



COSPLAY COMPETITION INFORMATION PACK

EVENT OVERVIEW



The Canberra Nara Candle Festival celebrates the Sister City relationship shared between Canberra and Nara, Japan. The celebration will be held on Saturday 24 October 2026 at the Canberra Nara Peace Park, Lennox Gardens, Yarralumla.

This year marks the 32nd Anniversary of the sister city relationship between Canberra and Nara. The Canberra Nara Candle Festival has been held annually in Canberra Nara Park since 2003. The main features of the festival include 2,000 lit candles in the dry riverbed that runs between two large ornamental stone lanterns, and a lantern procession that journeys through the festival space.

Visitors can also enjoy performances, interactive activities, community displays and a variety of Japanese food and beverage offerings. Originating in Japan more than 30 years ago, cosplay has become a globally recognised form of creative expression. Since the early 2000s, cosplay has grown into a thriving part of Australian popular culture, bringing together a passionate and creative community of participants and fans.

Cosplay (short for 'costume play') is the act of dressing up as your favourite manga, anime, or video game character.

Some cosplayers will even take on the mannerisms and personality of the character they are dressed as! Whether you are a well-rounded cosplayer or a total beginner, you are invited to enter the Canberra Nara Candle Festival Cosplay Competition.

Hosted by Dr Emerald L King, Lecturer in Humanities (UTAS), Cosplayer and recent Australian representative at the World Cosplay Summit held in Japan (August 2024), the Nara Cosplay is a friendly competition that aims to bring the Canberra Cosplay community together to share their costumes in a fun and family-friendly environment, while enjoying a festival celebrating the Canberra – Nara sister city relationship and Japanese culture.



KEY DETAILS



Event Date	Saturday 24 October 2026
Location	Lennox Garden - Canberra Nara Candle Festival Main Stage
Registrations Open	9am Friday 24 July 2026
Registrations Close	4:15pm Saturday 24 October 2026
Marshalling Time	4:45pm Saturday 24 October 2026
Event Start	5:15pm Saturday 24 October 2026
Award Ceremony	6pm - 6:15pm Saturday 24 October 2026



Best Constructed

Must be of Japanese origin (anime, manga, tokusatsu, - e.g, Power Rangers or Godzilla – or games). Costumes must be 60% constructed by the wearer. Entries will be judged higher in respect to the quality and percentage of handmade elements throughout their cosplay.

Competitors will be judged on costume, presentation, character accuracy and execution.

Best Compiled

Must be of Japanese origin (anime, manga, tokusatsu –e.g., Power Rangers or Godzilla – or games). Costumes must be compiled from bought elements and altered by the wearer. Bought costumes may be allowed – please contact the event organisers to confirm eligibility.

Competitors will be judged on costume, presentation and character accuracy.

Fan Favourite

May be from any series, although characters of Japanese origin encouraged. Costume may be either Constructed or Compiled. The winner will be awarded by audience response.

Participation in this category is optional.

CATEGORIES

COSTUME GUIDELINES AND RULES



RULES

Canberra Nara Candle Festival is a family-friendly event. If your costume is deemed to be inappropriate or not suitable for a family-friendly event you may be asked to change or modify your costume. Failure to comply may result in removal from the event.

COSTUMES

1. Your costume should celebrate Japanese culture and must be from a Japanese-origin anime, manga, game or tokusatsu series.
2. In line with the nature of the Canberra Nara Candle Festival, your costume must not be too revealing. It is recommended that your costume should cover all of the areas covered by standard swimwear. If your costume is delicate, make sure that you take all necessary precautions so that you do not expose yourself. If you are unsure, please email the event organiser.
3. If you are wearing a large costume or one with poor visibility, you must ensure that you have someone with you at all times to act as a guide/helper. Please be aware that the stairs to the stage may be very steep.
4. Large, bulky, or fur-lined suits must be properly ventilated with fans or be easily removable in case of emergency.
5. Make sure that there are no sharp edges on your costume.
6. Make sure that anybody paint is properly sealed. Some blood or fake gore is allowed but this must not be extreme or offensive and must not be wet or sticky.
7. While face taping is allowed to alter the shape of your face, you must not alter the shape of your eyes (fox eye). Race bounding and black/yellow/red/Asian faces are absolutely not allowed.
8. Costumes must not be offensive or discriminatory. Any imagery or symbols related to hate groups (including historical figures – e.g., Swastikas, Nazi uniforms etc) are not permitted at the event. It is recommended that you do not wear realistic military or first responder uniforms or costumes that would be easily confused for these by the general public.

