



Canberra
Business Chamber

2021-2022 Annual Report



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Front cover image: VisitCanberra

Chairman's & CEO's Joint Report

This was another challenging year for the Canberra Business Chamber, our members and the ACT community as a whole.

By July 2021, the sense of optimism and business recovery that many felt earlier in the year had evaporated. Although Canberra had remained free of Covid cases and community transmission, the ACT was closed to travelers from NSW and Victoria, directly impacting yet again the territory's visitor economy.

On 9 August 2021, Chief Minister Andrew Barr delivered his State of the Territory Address to Chamber members. The impact of the Delta Covid variant was casting a heavy cloud over the ACT, and the prospect of a hard lockdown in the ACT seemed inevitable. Just one week later the territory entered a lockdown that continued for 10 weeks.

By the end of the reporting year conditions had changed dramatically. Restrictions had eased and borders had opened, but skills and workforce shortages, supply chain disruptions, spiraling costs and geo-political tensions challenge businesses and the community.

It is against this challenging background that the Chamber sought to deliver on our mission to help businesses start, grow and transform, through our focus on three strategic pillars.

Advocacy and Access

At the end of July 2022 there were 33,918 registered ACT businesses, an increase of 2419 over the year. In the first half of 2021-2022 the critical issue for many was access to financial support to enable survival of the ACT lockdown.

The Chamber worked tirelessly for three months to represent their interests to the ACT and federal governments. We initially met every day with the ACT Government and industry groups to address issues around the administration and delivery of Business Support Grants in the territory. This gradually reduced to 3 days per week, and we talked to a wide range of businesses to ensure we understood and could communicate their experience and concerns.

We were able to achieve incremental and consistent changes to restrictions, initially allowing businesses to generate some revenue through online sales, contactless click and collect, and eventually to trade with appropriate restrictions in place.

We were particularly pleased that our advocacy achieved a lifting of restrictions applying to retail premises on Friday 15 October - one week earlier than originally planned. This change effectively marked the end of the hard lockdown conditions that began on August 17.

This certainly came as relief, but the second half of the year brought new challenges. "Shadow lockdowns" underpinned by government messaging around work from home, mask wearing and other risks took their toll. Smaller customer facing businesses were forced to close due to staff absenteeism, and staff shortages spread to impact every sector and every type of business. Spiraling inflation, supply shortages and global tensions added to the challenges facing members.

Along with our representations to government we maintained the Chamber's prominence in local press, radio, and TV throughout the year. Through the media we told the Canberra community why business matters and what matters to business, and our views on business and economic issues are sought after by every regional media outlet.

Expertise, advice and resources

In a rapidly changing policy environment, our weekly Business Pulse E -News continued to provide a valuable "go to" source for businesses, with information on policy changes, restrictions, government support and other developments that mattered for business.

Chamber members consistently identify employment relation and IR support and advice as a highly valued service. The pandemic delivered a variety of new challenges for employers – managing leave, absenteeism, quarantine, infection control, vaccination policy, returning to the office and more. Our advisors were able to assist members in the dealing with these specific challenges along with the ongoing demands of managing people and ensuring obligations are met.

The International Business Engagement program supports Canberra businesses that are, or are planning to, expand their operations into overseas markets. We delivered skills training, export-support information, market intelligence, connect business to stakeholders in key markets, and facilitate local (ACT Region) export-related networks.

Through this support the program increases the number of ACT exporters, increases export volumes and diversify export markets.

Building Networks and Connections

Connecting businesses to each is a core function for the Chamber. Building networks and connections helps businesses to grow markets, build supply chains and find new opportunities.

It was a tough time to be planning events, but we know that networking is still an important part of doing business. Before and after the lockdown the Chamber was proud to again lead the way on the return of business events.

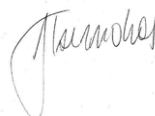
Given the challenges of 2021, we departed from tradition to safely host a “welcome to 2022” cocktail function in February for 220 guests at the National Arboretum. Our regular Federal Budget breakfast returned as an in-person event at the Australian Parliament House, while other events such as the ACT budget breakfast and the State of the Territory were moved from their traditional timing at the request of government.

