**DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH**

**08 June 2023**

**Night-time economy and public safety**

Start

**Introduction – Night-time Economy**

Thank you, Madam speaker. Canberra is a vibrant community with much to offer – from our world-class artists and performers to our classic speakeasy’s . Canberra has so much potential to be national nightlife destination.

Minister Cheyne’s work on the Night-time economy is something that live music enthusiasts, foodies, and small business are very excited for, and I commend all of the work that she has done in this space.

 The ACT Government is currently consulting with the community and industry on a night time economy strategy, which aims to support a safe, vibrant and thriving nightlife in Canberra as part of the recommendations provided in the Better Regulation Report 2022.

**The Focus – Public Safety**

As we pursue our night-time economy strategy, iI view a key and critical part to a good night out, being getting home safely at the end of it. This is why I bring this motion to the Assembly today, as I think that public safety considerations are critically important to the success of the night-time economy work. Canberra’s nightlife provides endless opportunities for working and socialising, but the success of the night-time economy is fundamentally tied to the perceptions of public safety.

Frances Crimmins, CEO of YWCA Canberra shared with me that their recent survey results indicate that for women in particular, their personal safety is a key consideration when choosing to go out with friends or take on late-night shifts at work.

The 2019, YWCA Our lives: women in the ACT survey found that 54% of women reported feeling unsafe in public spaces after dark, which is exasperated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with a disability. Ms Crimmins highlighted that “*public safety must be a core consideration for the ACT Government when taking steps to further develop Canberra’s night-time economy.”*

**Stats – ACT policing**

There is encouraging progress in this space, Madam Speaker, with figures released by the Productivity Commission this month highlighting the ACT as the safest jurisdiction in Australia with the lowest numbers of physical assault than any other state or territory.

Whilst this is promising, it still a clear that the ACT’s night-time precincts do attract more crime. In the period between January 1st 2023 – March 31st 2023 ACT Policing crime statistics list 65 assaults, 10 sexual assaults, 33 property damages and 197 “other” offences in Canberra City, these are most commonly associated with drunken behaviour. This area had a permanent population of just under five thousand according to ABS data.

In comparison, the nearby suburb of Turner has a similar population around five thousand and by comparison ACT Policing statistic list only 6 assaults, 2 sexual assaults, 12 property damages and 19 “other” offences.

Whilst we are heading in the right direction when it comes to safety there is room for improvement, and I hope we can take this opportunity during the consultation process for a night-time economy to improve safety after dark in Canberra. The ACT has a real opportunity to ensure everyone feels safe and welcome.

**The Aim – Increasing Safety**

The key to a good night out, Madame Speaker, is returning home safely at the end of it. The night-time economy work that the ACT Government is doing is a great time to progress discussions around public safety and ensure that a safe and welcoming Canberra nightlife is at the forefront of our night-time economy strategy.

**The Initiative - Purple Flag Accreditation**

To make our nightlife precincts more safe and secure, I propose through this motion that the ACT Government explore the potential for Purple Flag accreditations in Canberra’s nightlife precincts of Civic and Braddon, as well as other areas as part of the ongoing consultation and development of the ACT’s nightlife.

The Purple Flag initiative accredits nightlife precincts that meet a set of best-practice standards in safety measures, access to transportation, adequate lighting as well as diverse food and beverage offerings. Waving the purple flag signifies to the community that the area meets safety, social and arts and cultural standards!

Sydney used the purple flag initiative to revive its nightlife after the COVID19 lockdowns – with so much success that the NSW government is now looking to expand the scheme across the state.

If accredited we would join 90 locations across the world, including Sydney, Stockholm and Dublin. All of these locations have reported benefits including a raised profile and improved public image, reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour and a more successful mixed-use economy in the long-term.

TGhe adoption of Purple Flag accreditation has seen real safety benefits for the precincts it accredits. The necessary standards needed to wave the purple flag, means that an area has requirements to socialise and work in a safe environment that celebrates diversity with sufficient access to late-night public transport.

Chrystina Stanford, CEO of the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre said, “The Canberra Rape Crisis is really pleased to see this important initiative being presented. We fully support the Purple Flag accreditation being adopted in the ACT and also support the leadership from government in progressing strategies that have an end goal of keeping our community safety.”

**Conclusion**

Canberra has so much potential to be a national destination for our night-time economy – from everything a foodie could dream of, to those who want to hit the dance floor, go to the theatre or see live entertainment! I want to make sure that as we work on a night-time strategy, that we ensure public safety is a core part of the consultation and consideration. Key to a good night out, is everyone returning home safely at the end of the night - the night-time economy work the ACT Government is doing, is a great opportunity to progress discussions around public safety and ensure Canberra at night is a welcoming and safe destination. I hope we can fly the purple flag and show the world that we are a world class destination that meets high standards of excellence in vibrancy, diversity and safety at night!

**Closing speech**

On behalf of Dr Paterson, I would like to thank you all for passing this motion. I am sure we all look forward to updates after the night-time economy consultations – and hope we will soon by flying the purple flag. We all know Canberra has a lot to offer, and I hope that we can share our favourite spots with even more people!