COSTUME GUIDELINES AND RULES



PROPS

1. Props must not be longer than 180cm.
2. Props must not be too heavy for the cosplayer to safely carry or manipulate by themselves.
3. Zero tolerance for realistic, sharp, or dangerous weapons. This includes Nerf weapons that still have their firing mechanism.
4. Realistic-looking firearms are not allowed. This includes orange/red-tipped realistic-looking firearms. If you are unsure, please email the event organiser.
5. Non-realistic weapons in plastic/wood/foam/cardboard etc are allowed so long as they comply with the above restrictions. Fantasy firearms must have an orange/red tip.
6. Absolutely no pyrotechnics and/or explosives.

PLAY

1. No offensive cosplays (contact the event organisers if you have questions)
2. Please respect the boundaries of audience members and other cosplayers.
3. If handling a weapon or playing a dangerous character, keep in mind some audience members are not used to cosplay and may feel frightened/uncomfortable. We encourage you to play mostly with other cosplayers unless approached by an audience member.

SPECIFIC CATEGORY GUIDELINES

1. To be eligible for the **Best Constructed** category, competitions must be 60% constructed or heavily altered by the wearer. Pre-made pieces such as wigs, shoes, and commissioned 3D-printed elements are allowed.
2. All other costumes will be automatically entered into the **Best Compiled** and **Fan Favourite** categories.
3. **Fan Favourite** will be conducted by 'Scream-o-metre' as judged by the competition MC. If at any time you are uncomfortable or do not want to be considered for Fan Favourite, you are more than welcome to step away from the competition without penalty. You will still be eligible for Best Compiled and Best Constructed (if applicable).

ON THE DAY REQUIREMENTS



WHAT TO EXPECT

1. While preregistration is encouraged, on the day registration will be open until 4:15pm.
2. All entrants are required to assemble 30 minutes at the main stage before the competition for marshalling. There is no scheduled pre-judging, however this time will be used for participants to speak with the MC and judges about their costumes and craftsmanship.
3. Judging will be conducted LIVE on stage by a panel of Canberra Nara Candle Festival guests and community representatives.
4. You will be guided on stage by event staff. The MC will announce you using your nominated cosplay name as you enter the stage. You will then be invited to move to the front of the stage and pose. We encourage you to prepare two or three poses that showcase your costume (and hard work!). While you are posing, the MC will share the information you provided about your costume.
5. You will be guided off stage by event staff. Please wait beside the stage until all competitors have been called back for Fan Favourite judging.
6. Winners will be announced later in the evening. Please assemble 15 minutes before the award presentation so that all competitors can return to the stage for the announcement of the awards.

JUDGING PANEL



JUDGING

1. The Judging Panel will be headed by the Cosplay MC and consist of Canberra Nara Candle Festival guests and other community members.
2. Judges will be provided with the information supplied on the Entry Form.
3. Competitors entered in Best Compiled and Best Constructed will be judged on their costume, character accuracy and stage presence.
4. Judging will be conducted live as competitors walk on stage.
5. The Judge's decision is final, and no further correspondence or discussion will be entered into.

READY TO APPLY?

Please click the link here to complete your application. We look forward to seeing you at the Canberra Nara Candle Festival Cosplay Competition!

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If you need to contact the event organisers about your costume:

Email: info@visabel.com.au

Website: <https://visabel.com.au/>

Download this information pack:



REGISTER HERE



PARKING



ARRIVAL AND PARKING

Regular bus services from the city will be available. Please visit the Transport Canberra Website for information on routes and timetables that best suit your travel needs.

[Timetables - Transport Canberra \(act.gov.au\)](https://transport.canberra.gov.au/)

A free shuttle bus service will operate for the Canberra Nara Candle Festival. Details of shuttle bus routes, pick-up locations, and operating times will be available on the Canberra Nara Candle Festival website closer to the event.

For more information on the Canberra Nara Candle Festival please visit:

<https://nara.events.canberra.com.au/>