Our thanks

The Chamber is supported by a small team of six staff, and by the enormous goodwill of members and board of directors. We are fortunate to have such a depth of talent and experience available in a small organisation, and as a result the Chamber is greater than the sum of its parts and always manages to punch above its weight.

We take this opportunity to thank each and every member of the staff team and the board, for bringing their passion and ongoing commitment and support to the Chamber in another very challenging environment.

We thank every member for their support. As a membership organisation we are only as strong as our members, and we have been fortunate and proud to see that strength grow over the past twelve months. We are excited about the challenges and opportunities of the year ahead as together we continue to help Canberra through businesses start, grow and transform.



Archie Tsirimokos
Chair



Graham Catt
CEO

Image credit: Visit Canberra

Key Achievements



615 members @ 30 June 2022



150+ media interviews on Canberra business and the economy



1,240 attendees to our TOP 5 Chamber events



43% increase in event attendance



1125 attendees across our 3 networking events



16,000 new visitors on canberrabusiness.com



49,000 page views on canberrabusiness.com



16,000+ digital media followers



35-40% email open rates (industry averages 20-22%)



1,200 member calls to our Employer Assist Advice Line & Apprentice Wage Line



TOP 5 areas of advice related to:

- + Notice & Termination of Employment
- + Award Coverage & Interpretation
- + Employment Contracts
- + Wages
- + Redundancy

Our Key Member Categories

PRINCIPAL MEMBERS AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

Principal Members are the leaders of Canberra's business community and a key player in shaping our policy and advocacy program. They are actively engaged with the Chamber, government and community, while driving discussions about the issues that impact businesses in the ACT now and into the future.

- + Beca
- + Canberra Airport
- + Canberra FM Radio
- + CanPrint
- + CareSuper
- + Deloitte
- + Elite Event Technology
- + Employers Mutual Management
- + Encore Event Technologies
- + EY - Ernst & Young
- + Gajjh United
- + GIO
- + Hyatt Hotel Canberra
- + KPMG
- + Lend Lease Building Group
- + Master Builders Association (ACT)
- + National Press Club
- + PwC Australia
- + Telstra Corporation
- + The Village Building Co.
- + University of New South Wales - Canberra



KINDRED MEMBERS AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

Kindred Members are for-purpose organisations from across the Canberra region, including industry and professional associations, charities, and community groups. They are an important part of our policy work, and we facilitate their access to government and other key decision-makers. We consult with them on major policy issues, and regularly collaborate to address industry or sector concerns. This also adds to our individual and collective strength when advocating to the Territory and Commonwealth Governments.

- + Access Programs Australia
- + ACT Law Society
- + ACT Playgroups Association
- + AIVL - Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League
- + Anglican Diocesan Services
- + Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- + Australian Hotels Association (AHA)
- + Australian Institute of Company Directors
- + Australian Institute of Health & Safety
- + Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors - ACT
- + Australian Seed Federation
- + Bosom Buddies ACT
- + Canberra Cyber Security Innovation Node
- + Canberra Glassworks
- + Canberra Highland Society and Burns Club
- + Canberra Indigenous Business Network
- + Canberra Innovation Network
- + Canberra Opera
- + Canberra Region Tourism Leaders Forum
- + Canberra Women in Business
- + ClubsACT
- + Communities@Work
- + Complementary Medicines Australia
- + CPA Australia
- + Directions Health Services
- + Engineers Australia - Canberra Division
- + Enterprise Plus
- + Fyshwick Business Association
- + Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia
- + Hands Across Canberra
- + Havelock Housing Association
- + Heart Support Australia
- + Marymead Child and Family Centre
- + Master Plumbers ACT
- + Motor Trades Association ACT
- + National Capital Attractions Association
- + NECA ACT
- + Nexus Human Services
- + NSW/ACT Truffle Marketing Cooperative
- + Outdoors NSW & ACT
- + Palliative Care ACT
- + Property Council of Australia (ACT Division)
- + Real Estate Institute of the ACT
- + Regional Development Australia (ACT)
- + Riding for the Disabled ACT
- + Soldier On
- + St John Ambulance ACT
- + The Australian Indigenous Doctors Association
- + The Personnel Group
- + The Pharmacy Guild of Australia ACT
- + Transitions and Careers ACT Education Directorate
- + Volunteering ACT
- + Wellcare Australia
- + YMCA Canberra

