

Australia Forum

A CENTRE FOR SIGNIFICANT EVENTS, MEETINGS AND DIALOGUE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL

MEDIA STATEMENT

27 March 2010

The Australia Forum: A New Vision for our National Capital

Canberra's wonderful institutions provide a strong foundation of national pride and contemplation. Millions visit the Australian War Memorial, the National Gallery, the National Museum, the National Library, the National Archives, Questacon and the national Portrait Gallery each year. Places of fun, as well as of learning, they reflect the richness of our lives, history and culture. They hold a mirror to Australia.

Alongside them, Parliament House – and Old Parliament House – symbolise Canberra as capital of a nation. They give voice to the political debates of representative democracy.

One key institution is missing from the landscape. There needs to be a non-partisan place for public engagement on matters of national and global significance, which can act as a democratic counterpoint to the two chambers of Parliament, the Government of the day and the agencies of the Australian Public Service which deliver its policies.

Peter Shergold, formerly the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, today announced the beginning of a process to transform that spirit and vision into bricks and mortar. He is the Chair of a Steering Committee which will push for an Australia Forum to be built in Canberra. The members of the Committee are eminent and distinguished by their respect for Canberra as Australia's capital:

- Professor Peter Shergold, AC, Macquarie Group Foundation Professor, Centre for Social Impact, UNSW (Chair)
- Dr Dawn Casey, Director, Powerhouse Museum and formerly Director, National Museum of Australia
- Professor Ian Chubb, AC, Vice Chancellor, Australian National University
- General Peter Cosgrove, AC, MC Chair of the Australia War Memorial Council
- Ms Virginia Haussegger, ABC News presenter, journalist and writer
- Mr Rupert Myer, AM, Chairman of the National Gallery of Australia

According to Professor Shergold, "we are drawn together by the desire to create in Canberra a forum for public discourse, a centre of democratic dialogue, which will allow people across the nation to engage and participate in the greater issues of the day".

Supported by Canberra Business Council and the ACT Government, the Steering Committee looks to the establishment of a symbolic meeting place in which to hold the nation's big conversations about Australia and its place in the world. It will be open to diverse communities to discuss matter such as security, trade and foreign policy, economic and social well-being, education, environmental sustainability and the significance of the arts, religion and sport to national life.



Australia Forum

A CENTRE FOR SIGNIFICANT EVENTS, MEETINGS AND DIALOGUE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL



The first steps toward this ambitious goal have already been undertaken. Following a highly competitive international and domestic procurement process, a consulting alliance group led by Ernst & Young has been appointed to complete a Scoping Study for the Australia Forum examining the need, benefit and facility requirements. The team brings considerable international and national expertise to this specialised field research and analysis. The study itself is expected to be completed by the end of this calendar year.

According to Professor Shergold, the Steering Committee is in no doubt that “the path ahead will be challenging. Yet we share a strong belief that Australian democracy will be well served by having a place in which large numbers of people can be brought together in Canberra to participate in the affairs of the nation. It will give voice to citizenry. It will be The Australia Forum.”

Media Contact:
Lincoln Hawkins

0438 285855

lhawkins@beaconhill.net.au



Canberra Business Council 02 6247 4199
www.canberrabusinesscouncil.com.au