

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum Chair's Report: 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022

The **Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum** is the Canberra Region's peak tourism body. Our Board comprises the heads of associations and organisations representing the tourism and wider industry sectors in the ACT and Canberra Region, all focussed on growing the visitor economy in the ACT and Southern NSW.

Our 2021-2022 Board Membership.

Member	Position
Richie Alan	Representing the Traditional Owners
Sally Barnes	CEO National Capital Authority
Anthony Brierley	General Manager Australian Hotels Association ACT
Graham Catt	CEO Canberra Business Chamber
Ritu Clementi	Head, Global Client Group, Asia Pacific Region Amex
Rachael Coghlan	Head Parliament House Cultural Strategy & Experience representing Arts Events
Sean Haylan	General Manager Destination Southern NSW
Sheena Ireland	Chair ACT Businesswomen's Network
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 CMAG representing the Canberra Arts Community
Graeme Shaw	Owner Shaw Vineyard Estate representing Canberra Wines
Gary Stewart	General Manager Canberra Centre
Rob Stefanic	Secretary Parliamentary Services Parliament House & Chair National Capital Education Tourism Project
Michael Thomson	Head of Aviation Canberra Airport
Olivia Thornton	CEO Cricket ACT
Marg Wade	Canberra Small Tour Operators Collective & ATEC Chair
Brian Weir	Lecturer, UC Tourism Program, representing education sector
Stephen Wood	General Manager National Convention Centre

As a Board the Tourism Leaders Forum hosted a number of our Canberra Region Tourism Advisory Forums at the National Convention Centre Canberra and online during the ACT Covid lockdown. These Forums brought all sections of the industry together and provided a platform for some of our country's most influential leaders to brief our industry on all matters relating to how we should cope and survive this tumultuous time.

July 2021-June 2022 Meeting Dates:

Canberra Region Tourism Advisory Forums dates

These Forums were mostly held face-to-face at the National Convention Centre however three of the meetings, due to the ACT Covid outbreak and lockdown, we held online. Our July 2021 Tourism Advisory Forum was subsequently cancelled with the ACT Chief Minister and ACT Chief Health Officer as Covid cases emerged in the Territory for the first time in over 12 months.

2021

- Monday 2 August
- Friday 13 August (Special WebEx Forum with Hon Dan Tehan MP)
- Wednesday 1 September (Webex)
- Tuesday 5 October (Webex)
- Tuesday 9 November
- Monday 6 December

2022

- Thursday 3 February
- Tuesday 8 March
- Thursday 7 April
- Monday 9 May
- Monday 6 June, the Forum was held in association with the Canberra Region Tourism Conference hosted by Visit Canberra

Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forums Dates:

2021

-
- Friday 9 July
- Friday 16 July (Webex with Chief Minister)
- Monday 2 August
- Wednesday 11 August (Strategy session)
- Tuesday 24 August (via ZOOM)
- Wednesday 1 September
- Tuesday 5 October
- Wednesday 20 October
- Tuesday 9 November
- Monday 6 December

2022

- Thursday 3 February
- Tuesday 8 March
- Thursday 7 April
- Monday 9 May
- Monday 6 June: no meeting due to Visit Canberra one day conference

Once again this year Kareena Arthy, Deputy Director-General, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, 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 and Daniel Riley, Senior Director, Strategic Policy, Economic Development attended our Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum Board meetings. This ongoing liaison with senior ACT Government personnel added significantly to Board discussions on a range of matters surrounding the sectors our Leaders Forum represents.

During the year Jonathan Kobus stepped into the role Kate Starick held as she took long service leave, and Morgan Campbell took over Jonathan's role as acting head of Visit Canberra, and thus Morgan attended the Tourism Leaders Forums.

Canberra Region Tourism Advisory Forum Guest Speakers 2020/2021

- Andrew Barr MLA: ACT Chief Minister and Minister for Tourism
- Brendan Smyth: ACT Commissioner for International engagement
- Hon Dan Tehan MP, Federal Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment
- Professor Peter Collignon AM: Infectious Diseases Physician
- Dr Mat Trinca AM: Director National Museum of Australia
- Nick Mitzevich: Director National Gallery of Australia
- Phillipa Harrison: Managing Director Tourism Australia
- John Hart OAM: Executive Chair Australian Chamber – Tourism and Board Member Tourism Australia
- James Goodwin: CEO Australian Airports Association
- Malcolm Snow: Chief Executive City Renewal Authority
- Jonathan Kobus: Director Visit Canberra
- Michael Thomson: Head of Aviation Canberra Airport
- Michael Matthews: CEO Canberra Convention Bureau
- His Excellency Kwok Fook Seng: High Commissioner of Singapore
- Patrick McIntyre: Director National Film and Sound Archives
- Garry Watson OAM: National Capital Educational Tourism Project
- Leigh Gordon AO, CSM: CEO Royal Australian Mint
- Andrew McKellar: CEO Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Karen Quinlan AM: Director of the National Portrait Gallery Australia
- Ritu Clementi: Member of Amex's Global Client Group, Asia Pacific Region
- Professor Paddy Nixon: Vice Chancellor University of Canberra

I would extend my sincere thanks to these leaders and experts in their respective areas of responsibility, who provided their invaluable perspectives on topics as

varied as coping with Covid, through to the opportunities presenting themselves for our industry sectors during a very difficult year.