CORPORATE MEMBERS AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

Corporate Members are a diverse group of businesses from a wide range of industry sectors, including local operations of national and global businesses, Canberra's leading SME'S educational institutions and more. They actively engage with the Chamber's policy work, and have access to key decision makers, government and other stakeholders as well as opportunities to build their brand and markets through engagement with the territory's small business community.

+ ACCOR Hotels Canberra	+ Crowne Plaza Canberra	+ RD Consulting
+ ActewAGL	+ Dimeo Cleaning Services (ACT)	+ Rentokil-Initial
+ Ainslie Football and Social Club	+ Equity Investments	+ RiotACT Holdings
+ ANZ Banking Group	+ EvolveFM	+ Rolfe Property Services
+ ARUP	+ Gallagher	+ Seeing Machines
+ Aspen Medical	+ GHD	+ Service One Mutual
+ Australian Catholic University	+ Hays Specialist Recruitment (Australia)	+ Shaw Building Group
+ Australian National University	+ HSBC - Canberra Branch	+ Shaw Wines
+ Beyond Bank Australia	+ Independent Property Group	+ Snedden Hall & Gallop
+ Brumbies Rugby	+ Inside Outside Facility Services	+ St George Bank/Westpac Bank
+ Callida Consulting	+ Institute of Public Accountants	+ Summit Health Solutions ACT
+ Canberra Convention Bureau	+ Kellogg Brown & Root	+ Supabarn Supermarkets
+ Canberra Helicopters & Forestrack	+ Kingpin Canberra	+ Synapse Worldwide
+ Canberra Institute of Technology	+ Liquid Instruments	+ Tailored Accounts
+ Canberra Southern Cross Club	+ Manteena Commercial	+ The Canberra Times
+ Canberra Weekly	+ McGrath Canberra	+ The CAPS Clinic
+ Cantlie Recruitment Services	+ Minter Ellison Lawyers	+ The Salvation Army Employment Plus
+ Capital Hotel Group	+ MV Law	+ The Sebel Canberra
+ Casino Canberra	+ Nexis Accountants and Business Advisors	+ TSA Management (ACT)
+ Chartered Accountants Australia New Zealand	+ Noetic Solutions	+ University of Canberra
+ Chartertech	+ oOh Media	+ VCA Services
+ City News	+ ORD Minnett	+ Vee H Aviation
+ Colliers International (ACT)	+ Paynter Dixon	+ Walker Executive
+ Colquhoun Murphy	+ Project Coordination (Australia)	+ Wildbear Entertainment
+ Communication Link	+ Project Wing	+ Windlab
+ Core Facilities International	+ Proximity Advisory Services	+ WR Engineering
	+ Ray White Canberra	+ XTEK

Other membership categories include Life/Honorary, Business and Micro.



Advocacy and Policy

During the reporting year, the Chamber undertook a wide range of activities to promote and advocate on behalf of the Canberra business community. In addition to our regular mix of advocacy and submissions, COVID-19 related issues heavily influenced engagements throughout the financial year.

