

Assistant Minister for Economic Development
Question Time Briefs
February 2021

Ref No	Page number	Title	Status	Reason for Exemption
1	2	Major ACT Government Events During Autumn 2021	Full	n/a
2	4	Priority Investment Program	Full	n/a
3	7	Blacklight Canberra Production	Full	n/a

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CM2021/290

Portfolio/s: Tourism

Assistant Minister for Economic Development

Major ACT Government Events during Autumn 2021

Talking points:

- With current public health restrictions, major ACT Government events scheduled for the autumn period in 2021 cannot proceed in their usual format. The health and safety of our community must continue to be our number one priority.
- Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACT Government has sought to develop innovative methods for connecting Canberrans through events in a COVID-safe manner. This planning work has been supported by the release of the ACT's COVID Safe Event Protocol, and has also involved consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders – including the Office of the Chief Health Officer.
- **The National Multicultural Festival**, originally scheduled for February 2021, has been postponed. Held in Canberra's city centre, the Festival typically attracts crowds in excess of 200,000 over three days.
- Planning for alternate delivery options for the Festival later in the year has begun, with a focus on bringing cultures together.
- However, it should be noted that COVID-19 restrictions are likely to have a considerable impact on Festival atmosphere and the free flow and spontaneity that attendees and participants are accustomed to.
- **The Enlighten Festival** will proceed as scheduled from 26 February to 14 March 2021. The Enlighten Illuminations precinct in the Parliamentary Triangle is an expansive site that is conducive to social distancing, with precinct access controls (e.g. timed ticketing and security) to be implemented to control potential higher crowd density areas.
- Consistent with AHPPC advice, the Enlighten Main Stage entertainment area will not be delivered. Main Stage entertainment will instead be replaced with smaller stages across defined precincts, multiplying performance opportunities for local artists.

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- Nine Entertainment (organisers of the Night Noodle Markets) has announced that it is not able to safely proceed with that event alongside the Enlighten Festival this year.
- However, other Enlighten Festival events will adapt well to the implementation of COVID Safe measures, including Lights! Canberra! Action!, the Canberra Balloon Spectacular, Symphony in the Park and Canberra Day celebrations.

Key Information

- Widespread event cancellations and postponements have had serious financial implications for event organisers and suppliers.
- In the absence of mass public gatherings, a primary objective has been to continue delivering the benefits of events – but in new ways – while also contributing to the economic security of artists, vendors, suppliers and contractors.
- The ACT’s COVID Safe Event Protocol was released on 22 September 2020. The Protocol was developed to provide further information for event organisers on the types of events that can take place while COVID-19 restrictions remain in place.
- The Protocol document continues to be updated and reissued when public health directions allow.

Background Information

- Events ACT is responsible for delivering celebrations for the Enlighten Festival (incorporating Illuminations, Lights!Canberra!Action!, the Canberra Balloon Spectacular, Symphony in the Park and Canberra Day celebrations).
- The Community Services Directorate (CSD) is responsible for delivery of the National Multicultural Festival.
- Events make a strong contribution to the ACT economy, have social and community benefits, enhance Canberra’s image and reputation, and assist with realising the ACT’s tourism potential.

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Portfolio/s: Economic Development

cc to Assistant Minister for Economic Development

PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

Talking points:

- Talent, knowledge and infrastructure within the ACT's tertiary education and research sector are primary drivers attracting investment into Canberra.
- The Priority Investment Program (PIP) provided \$9.75 million over three years in the 2018-19 budget to facilitate collaboration and, through matched funding, activate these assets to create long term wealth and wellbeing through economic diversification and growth in jobs.
- In 2018-19, \$5.2 million was committed to five projects across agri-technology, renewable energy, space and cybersecurity sectors.
- In 2019-20, \$2.1 million was committed to three projects across the space and biodiversity and biosecurity sectors.
- Considering the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the economy, the 2020-21 PIP funding round, which is the third round, is focused on jobs and economic recovery. A total of \$1 million is available in this round to support projects that will contribute to economic recovery and creation of jobs in the priority sectors of the ACT's economy.
- The ACT Government has established the Future Jobs Fund. This fund is designed to implement the Government's election and policy commitments to support economic recovery in the ACT, with a focus on the higher education and research sector and creating future jobs in growth industries.

Key Information

- **Not yet announced** - \$2.165 million is allocated in the 2020-21 budget to achieve these commitments, prioritising projects that protect or create new jobs in our universities and private sector.

Projects funded under the 2019-20 round include:

Biodiversity and Biosecurity

- Announced on 28 January 2021, the **\$1.2 million** grant is to enable DART Pty Ltd, collaborate with ANU and UC to establish a cloud-based biodiversity and biosecurity data storage and analysis platform to enable wider research and commercial applications.

Space

- **\$300,000** to establish the Spacecraft Detector Characterisation Facility, which will enhance the ANU Space Testing Facility and secure the ANU and Canberra

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businesses opportunities in the supply chain of the global infrared detector industry for space applications. The new capability has a wide application in defence, agriculture, mineralogical surveys, health (pollen and air quality monitoring) and natural hazard management (bushfire and water quality).