The meetings at the National Convention Centre attracted up to 150 industry leaders each month, and the Board very much appreciated General Manager Stephen Wood and his team, including Encore, for hosting these meetings. I would also sincerely thank Visit Canberra and Jonathan Kobus for sponsoring these very important Forums.

Tourism Advisory Forum Supporting Partners

In addition to Visit Canberra, the NCCC and Encore, I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to our Supporting Partners:

- The University of Canberra
- Enterprise Rent-a-Car
- The Canberra Centre
- Canberra Park
- The Canberra Business Chamber
- MIXFM
- Parbery Consulting
- SPA Accounting

These partners have enabled to Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum to undertake the extensive work outlined in this report, and in particular to support the holding of the popular monthly Canberra Region Tourism Advisory Forums.

MIXFM, as a Supporting Partner, provided the Tourism Leaders Forum with a significant schedule of radio ads promoting the benefits of every aspect of the tourism and hospitality sectors to the ACT and region economy and to the wider community

Other Activities

Covid and Liaison with the ACT Government

On 12 July 2021 the Tourism Leaders Forum submitted a detailed report to the ACT Chief Minister and Kareena Arthy on the 'Impact of Sydney's Lockdown on Canberra's Tourism, Hospitality and Aviation Industries.

On Thursday 12 August 2021 the ACT went into lockdown, initially for 7 days. On Friday 13 August Kareena Arthy initiated a daily and then three-times-a-week WebEx Forum with industry leaders to quickly identify issues in the business community relating to the lockdown. These meetings explored strategies for coping with Covid during this period and the significant financial downturn almost all business sectors were experiencing across the ACT.

The Tourism Leaders Forum, in association with other private sector members, prepared a number of papers for the ACT Government to consider as part of this process. One paper, on Friday 8 October sought guidance on a number of issues our respective sectors were seeking clarification on.

On Friday 15 October 2021 the ACT Government commenced lifting the lockdown following strong community support for vaccines, being on track to lead the world in vaccination coverage. Business Minister Tara Cheyne then arranged for tourism and business leaders to participate weekly in a new 'Post Lockdown Business Recovery and Transition Forum' over November and December 2021. The Forum examined issues faced by business with the reopening of the ACT economy slowly coming out of lockdown. The first meeting was held on Friday 5 November and meetings ceased on Friday 17 December 2021.

The Tourism Leaders Forum, along with a few of the private sector members attending these meetings, prepared a three-page 'Post Covid Recovery Plan'. This strategy document dated 16 November 2021 outlined the way forward for the Minister to consider. Also the Minister created an ACT Government Outdoor Activation Taskforce to support restaurants, cafes and other businesses to utilise public outdoor spaces near their premises once the lockdown ended.

On 28 August 2021 the Tourism Leaders Forum prepared a 12-page submission for the ACT Chief Minister recommending an array of business support packages for struggling businesses. This document was supported by specific examples of each sector's membership and the financial stress they were experiencing.

The Tourism Leaders Forum also prepared a 'Strategic Roadmap out of Lockdown' for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate to consider on 27 August 2021

The Tourism Leaders Forum also produced a paper for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in December 2021 recommending a strategic approach to enhancing the communication with the wider business community in 2022

On Thursday 14 October Chair of the Tourism Leaders Forum appeared before the ACT Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into the Pandemic Response. This public hearing reviewed how the ACT Government handled all aspects of its decision making through to the how effective financial support was for the wider business community.

The Tourism Leaders Forum met with Minister Cheyne on 17 February 2022 to discuss a number of matters including ongoing financial support for businesses impacted by Covid, the impact of public service work -from-home directives, ACT Budget allocation to tourism marketing, the Minister's 'Statement of Ambition for the Arts', Government taxes and charges on business viability and the Government's Regulatory Reform agenda.