In the first few months, the focus was on support for businesses in sectors facing market collapse due to Covid lockdowns and border restrictions. With the easing of business restrictions since mid-October 2021, the discourse moved to recovery mode, with the key advocacy issues being:

- + The removal of remaining restrictions including TTIQ – to shift government thinking as we emerge out of lockdown to better balance economic objectives vs health objectives
- + Continuation of business support for sectors in need; processing issues with the elements of the Hardship scheme; the slow speed of payments
- + Return to the office by the ACT public service
- + Action to address skills and workforce shortages

The spread of the Omicron COVID variant at the end of the year and into 2022, brought forward a new range of issues for the business community and for us to engage with the government on. Most notably:

- + Staff shortages due to quarantine and isolation requirements (which soon evolved into a multifaceted skills crisis on a national level)
- + Scarcity of Rapid Antigen Tests and long wait times for PCR tests and test results
- + Supply chain interruptions and stock shortages

- + Lack of financial support in the ACT (juxtaposed with support packages being announced by State Governments in other jurisdictions)
- + Uncertainty around the “pathway forward” and health indicators that would allow businesses to plan ahead
- + Inflation, rising costs of supply, logistics and fuel

In February, the CBC Business Conditions survey identified challenges such as: staffing issues, revenues, confidence, and the impacts of government directives. The results were shared with government and media

Our activities included:

- + Regular meetings with ACT Ministers and the Chief Minister.
- + Meetings with other parliamentarians, including government backbenchers, Opposition members, and federal Members of Parliament from all sides of politics;
- + Regular meetings with government officials and regulators;
- + Hosting political roundtables for members with ACT Ministers and federal parliamentarians;
- + Hosting 4 meetings of our kindred member CEOs, and 3 of the local business precinct groups;
- + ACT budget submission (sent on 10 May 2022)
- + Issuing 20 press releases on a variety of issues, including the impacts of lockdowns and the need for a plan, business support packages, budget release, ACT Skills and Workforce strategy, and a response to the ACT govt. Statement of Ambition and economic priorities, Better Regulation Report.

Policy Development and Committees

POLICY TASKFORCE

Three meetings of the Taskforce were held during the year. Its members have extensive experience corporate, financial, small business, parliamentary, higher education, legal, healthcare and cyber-security sectors, amongst others. It is focused on identifying the emergent industries which will help create Canberra's future economic prosperity and recommending measures to support their growth.

Policy Taskforce Members

Michael Brennan
Gai Brodtmann
Athol Chalmers
Chris Faulks
Dr Michael Schaper
Dr Steven Parker
Craig Sloan (Chair)
Liesel Wett

KINDRED MEMBERS

Meetings of the CEOs of our kindred members were held on a regular basis throughout the year. These have provided an effective forum for local association leaders to meet and exchange ideas on areas of common interest. A central focus of meetings in the latter half of 2021 was to provide updates on the impacts of lockdowns and other related measures on different industries/businesses. The consequent meetings focused on the ACT budget submissions from kindred members and also included sessions with local policymakers.

Our guests during the year included Shadow Minister for business Leanne Castley MLA, Shadow Minister for Jobs and Workplace Affairs Peter Cain, MLA, and CMTEDD A/g Executive Group Manager Jonathan Kobus.

PRECINCT BUSINESS GROUPS

The Chamber maintained quarterly meetings with the representatives of local suburban business communities, such as those in Fyshwick, Phillip and Mitchell. Since the last quarter, these meetings continued in a form of the Chamber's CEO visit to each precinct to discuss relevant issues affecting their local members.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION

The Chamber has representatives on several external consultative and advisory committees. This is an important tool in ensuring the voice of the business community is provided to government and other bodies.

The Chamber is represented on the following:

- + Secure Local Job Code
- + Skills Industry Advisory Committee
- + Planning & Construction Industry Chief Executive Reference Group
- + Capital Region Local Jobs & Skills Taskforce

University of Canberra

- + Canberra Business School Advisory Board

Chamber nominees to committees

- + ACT Work Health & Safety Council
- + Board of Secondary School Studies

Memberships

- + Australia Made
- + Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- + AuSAE



Trade & International Business

During the 2021-22 financial year, the Chamber in partnership with the ACT Government programs and activities to help Canberra region businesses during COVID-related disruptions to understand their global opportunities, identify potential markets, and develop the relationships and capacity to successfully engage in them.

