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ROADS COMING TO CANBERRA, BUT PUBLIC SECTOR BEING DRIVEN OUT

Canberra Business Chamber welcomes the Federal Budget measures announced tonight that will encourage business growth and employment, but is concerned by the Commonwealth Government's continued push for public sector decentralisation.

"We are pleased by the continued measures that will eventually see all businesses only subject to a tax rate of only 25 per cent and extension of the instant asset write-down for small businesses for a further year," Canberra Business Chamber CEO, Robyn Hendry said.

"These will support Canberra Region businesses to grow and employ. The individual tax measures should also result in Canberrans having more disposable income and this will benefit the local economy.

"Less welcome is the Government's decentralisation agenda, with a significant number of jobs to be relocated out of Canberra. In a number of these instances jobs are going to other capital cities, which discounts arguments that agencies are being shifted to support regional development.

"While some of these moves are logical, such as basing the Regional Development and Cities Inland Rail Unit in regional areas, but in other cases this will simply diminish one of the ACT's largest industries and employers, and potentially dilute a globally acknowledged gold standard of public policy development.

The Budget provides infrastructure investment, health spending, and project funding that will benefit the Canberra Region.

"Providing \$200m for Monaro and Barton Highway upgrades will better connect our region," Ms Hendry said.

"Canberra businesses are strong players in the cybersecurity, space industry, ICT, digital, defence industries, and research and development fields. The Commonwealth will be investing in these sectors in coming years and we will work to ensure Canberra SMEs can compete for this business.

"The National Gallery will receive over \$16 million for maintenance and the National Library, National Museum, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies will be key players in delivery of a \$47 million project to celebrate the 250th anniversary of James Cook.

"A focus on skills training and helping older Australians who want to keep working to stay in the labour market will contribute positively to the nation's productivity and the ACT's pool of skilled workers.

"Canberra businesses are increasingly exporting so we will watch closely to see how the \$20 million for SME Export Hubs can help continue their expansion into overseas markets. We also welcome export support for defence industries and our wine producers."

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