Michael Pettersson MLA
Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries
Minister for Children, Youth and Families
Minister for Multicultural Affairs
Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations
Member for Yerrabi

Response to question on notice

Questions on Notice Paper No 9
5 September 2025
Question No. 538

Ms Chiaka Barry MLA: To ask the Minister for Multicultural Affairs

1. Under what circumstances are bonds required to be paid by multicultural organisations in order to be allocated a stall at the ACT Multicultural Festival.
2. Are there any exceptions to the bond requirement referred to in part (1); if so, what are they.
3. What is the amount of the bond referred to in part (1).
4. When does the bond referred to in part (1) have to be paid.
5. What is the process for repayment of the bond referred to in part (1).
6. For the last five Multicultural Festivals, (a) how many bond payments were not repaid, (b) what were the reasons the bonds were not repaid, and (c) what was the average time for bonds to be repaid after the festival closed.
7. Is the Minister considering any changes to the administration of these bonds to ensure more timely repayments, given concerns from some stall holders that bond repayments are processed very slowly, with some waiting up to a year to receive repayments.

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. For the 2024 event, any stallholders selling food, liquor and/or cultural items were required to pay a bond. This was not limited to multicultural organisations and included commercial vendors.

   In 2025, the bond requirement was extended to all categories of stallholders.

   This requirement has been removed for the 2026 festival. These have been removed to reduce administrative burden and because compliance has improved.

2. In 2024, stallholders not selling food, liquor and/or cultural items were not required to pay a bond.

   In 2025, ACT Government stalls, sponsors, and diplomatic missions who made in-kind Festival program contributions, were not required to pay a bond.

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3.

- 2024 Festival (food/liquor stalls only):
    i. Community stalls: $200.00
    ii. Commercial stalls: $250.00.
- 2025 Festival (all stallholders):
    i. Information and non-food/liquor stalls: $150.00
    ii. Food/liquor stalls: $300.00

4. For the 2024 and 2025 Festivals, prior to signing a Stallholder Agreement, stallholders could nominate to pay stallholder fees, inclusive of the bond amount, in full, or in up to three instalments.

   If stallholders nominated to pay in instalments, the bond payment was included in the first instalment.

   Regardless of whether the bond payment was paid in full or in instalments, it had to be fully paid prior to the festival.

5. The process for repayment of bonds was as follows
    - National Multicultural Festival (NMF) team emailing the stallholder requesting repayment information, which is then uploaded onto an Accounts Payable form and sent to Shared Services Finance.
        i. This also often included the completion of a New/Existing Supplier form by the stallholder to create or update their Oracle account (required to be resubmitted annually, regardless of whether supplier details have changed).
    - Verification of customer Oracle account details via Shared Services Finance for existing suppliers.
    - If Shared Services Finance rejects any mismatched or incomplete forms, NMF team must notify the stallholder and ask them to resubmit the forms. To ensure successful processing and refund of the bond amount, stallholders were required to submit the following:
        - The official entity name, verified via ABN or Incorporated Association lookup.
        - Bank account details matching the entity and the account used for the original bond payment.
    - Upon approval of both forms, Shared Services Finance scheduled the refund for the next available pay run (typically Tuesdays and Thursdays). Processing may take up to one week, with funds appearing in the customer account within three business days post-payment.

6.

a) Stallholder bonds were introduced in 2024 and continued in 2025, so were not in effect in 2023, 2022 or 2021.

  - In 2024, 37 stalls had partial or full bond amounts withheld due to non-compliance. All other bonds have been refunded.
  - In 2025, 34 stalls had partial or full bond amounts withheld due to non-compliance. An additional 19 bond refunds are in progress, with payments delayed to incorrect or mismatched details provided by stallholders, resulting in rejected claims and extended processing times. HCSD is actively working with stallholders and Shared Services Finance to resolve these issues and provide support to stallholders to resubmit forms correctly. A further 91 stallholders have not yet applied for refunds. HCSD continues to issue reminders to stallholders outlining the refund process.
  - All 2025 stallholder bonds remain held in a dedicated bond account while the bond reconciliation process is ongoing.

b) Stallholder bonds were withheld where stallholders demonstrated non-compliance with the Bond Policy, outlined in the 2024 and 2025 Stallholder Agreements, primarily for:

  - Damage to the stall site (marquees, electrical leads, infill, pavement and grass)
  - Incorrect waste disposal including waste disposal resulting in environmental damage.

c) Stallholders were notified of assessment outcomes within eight weeks post event and given 14 days to dispute findings of non-compliance, with supporting evidence. If no disputes were raised or upheld, the repayment process (as outlined in response to question 5) commenced. Stallholders received bond repayments within 28 days of the dispute period ending—providing there were no administrative issues. Delays have been caused by mismatched or incorrect details provided by stallholders, leading to rejected claims and longer processing times.

7. As noted above, no bonds will be collected for the 2026 Festival.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard. **Michael Pettersson MLA** **Multicultural Affairs**   **Date:** 22·10·25
This response required 27hrs 55mins to complete, at an approximate cost of $2503.03.

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