Internationally focused educational and networking events, seminars and mentoring

Over the year, we organised, hosted, facilitated or cross-promoted a dozen of events (online and in person) with 500 people attending in total, developing trade connections, business insights and market knowledge. Events were delivered in conjunction with partner organisations, universities, bilateral trade associations and Canberra-based exporting firms.

Two events from the International Business Connect series were organised during the year, in between periods of COVID lockdowns and related health measures. These events are delivered in partnership with the ACT Government and ACT TradeStart, each hosted by a successful local business or organisation operating internationally.

The Chamber also delivered the 2021 ACT Chief Minister's Export Awards program for the ACT Government. The new 'storytelling' format introduced at the last year's Awards, gave way to a traditional application process, with companies competing again for awards in different categories. The 2021 ACT Exporter of the Year was Instaclusr.

At the National Export Awards Ceremony, held in November 2021, two Canberra companies won in their respective categories (Penten in "Emerging Exporter" and WildBear in "Entertainment – Creative Industries), while Aspen Medical was inducted into the Australian Exporters Hall of Fame.

Engagement with global Chambers' networks and the Diplomatic Corps

Our Chamber is a member of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Australia, facilitated by the

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This allows us to foster global connections and share updates and resources from these networks with ACT businesses and other stakeholders.

Chamber staff and members engaged with 30+ diplomatic missions through the course of the year. We also facilitated the attendance of Heads of Missions and Trade Counsellors at local business events.

Creating links between local industry, business associations and government support programs

Acting as an initial point of contact, we helped with identifying opportunities and connected 50+ businesses with relevant resources and/or referred and connected them with other stakeholders within the ecosystem.

The Chamber also continued to provide information on the Rule of Origin System, built into Australia's free trade agreements, as the only body in the ACT authorised to issue Certificates of Australian Origin.

Program Delivery

During the 2021-22 financial year, the Chamber operated the following programs on behalf of the ACT government:

- + International Business Engagement Program
- + ACT Chief Minister's Export Awards
- + ACT Wage Advice Service for Australian Apprenticeships
- + FWO Industrial Relations Advice Service

Whilst the opportunity to work with the ACT government has been much valued, the board resolved at its March 2020 strategic planning day to continue to reduce the Chamber's reliance on income derived from government.

We also continued to provide limited IR advice service through ACCI for the Fair Work Ombudsman. This service was funded by federal government in response to the COVID-19 ongoing impact on business. The program was finalised August 2022.

The Chamber will continue to seek funding and deliver programs where there is alignment with our strategy and our core services as a Chamber. The International Business Engagement and Export Awards programs are excellent examples of strategic alignment.

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry



Canberra Business Chamber is a full foundation member of ACCI, which provides ACT business a voice in national forums and policy deliberations for the chamber movement across Australia. During the financial year, the Canberra Business Chamber participated in over 16 meeting including ACCI General Meeting, CEO meetings and associated functions.

The Chamber is also a member of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Australia, facilitated by the Australian Chamber of Chamber of Commerce and attended the Policy Committee Meetings on the 13 July 2021 & 23 Feb 2022.



Board & Governance

Canberra Business Chamber is a company limited by guarantee. The entity was incorporated on 30 June 2014 and replaced two previous organisations, the Canberra Business Council and ACT & Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

A copy of the Chamber's constitution is accessible on the website at canberrabusiness.com. There were two changes to the constitution that were passed at the Annual General Meeting on the 19 November 2019.

The Company Secretary as at 30th June 2022, and throughout the year, was Harry Hoang (Tailored Accounts).

Oversight of the Chamber is vested in the board of directors. More details of the membership and meeting frequency of the board is provided in the attached financial statements.

Our History

Canberra's business chamber has been supporting local business for almost 90 years. It originates from the Canberra Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1932. Since then, there have been a variety of name changes and mergers that led to the organisation being constituted in its current legal form and name in 2014.