The head of the Regulatory Reform Taskforce, Sam Engele, addressed the Tourism Leaders Forum on Monday 9 May 2022 providing an update on the progress of their 'Discovery Report' detailing its findings and proposed reform agenda

Issues discussed during the year:

Business Support

- ACT and Federal Government financial support for industry sectors impacted by border closures and health-imposed restrictions, particularly the ACT Business Support Package Program and the ACT Hardship Grants
- Urging the ACT Government to continue to support business in 2022 when residents' hesitancy to shop and attend events became a 'self-imposed' lockdown impacting on the tourism and hospitality sectors
- The impact of ACT isolation and quarantine health requirements on business staffing levels across the Territory
- More Federal Government financial support for the National Attractions
- The serious financial dilemmas faced by the aviation industry, and the recovery process as flights resume. Also the potential reluctance of Singapore Airlines and Qatar to recommence flights into the National Capital
- The planning for the Singapore Trade Mission, postponed in February 2022 due to Omicron outbreaks in both countries. This was rescheduled to the first week of June.
- International Engagement Commissioner Brendan Smyth kept the Leaders Forum informed in his role as Commercial Tenancy Mediator (Business Commissioner) to assist commercial landlords and tenants to negotiate mutually agreeable outcomes during the Covid lockdowns

Communication

- Communication between the states and the confusion on how each jurisdiction is dealing with Covid lockdowns and hotspots
- Requesting the Tourism Leaders Forum, and business generally, have a seat at the table when the Chief Health Officer decided to impose various restrictions on our sectors. Some decisions could have been enhanced with input from business experts
- Clarification on the criteria ACT Health uses to close a business if a Covid case arises

Covid Restrictions and Isolation Regulations

- How the vaccine rollout was handled, including the contentious mandatory vaccination requirements not being enforced in the ACT in mid 2021
- The lack of RAT'S availability and lengthy delays in receiving PCR results experienced in the first quarter of 2022
- After the ACT Government implemented changes to quarantine requirements for household contacts in late April 2022, they sought feedback from the tourism sectors and others on an updated Assessment Tool prior to its publication

ACT Events

- The impact of Covid on ACT events, particularly Floriade and Enlighten. The costs of engaging an interstate contractor to provide the equipment to project onto the National Institutions was almost prohibitive and further discussion will take place on having a local company provide this service
- The future of the National Folk Festival and Summernats
- The inability to host business events in the ACT
- Clarification on the square meter rules as they relate to meetings and events space
- Increasing the ACT Government's Major Events Funding, including a contingency for bidding to host major national events
- Discussions on the appointment of a consultancy to develop an events strategy for the ACT
- Funding for ACT sports generally was the subject of considerable discussion again this year, particularly the Kanga Cup

Workforce issues

- The critical issue of workforce shortages and workforce attraction
- The ACT Government's planned workforce attraction campaign
- The lack of international university students and their inability to return to the ACT
- The promotion to entice overseas students, backpackers and migrants into the ACT
- Australian States banning or dissuading school excursions to the National Capital.
- A plea to have public servants returning to the workplace as soon as possible
- Reversing the 'work from home if it suits you and your employer' to better explain what should occur: 'Go to work if it suits you and your employer'.

Border Closures and the Canberra Region

- State border closures and the impact on our sectors
- How to cope with all States and the Northern Territory banning travel to and from NSW and the ACT for weeks
- Cross Border issues and their impact on Destination Southern NSW and Victorian visitations
- In late April 2022 NSW Cross-Border Commissioner James McTavish initiated a survey to determine the impact of border closures on cross border community members. The Tourism Leaders Forum Board members were invited to participate in this research.

Infrastructure

- Discussions were held on the status of the Kingston Arts Precinct now Geocon were no longer developing the site
- The business case for a new National Convention Centre and support for a temporary structure to expand the exhibition floor space
- The impact of the raising of London Circuit as part of Light Rail 2A would reduce the flow of traffic crossing Commonwealth Ave Bridge by 80% over the next 2 years, requiring a detailed traffic management plan to be developed
- The proposal to develop an Indigenous Cultural Centre within the Parliamentary Triangle
- The state of the AIS Arena and the urgency to upgrade the facility, with the Federal Government committing \$11.4m during the 2022 election campaign for this purpose
- Malcolm Snow CEO of the City Renewal Authority discussed the CRA's ongoing Precinct Renewal Programs

Tourism, Hospitality and the Arts

- Density limits on venues and the financial impact of these on business viability
- The impact of mask mandates on the hospitality sector
- Ticketing and density limits within National Attractions
- Australian War Memorial construction and the impact on visitors to one of Canberra's leading attractions
- Indigenous tourism challenges
- Calling on Telstra to invest substantial sums in upgrading Telstra Tower to reopen the facility as a major National Attraction. This followed significant criticism from visitors and Canberrans at the state of the iconic Tower
- The potential for developing the indigenous tourism experiences for visitors to the ACT
- The ACT night time economy, now the responsibility of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)
- The challenges faced by the Canberra Region Wine Industry and differing rules for visitors from the ACT and NSW
- Minister Cheyne's 'Statement of Ambition' for the Arts sector was released
- Forums for the ACT Arts Community planned to be conducted in 2022
- Planning for Visit Canberra's one-day Canberra Region Tourism Conference to be held in June
- Visit Canberra's 2030 Strategy development commenced

