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## **LIGHT RAIL CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES**

Canberra businesses were treated to expert presentations on competition and contract law, with a particular focus on tendering for work on major infrastructure projects, at the first information forum held by the newly formed Light Rail Business Link program, yesterday.

Canberra Business Chamber, in partnership with Capital Metro Agency, has established the Light Rail Business Link program to help local businesses get “project ready” to take advantage of the opportunities created by investment in light rail in the ACT.

The presentations from two highly respected small business experts provided in-depth information, advice, education and networking opportunities to new and existing businesses, which is a priority for the Program.

Both speakers stressed the importance of reviewing contracts and seeking legal advice when entering into any new business agreement.

Deputy Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Dr Michael Schaper, said 30 per cent of small businesses spend less than 9 minutes reviewing contracts before agreeing to them, but a new law coming into force in November 2016, will provide small business with additional protections.

Under the *Treasury Legislation Amendment (Small Business and Unfair Contract Terms) Bill 2015* unfair terms in standard form small business contracts will be void. An example of an unfair term might be a clause that places all responsibility for any liability on the small business even if they are not at fault.

Australian Small Business Commissioner, Mark Brennan emphasised the importance of businesses understanding who they are signing a contract with.

He explained that when working on large government infrastructure projects, businesses often assume their agreement is underwritten by the government, but the reality is such contracts are often with another business that is either delivering the project or sub-contracting themselves.

Light Rail Business Link Program Manager, Ben Maguire, said the objective of the Light Rail Business Link program is to encourage and support Canberra businesses to take advantage of the opportunities created by major local infrastructure projects like the Light Rail project.

“The ACT Light Rail Project presents a major opportunity for businesses across industries – from manual labour companies to professional services,” Mr Maguire said.

“This program aims to improve industry engagement and strengthen local business capacity, improve business engagement along the light rail corridor through targeted engagement and reference groups, explore and identify new opportunities and new business models, and deliver marketing and communications activities related to the program.

“This forum has provided insight and understanding of how businesses should be aware of contracts, but also the opportunities these projects can provide. I am sure all attendees were inspired and took something away to think about and work on.

“Our first Light Rail Business Link forum will be one of many more to come and we hope future presentations from experts like Dr Schaper and Mr Brennan will provide informative and sound advice to support Canberra businesses.”

Any local businesses wishing to take part in the Light Rail Business Link program and be kept informed of future events, can visit [canberrabusiness.com/services/programs/light-rail-business-link/](https://canberrabusiness.com/services/programs/light-rail-business-link/) and complete the online contact form.

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