The Canberra Chamber of Commerce held its first meeting on 25th February 1932¹. Although surviving records are limited, by 1936 it had 79 members². The Chamber continued operating for many years, and in 1991 merged with a small local trader district group, the Fyshwick Chamber of Commerce, to become the ACT Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Alongside the Chamber, a specific industrial organisation for local employers, the ACT Employers Association, was formed in the 1940s. It began publishing wages guidelines, newsletters, trader directories and other material for its members in 1949; other sources suggest it may in fact have begun as early as 1943. In subsequent years its name changed to the ACT Employers Federation (which it traded under in the 1960s and 1970s), and then to the Confederation of ACT Industry (in the 1980s and 1990s)³.

The Confederation was one of the original founding members of the national Confederation of Australian Industry in 1977, which in turned merged with the Australian Chamber of Commerce in 1992 to form the modern-day peak national voice of business, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)⁴. The Confederation later merged with the ACT Chamber to form one organisation, and the name of the merged entity was slightly changed once more, to that of the ACT & Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACT CCI).

Yet another separate business organisation emerged in 1979 – a group of local business leaders operating under the title of the “Committee of 22,” to lobby for business-friendly policies. It underwent its own series of name changes, becoming the Canberra Association for Regional Development and then in the early 1990s the the Canberra Business Council.

In mid-2014 the ACT & Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Canberra Business Council merged into today's current entity, the Canberra Business Chamber.

¹ Canberra Chamber of Commerce (1989), 56th Annual Report, p.12

² Canberra Times (1936) “Chamber of Commerce” Wednesday 15 July, p.3.

³ National Library of Australia “ACT Employers Federation”; Annual Report – Confederation of ACT Industry [online] <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/639491> (accessed 06 September 2019).

⁴ WE Cleary, undated, “Some Memories of the Confederation of ACT Industry” Canberra

Canberra Business Chamber Chairs and CEOs

Canberra Business Chamber Chairs

2018-Present: Archie Tsirimokos

2014-2018: Glenn Keys

Canberra Business Chamber CEOs

2020 – Present: Graham Catt

2018-2020: Dr Michael Schaper

2014-2018: Robyn Hendry

Canberra Business Chamber Board Members

2021-2022

Scott Leggo (Deputy Chair)
Carrie Leeson
Craig Wagstaff
Richard Snow
Sarah Rajic
Kimberley Ohayon
Lisa McPherson
Mark Field
Matthew Andrews
Stephanie Bates

2020-2021

Sara Rajic (Deputy Chair)
Scott Leggo
Craig Wagstaff
Craig Sloan
Vicki Williams
Richard Snow
Carrie Leeson
Jo Metcalf

2019-2020

Keith Cantlie (Deputy Chair)
Sara Rajic
Craig Sloan
Vicki Williams
Jo Metcalf,
Scott Leggo
Richard Snow
Carrie Leeson

2018-2019

Keith Cantlie (Deputy Chair)
Lorcan Murphy (Treasurer)
Sarah Rajic
Craig Sloan
Jason Duarte
Vicki Williams
Jo Metcalf
Richard Snow
Rowena Abbey

2017-2018

Keith Cantlie (Deputy Chair)
Lorcan Murphy (Treasurer)
Craig Sloan
Jason Duarte
Archie Tsirimokos
Sarah Rajic
Joanne Metcalfe
Jure Domazet
Vikram Shama
Rowena Abbey

2016-2017

Archie Tsirimokos (Secretary)
Craig Sloan (Treasurer)
Col Alexander
Jason Duarte
Tina Fisher
Laurie McDonald
Lorcan Murphy
Alicia Shepard
James Willson

2015-2016

Archie Tsirimokos (Secretary)
Greg Castle (Treasurer)
Col Alexander
Keith Cantlie
Tina Fisher
Louise Hughes
Laurie McDonald
Michelle Melbourne
Timothy Overall
Craig Sloan
James Willson

2014-2015

Tony Henshaw (Transition Chair)
Julian Barrington-Smith (Deputy Chair)
Keith Cantlie
Greg Castle
John Hindmarsh
Louise Hughes
Kathy Kostyrko
Laurie McDonald
Tim Overall
Kristine Riethmiller
Ivan Slavich
Craig Sloan
Chris Taylor
Archie Tsirimokos
Michael Zissler