Other matters explored

- ACT budget discussions were held with a cross section of ACT Directorates and executives in the private sector to shape our 2021 and 2022 ACT Budget considerations
- Noel Langdon continued to represent the Tourism Leaders Forum on the ACT Planning Directorate's review of the 400 pages of legislation supporting the Territory Plan
- Strategic review of the Tourism Leaders Forum was held on 11 August 2021 driven by Board Member Brian Weir
- Meetings held with Destination Southern NSW Board Chair Richard Beere and General Manager Sean Haylan on developing closer relationships with DSNSW industry sectors. The Chair attended the Destination Southern NSW Visitor Economy Roundtable and DMP Consultation in Ulladulla in May 2022

- Letters of Support were provided throughout the year to:
 - ❖ The National Capital Authority's seaplane proposal to land on Lake Burley Griffin
 - ❖ The Turcin Avis proposal to bring a Supercars race back to Canberra to be staged at EPIC
 - ❖ The National Convention Centre for their Government submission to erect a temporary structure to expand the exhibition Hall of the NCCC.
 - ❖ The National Convention Centre, endorsing IHG to continue as the operator of the NCCC
 - ❖ The National Convention Centre letter to the ACT Property Group endorsing IHG as an ongoing operator

The Chair attended a number of Australian Chamber – Tourism Board meetings on behalf of the Canberra Business Chamber during the year. The Tourism Leaders Forum was represented at the Canberra Business Chamber's 'Roundtable Forums' with guest speakers including ACT Assembly MLA's and Federal Members of Parliament.

The Tourism Leaders Forum also attended quarterly meetings of the Chamber's Kindred Organisations, and a number of business Roundtables with ACT and Federal politicians as guests

The Chair attended the National Tourism Awards held on the Sunshine Coast on Friday 18 March 2022. Coinciding with the awards the Australian Chamber – Tourism arranged a meeting with the Federal Tourism Minister, Dan Tehan which the Chair attended. Russell Jackson, President of the NCAA and Business Manager of the National Zoo and Aquarium was invited by the Tourism Leaders Forum Chair to also attend this meeting.

The Chair attended the 2022 Federal Budget luncheon at Parliament House with Treasurer Josh Frydenberg on 30 March and on 5 April the Federal Labor Opposition Treasurer's address, both as guest of Qantas.

Federal Government and National Issues

- Meetings with Sally Barnes, Chief Executive of the National Capital Authority were held regularly to canvass a number of matters pertaining to the Parliamentary precinct.
- Meetings were convened with most National Institution Directors over the past 12 months to explore the many issues facing these organisations
- The Chair attended forums and meetings with the Australian Chamber – Tourism with Federal Ministers as guest speakers

Meetings and functions with ACT industry sectors

Members of the Tourism Leaders Forum were attendees at industry functions, launches and openings during the year, but in particular:

- SKAL monthly industry lunches
- Tour Operators Alliance meetings organised by Marg Wade
- Mini Tourism Expo meetings at King O'Malley's arranged by Dot Barclay and Marg Wade
- AHA Awards
- Canberra Region Tourism Awards Launch and also the Awards Presentation, this year held successfully online
- Canberra Convention Bureau membership networking nights
- Canberra Business Chamber monthly Business after Business functions

Media Activity

Since 1 July 2021, media coverage included around 80 interviews on a variety of tourism related issues on Radio 2CC, ABC Radio, MIXFM and 104.7, and articles in the Canberra Times, the Riot ACT, and appearances on ABC and WIN Television news

Finally

My appreciation to the 21 Board members of the Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum for their ongoing commitment to our industry during a very challenging year. Everyone provides their time freely and their devotion to the recovery and future growth of our industry sectors is to be highly commended.

I would again acknowledge Visit Canberra in supporting the Canberra Region Tourism Advisory Forums, these having become popular and vitally important meetings for members of our industry.

Finally, to our generous supporting partners: The University of Canberra, Enterprise Rent-a-Car, the Canberra Centre, Canberra Park, Parbery Consulting, SPA Accounting, the Canberra Business Chamber, the National Convention Centre and Encore. Their support has enabled us to accomplish many significant achievements over the past 12 months.

Dr David Marshall AM
Chair Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum
30 June 2022