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## High Speed Rail (HSR) Announcement Bitter Sweet for Capital Region

Canberra Business Council today welcomed the announcement by the Labor Party that, if re-elected, it would fund a study into HSR in Australia.

“This is great news”, Chris Faulks, CEO of Canberra Business Council said today. “Canberra Business Council has lobbied for such a study for the past two years. And earlier this year we enthusiastically supported the CRC for Rail Innovation’s Report ‘*High Speed Rail: Strategic Information for the Australian Context*’” (<http://www.railcrc.net.au/publications>) which concluded that such a detailed study into building a HSR network along the east coast of Australia is needed”.

Ms Faulks said a HSR network along the east coast of Australia would not only be a major nation-building infrastructure project, it has the potential to have a transformational impact on Australian society and the economy.

“That is the good news”, Ms Faulks said. “However the disappointing news for the Capital Region is that it appears the study will only look at the cost-benefit of building a HSR network north from Sydney to Newcastle and not look at a similar analysis south to the Capital Region. “

“Any study of HSR must evaluate the cost-benefits of building a network BOTH north from Sydney to Newcastle and south to Canberra,” Ms Faulks said. “I hope this is not another example of the National Capital missing out as it did in the Infrastructure Australia funding round when the ACT was the only State or Territory in Australia to NOT receive funding for an infrastructure project.”

“Apart from the national benefits, the potential economic benefits to Canberra and the Capital Region are incredibly significant”, Ms Faulks said. “As an example, a HSR link between Sydney and Canberra would allow Canberra Airport to act as a supplementary international gateway for both passenger and freight services, relieving congestion at Sydney International Airport.”

“Canberra Business Council agrees that the challenges of building a HSR network in Australia are substantial including securing high levels of government support, achieving the right funding model which provides a balance of public and private sector funding, challenges in land acquisition, infrastructure requirements and environmental issues.”

“Despite these challenges we are facing a very different situation now from when the last proposal for HSR was considered a decade ago”, Chris Faulks said. “The CRC report highlighted just how much has changed globally in that time. Apart from environmental changes, there has been exponential growth in HSR throughout the world.”

“The Council has advocated for a HSR network from Melbourne to Brisbane via Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle for a number of years. Such a network has the potential to address increasingly vital national issues such as population growth and congestion in our major cities; environmental pressures and airport and highway congestion. It would also be enormously beneficial in opening up regional Australia, including the Capital Region”

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