

# MEDIA RELEASE



Wednesday 23 September 2020

## Investment in school infrastructure a key to economic recovery

Local businesses and industry groups have today welcomed ACT Labor's commitment to invest \$99 million into improving educational infrastructure in public schools through renewal, expansion, repairs and maintenance across the city, and the creation of 650 jobs (and estimate an additional 1200 jobs in new and expanded schools spend). The announcement is part of their bid to boost ACT jobs to 250,000 by 2025.

Business Groups have called on all political parties to commit to spend infrastructure money in every single Canberra School over the next four years.

Master Builders ACT CEO Michael Hopkins said "We know through the lived experience of the Global Financial Crisis that the Building the Education Revolution (BER) was critical in our quick economic recovery from that crisis. As we face an event bigger crisis than that as we move to recover from the COVID-19 Induced Recession, we need all political parties to be thinking immediately about directing their budgets towards driving construction activity across the city.

"The BER Program, which commenced in 2009 was really central to creating employment opportunities through capital works funding and providing immediate infrastructure benefits to our community. And whilst there were lessons learnt through that roll-out the underlying principles were as sound then as they are today," Mr Hopkins said.

ACT Executive Director of the Property Council of Australia, Adina Cirson, said, "What was also critical through the BER program was that the planning system was charged with being flexible enough to make sure projects got through the planning system, through DA exemptions and removal of third party appeal rights. It was an approach that was utilised in extraordinary circumstances so that funding could flow, construction could commence and every school and every community across the city benefited.

"Today is no different - and we must be taking a more than business as usual approach to keep the construction industry pipeline of work coming, which is why we welcome Labor's commitment to this educational infrastructure investment," Ms Cirson said.

Canberra Business Chamber CEO Graham Catt concluded by saying, "Job creation in the private sector must be central to the policy approaches taken by the next ACT Government. Creating new jobs and protecting existing ones in any industry has enormous flow on effects to the broader economy and supports local business."

**ENDS**

**Media contacts - for interviews, comment, and further information:**

# MEDIA RELEASE



*Graham Catt, CEO, Canberra Business Chamber: 0414 980 944*

*Michael Hopkins, CEO, Master Builders ACT: 0418 984 594*

*Adina Cirson, ACT Executive Director, Property Council of Australia: 0429 579 972*