tourism business owner
Gordon Ramsay	CEO Cultural Facilities Corporation
Dash Rumble	Owner Pilot Restaurant representing the restaurant/cafe sector
Katie Russell	CEO Australian Museum and Galleries Association
Emma Shaw	Piquenique Wine representing Canberra District Wine Industry
Gary Stewart	General Manager The Canberra Centre
Michael Thomson	Head of Aviation Canberra Airport
Olivia Thornton	CEO Cricket ACT representing sporting associations
Selina Walker	Ngunnawal woman representing Indigenous communities
Brian Weir	Lecturer, UC Tourism Program, representing education sector
Jo White	Director Questacon representing the National Attractions
Stephen Wood	General Manager National Convention Centre Canberra

Tourism Advisory Forum Supporting Partners

Our Supporting Partners make a significant contribution to the success of the Advisory Forums and the important work undertaken by the Leaders Forum.

Visit Canberra	The University of Canberra
Canberra Racing Club – Thoroughbred Park	The Canberra Centre
Hostplus	Gow-Gates
King O'Malleys	Canberra Convention Bureau
Cricket ACT	Canberra Airport
Department of Parliamentary Services	Parbery Consulting
SPA Accounting	Canberra Business Chamber
National Convention Centre	Hyatt Hotel Canberra
Encore	MIXFM
Heibel Photography	