Space Innovation Lab (Not public - Under contract negotiation)

- **\$600,000** to enable UNSW Canberra start-up, Space Services Australia, to develop software capability address the main cause of failure in miniature space systems (ranging from a 10 per cent dead-on-arrival and up to 50 per cent partial systems failure). This approach complements the physical systems testing capability at Mt Stromlo's Advanced Instrumentation Testing Centre which tests physical, structural and environmental integrity of space hardware.

The 2018-19 PIP projects :

Renewable energy sector

- **\$1.5 million** to fund the establishment of the Distributed Energy Resources Laboratory at the ANU. This Lab will provide industry and researchers with an interface with the energy grid to test devices, get data about how energy networks function and enable training and teaching. It will also test distributed energy resources such as solar panels, batteries, wind generating units, smart meters and model and measure demand loads on each through a real time network.

Space and Spatial Technology

- **\$800,000** to establish the Quantum Optical Ground Station at Mt Stromlo. The high speed, encrypted, optical communications capability will enable the Territory's participation in global communications networks and attract international business and world leading research groups for quantum optical communications to space.
- **\$1 million** to support Skykraft, a UNSW Canberra spin off, to collaborate with multinational space companies to develop and launch smallsat constellations for space-based global services, a capability of considerable global export potential.

Agri-technology

- **\$1.3 million** to enable the ANU/CSIRO Centre for Entrepreneurial Agri-Technology to broaden the scope of its industry engagement and research translation and become fully self-sufficient within a three-year period. The Centre's vision is to strengthen, transform and diversify Canberra into a regional, national and global hub for transformational agriculture.

Cybersecurity

- **\$600,000** to support the Canberra node of Austcyber to advance ACT's cyber security industry capabilities.

Background Information

- **\$9.75 million** was allocated to the PIP in the 2018-19 budget. Most of this funding was committed or expended over two rounds. A total of \$8.3 million was committed

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to nine projects across the space, renewable energy, cybersecurity, agri-technology and biosecurity and biodiversity sectors.

- A total of \$1 million is available for the 2020-21 PIP Jobs and Economic Recovery round. From a total of 22 expressions of interest received in the first stage of the process, six were shortlisted to prepare full business cases. The independent assessment panel is being convened to assess the business cases before making recommendations for approval of successful respondents.

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Portfolio/s: Assistant Minister for Economic Development

Blacklight Canberra Production

Talking points:

- The production of major international film *Blacklight* took place in Canberra from 14 to 19 January 2021. The film has an estimated production budget of US\$34.7 million.
- The production spend in Canberra over the period exceeded A\$2 million. Screen Canberra reports that approximately 100 locals were employed for each day of the production across a wide range of roles with approximately 35 of these getting valuable production assistant experience.
- The production company reported that they were impressed with Canberra as a surprising and easy place in which to film, helped by the co-ordination of approvals through a single layer of government.
- ACT Government worked closely with residents, local businesses, and the production company to ensure that disruptions were minimised. As a result, delays were kept to a minimum and community feedback was positive.
- On the back of *Blacklight's* success, ACT Government is continuing discussions with the production company and Screen Canberra to attract further productions to the ACT. This will both support more local jobs in the creative industries, as well as drive wider economic activity.

Key Information

- A whole of Government approach, including officers from Economic Development, Access Canberra, Health, TCCS and Emergency Services provided support to the *Blacklight* film production both in advance of, and during the film's production. Cross Government work included ensuring compliance with all COVID health protocols, issuing permits, traffic management, and the facilitation of community engagement with affected businesses and residents.
- The production provided a proof of concept for Canberra as the leading Australian location for car scenes, creating a compelling offer to other productions.
- Concerns had previously been raised by some local residents about the pre-production shoot on 5 December 2020.
- Engagement and coordination work was undertaken with the production company, residents and businesses to minimise inconvenience to residents and businesses during the production shoot.

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- The production shoot also generated positive media coverage for Canberra at a national level.

Background Information

- Facilitating the *Blacklight* production to come to Canberra aligned with the Government's policy of developing the local screen industry.
- The screen sector plays a significant role in the economy in terms of its contribution to direct employment, as well as its economic contribution to downstream industries such as exhibition and retail, and to ancillary sectors such as tourism and hospitality.
- Through Screen Canberra, the ACT collaborates with, and competes against other states and territories to share in the benefits of a growing Australian screen industry. Australia's success at containing the COVID pandemic relative to key competitors has created opportunities for the Australian film industry.
- In addition to economic benefits, film and television have a unique capability to showcase Canberra domestically and internationally and that makes it a powerful medium for enhancing Canberra's branding.
- There has been a steady growth of the local screen industry in recent years. The industry has increasingly demonstrated potential in the television series and feature film productions, with successes like *Secret City*, *The Code*, *Rip Tide*, *The Furies* and *Total Control*.

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