



2016 ELECTION IN FOCUS – DESTINATION 2030 COMING INTO SIGHT

Canberra Business Chamber's assessment of the major parties' policy positions against its own vision for Canberra, *Destination 2030*, reveals some positive first steps along this roadmap for the future, with all of the parties picking up key elements of the [2030 Plan](#).

"We believe the Canberra Region needs a cooperative and cohesive approach between governments, business, the community and Canberrans in order to create a prosperous and resilient region," Canberra Business Chamber CEO, Robyn Hendry explained. "Therefore, whichever party wins this weekend, we are seeking a forward-looking ACT Government committed to policies which contribute to the objectives outlined in *Destination 2030*."

With under one week to polling day, Canberra Business Chamber has reflected on the policy positions of the major parties to assess how they align with its plan for building the Canberra of the future. While it has assessed publicly made statements, the Chamber understands there is bipartisan support for many initiatives being discussed during the campaign.

"Linking to our five core themes – Liveable, International, Connected, Agile and Resilient – we see many positive commitments and some missed opportunities," Ms Hendry said.

Liveable

"Each of the parties are to be commended on their initiatives to increase active and public transport," Ms Hendry praised. "Whilst this is positive, it is important to ensure major infrastructure projects bring significant return to the economy and support creation of local jobs and economic diversification. We are concerned about the negative impact cancelling signed contracts can have on the ACT's ability to attract inward investment – investment that is critical to the growth and development of the region."

A range of other announcements related to improved infrastructure planning and investment are on the agenda from both ACT Labor and the Canberra Liberals. These are supported as well as initiatives to upgrade and rejuvenate local shopping precincts, which clearly supports small business.

"All parties have also made a number of welcome announcements related to inclusion and accessibility for the most vulnerable members of our community," Ms Hendry said

A key recommendation of *Destination 2030* is creation of a Committee for Canberra to champion the city and region. This has been embraced by the ACT Greens as well as funding to improve the city's social, cultural and arts life.

International

Internationalisation of our region will be assisted by ACT Labor's \$770,000 fund to attract overseas flights to Canberra as well as all of the parties' commitments to invest in events and tourism infrastructure.

"Support from the Liberals and Labor for the Canberra Convention Bureau will help attract conferences and visitors to the ACT and position our city as a knowledge hub." Ms Hendry applauded. "However, we are exceptionally disappointed that only the Greens have to date publicly indicated clear support for progressing development of the Australian Forum as soon as possible."

"Initial results from the Brand Canberra Program, introduced by Labor, are promising in terms of lifting the profile of our region and its local producers and businesses. We would like to see this program continued as the best results for city branding programs are gained over 10 years."

Connected

A key goal of this core theme is to improve connectivity throughout the Canberra Region to enable it become more integrated.

Each of the parties have indicated support for major road upgrades. While these are welcomed by the Chamber, it feels guidance could have been provided to the Canberra voting population by parties making a public commitment to secure funding for major network upgrades, principally the Barton Highway and Pialligo Avenue to the NSW border.

“We also believe the parties could do more to support business growth and improvement. The Chamber is pleased by plans around development of innovation districts and co-working hubs, testing of autonomous vehicles in the ACT, attracting Defence and high tech jobs to the region, and a Canberra Tech Partnership,” Ms Hendry said.

Agile

While both the Liberals and Labor have dedicated welcome funding for schools, Canberra Business Chamber thinks this is one area that requires more attention.

It is particularly interested in further plans for growing the number of students across the vocational landscape. “We are calling for a long-term strategy underpinned by partnerships between public and private sector employers and the institutions that teach and skill our workforce,” Ms Hendry said.

“The Chamber is also interested in seeing plans for growing the number of CIT students and our university sector. On this note, ACT Labor’s additional \$3 million for Study Canberra, commitment to directly fund CIT to a minimum of 70 per cent of total ACT Government funding for VET and support for up-skilling and reskilling women and mature-aged workers are positive initiatives.” The Greens have also stated they will prioritise government VET funding to CIT and improve links between education providers and industry.

ACT Labor’s 100 new scholarships to grow the science, maths, technology, engineering and language teaching workforce, is also in line with *Destination 2030*’s demand to increase student uptake of STEM subjects.

“As we build and diversify our economy, it is key that we are able to educate, train and attract the most appropriate and talented individuals to meet the current and future needs of businesses of the Canberra Region.

“Canberra businesses are exceptionally innovative and we think they have much to offer, not only in improving the quality of service delivery, but in reducing government spending,” Ms Hendry explained.

Two key Chamber recommendations for all candidates is to collaborate and work with the business sector to deliver non-core government activities through the private sector, and increase opportunities for local small businesses to win ACT Government contracts.

“The Canberra Liberals have now publicly stated their position on these key issues,” Ms Hendry revealed. “It will assist local business by streamlining procurement with a view to increasing opportunities for small and medium enterprises and increasing the local weighting factor on all ACT Government tenders to 10 per cent. The Greens also intend to assist local companies and social enterprises to secure ACT Government projects.”

Destination 2030 highlights the need for a transparent regulatory environment. The Chamber believes the Liberal’s resolution to not sign an MoU with Unions ACT on procurement of works and services will create more transparency in procurement processes for all.

Resilient

ACT Labor and Greens have both announced initiatives to support economic diversification and strengthen the hospitality and entertainment industries. Canberra Liberals plans to help businesses through its job package and encouraging more development in town centres by removing the Lease Variation Change.

“All parties have released policies designed to protect our environment,” Ms Hendry praised. “However, we still want business to be further incentivised to develop and adopt renewable energy technologies.

“They have each embraced ideas that will help build a city and region that is liveable, international, connected, agile and resilient. The Chamber looks forward to working with whomever is in Government for the betterment of our region as a whole. This requires policies with vision beyond the election cycle. We encourage parties to continue to think big and hope between now and election day more initiatives will be announced that will help us on our journey to 2030.”

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