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BENEFITS FOR ACT IN FEDERAL BUDGET

The 2011-12 Federal Budget's focus on building a skilled workforce, funding for the Centenary of Canberra and support for small business will all benefit the ACT, according to Canberra Business Council.

"Local businesses are finding it increasingly tough to find and attract workers not only because of the ACT's current low unemployment rate but because they are operating in new and emerging sectors that require a workforce with skills not traditionally provided through our education and training systems.

"This Budget commits \$3 billion over six years for new skills initiatives that ensure the skills of our workforce better meet the needs of industry.

"This funding includes a partnership with industry to deliver around 130,000 high quality training places and \$1.75 billion for reform of the vocational education and training system.

"I urge the ACT Government to work with the Federal Government to finalise a VET reform package they can both support in order to secure our share of this funding and improve training here in Canberra," Canberra Business Council CEO, Ms Chris Faulks said.

"The size of the available skilled workforce in Australia will grow through an extra 16,000 skilled migration places being made available in the regions and support to help more people complete apprenticeships and move more efficiently through their training.

The Budget also provides \$6 million for programs to promote the Centenary of Canberra. This funding will allow the ACT to engage with communities around Australia.

"While this is not as much funding as the Council called for in its Pre-Budget submission, it is still very welcome as it will make sure more Australians are part of the celebrations marking this important milestone in the history of Canberra as the national capital," Ms Faulks said.

In addition, the Budget provides \$20 million for development of the National Arboretum and \$42 million for redevelopment of Constitution Avenue.

"Funding to upgrade Constitution Avenue has previously been promised but never delivered. It is great to see this commitment being made as part of the Federal Government's support for the Centenary of Canberra. This work is designed to recognise Constitution Avenue's national significance as the axis of the Parliamentary Triangle and finally deliver Walter Burley Griffin's vision for this area.

"I commend the Federal Government on the \$33.9 million and \$2 million provided for the Australian War Memorial and National Gallery respectively. Unfortunately this funding does not offset the negative impact efficiency dividends continue to have on the ability of our national institutions to house, document, research, secure and share our national treasures."

Canberra Business Council also supports funding for Infrastructure Australia to strengthen its role in ensuring a cohesive and efficient national approach to infrastructure development and investment.

"CBC welcomes the initiatives announced tonight that are designed to improve cash flow and reduce the taxation burden for small business," Ms Faulks said, "and we look forward to more detail on how these will work."

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