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CANBERRA BUSINESS COUNCIL

Canberra – “the meeting place of the nation” A Convention Centre for the Nation

The Canberra Business Council is taking the lead in a push to deliver a new *Convention Centre for the Nation* in Canberra. As the National Capital of Australia and the seat of the National Parliament it is appropriate that Canberra should have a world-class conference or convention facility where Australians can proudly host significant national and international meetings. The Centenary of Canberra in 2013 is the ideal time to open such a centre.



By Chris Faulks
CEO, Canberra Business Council

As an indication of just how serious and committed the Council and the private sector are to this project, the Canberra business community is prepared to contribute one third of the cost of the project development phase and is well on its way to reaching its target of \$250,000. The ACT Government has matched this with a commitment of \$250,000, contingent on the new Australian Government matching the \$250,000 contributions of the private sector and ACT Government.

What is required now is a clear path forward to deliver the facility to coincide with Canberra’s Centenary celebrations.

There is a broad consensus that a new Convention Centre facility is required in the national capital. The Territory’s inability as the National Capital to stage the important CHOGM conference in 2001 indicated the inadequacy of the present conference facilities. Then in March 2006 the Centenary of Canberra Task Force released a blueprint recommending an “International Convention Facility/ Meeting Place” as a Centenary legacy project. The Task Force suggested that “this has long been identified as a significant gap in Canberra’s infrastructure”.

The ACT Government, the business community, and the tourism and convention industry all publicly support a new Convention Centre for the ACT and acknowledge that the current Convention Centre, even with its much-needed recent refurbishment, is inadequate for the future needs of the nation’s Capital. The upgrade of the current facility has really only provided a short-term “breathing space” while a new Convention Facility/Meeting Place which is iconic in design and

reflective of the status of Canberra as the nation’s capital is designed and built.¹

The Council’s push for a new National Convention Centre is not just about another building for Canberra. Such a world-class facility would benefit businesses in the ACT and region and improve the sustainability of the ACT economy by expanding the number of non-public sector employment positions located in Canberra and allowing local businesses to benefit from delegate expenditures (estimated to be in the vicinity of \$550 per delegate per day).

It also offers advantages to the Australian Government, as it will permit the organisation of conferences of national and international stature in the National Capital, under world-class security conditions, proximate to the national Parliament and Executive. This would provide economic savings to the Australian Government as well as adding status to the National Capital.

The Canberra Business Council has included this proposal in its Federal Budget submission and looks forward to the Australian Government coming on board with the ACT Government and the private sector in the ACT and surrounding region to deliver this major infrastructure project in time for the celebration of the Centenary of Canberra.

For more information on the proposal for a new Convention Centre visit www.canberrabusiness-council.com.au or phone (02) 62474199.

¹The mean daily expenditure of delegates at conventions is estimated as being \$556.52 for interstate delegates and \$554.23 for international delegates – see Deery, Jago, Fredline and Dwyer *The National Business Events Study – An Evaluation of the Australian Business Events Sector* Sustainable Tourism CRC 2005.



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