STATE OF THE TERRITORY – 2016

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It's great to be joined by so many community and business leaders today, and I thank the Business Chamber for this opportunity.

I particularly appreciate the attendance of leaders of our higher education sector – your efforts are reflected in our growing reputation as Australia's university capital, and the future of our city relies so much on your ongoing work.

You will find no stronger supporter than me, and you are in a room full of people who are willing you to succeed.

Introduction: Ambition and Advantage

Today I want to talk with you about the **ambition** and **advantage** of Canberra. A year ago, at this event, I outlined my vision for the Territory as Chief Minister: **a vision of Canberra taking control of its own future**.

A vision for a Canberra that relies on no one's efforts but our own.

One of the world's most liveable and competitive cities – welcoming to all. And I outlined a plan to deliver on this vision:

By constructing a modern transport network; by creating a more economically self-reliant Canberra that drives job creation in emerging industries; and by conceiving of Canberra as a true "knowledge capital", where our world-class universities have structural advantages over their Australian and international competitors.

We have made significant practical progress towards this ambition over the past year:

Direct international flights to Singapore **and** Wellington – **secured**. Construction of a new world-class teaching hospital – **commenced**.

Legislation to enable the transformation of the University of Canberra campus, and cement UC's rapid rise up international higher education rankings – **passed**.

A world-leading light rail provider – **selected**.

Legal, regulated, safe and affordable ride-share services – **introduced**.

New wind and solar farms – **commissioned, and some already operating**;

A new goal that our city will be powered entirely by renewable energy by 2025 **– ahead of schedule**.

Stamp duty – **cut again**, and insurance levies **abolished – gone for good on 1 July**.

Economic growth last year **– doubled**.

And the ultimate test – 3,300 new jobs created together.

This is the business of good government – vision, plan, and progress – and it is what my team has worked on delivering every day.

But what our city needs now is more than good management and progress, but leadership in a genuine, collaborative, long-term project for this decade and beyond.

That's why we're here today.

Canberra: Statement of Ambition

On the back of this significant progress, now is the time build on our unique advantage to stand out from every other Australian and Asia- Pacific city.

Many of you know I have been working over recent months with Dr Tim Williams, and talking with leaders in our community, including many people here in this room, about how we can link the unique strengths this city has today, with the opportunities this city will have in the years to come.

Many of you will know Tim as the driving force, along with Lucy Turnbull, on the Committee for Sydney, the independent think tank whose mission is to rejuvenate Sydney – a very big job!

Over the past year, Tim has also spent a lot of time in Canberra, working with my Government on the **Statement of Ambition for Canberra**, which I am delighted to launch today.

The Statement is the key document I will be using to promote Canberra to the world – most immediately, when I lead a business, tourism and transport delegation to Singapore and China next month.

And it is also a key statement of what comes next for Canberra:

Winning the global contest for investment and talent – opening and diversifying our knowledge-based economy – better metropolitan infrastructure – and integrated smart-city initiatives.

This is what makes it a dual Statement:

An expression of our **ambition** – and our **advantage**.

That is the key to success for our city in the years to come.

To have the ambition to become a truly internationally engaged, world-leading city of the 21st Century.

And to build on our advantages – cultural, educational, economic, transport, urban design and lifestyle – to help us achieve that goal.

We need to "capitalise on our assets", as the Business Chamber's Destination 2030 document puts it.

We will never succeed selling to ourselves.

This Statement sets out *how* and *why we will* succeed.

This is our line in the sand: it's time to show the world what they're missing if they don't have a presence here.

And it's time to show them why our businesses, people and ideas are worth investing in and buying from.

We have every reason to be optimistic and ambitious. That is why my government is taking the bold steps now to deliver the benefits Canberrans need over the next 20 years.

But we don't have a day to waste.

That's why I'm here today, driving the project forward locally.

That's why I'll be standing up for Canberra and for good public policy for Australia at the COAG table tonight and tomorrow.

That's why I'll be in the air next month to tell Canberra's story in Singapore and China.

And that's why we are governing right through our term. We're not shying away from important decisions because it's an election year – if they need to be made, we are making them.

I will be blunt: Canberra cannot fall behind or miss long-term opportunities because of any artificial countdown to October.

Light rail

For example, we are getting on with the city-defining project that will help Canberra avoid the productivity-crushing, and morale-destroying, traffic congestion that characterises most other Australian cities.

I spent some time here last year outlining the fundamental benefits that an efficient, reliable light rail system will deliver for the fastest-growing parts of Canberra, as well as driving economic growth and urban renewal along the corridor.

In the year since, we have finalised our comprehensive assessment of shortlisted bidders, and selected a world-class consortium including John Holland and Mitsubishi Corporation with Deutsche Bahn International as the operator.

That is a strong endorsement of our city in itself: these world-class partners have a proven international track record, and **they want to do business here in Canberra.**

The competitive nature of the procurement meant that costs have come in well under what we originally allowed for.

To put it in context, the total cost will be equivalent to less than one per cent of the ACT Budget over the next 20 years.

Comparatively speaking, for every dollar we're budgeting for light rail, we're investing $10 into our roads, footpaths and parks.

Just as we promised before the 2012 election, work will start this year – construction of the first stage will be completed in late 2018 – and operations will begin in early 2019 – sooner than previous estimates, meaning less disruption and faster access for Canberrans.

Simply, for a city the size of ours, at the stage of development we have reached, this is the **right project, at the right time, at the right price**.

Transport integration

Last year I also made the point that this project is part of an integrated public transport system for our city – essential now, and absolutely critical to Canberra's ongoing success 20 years from now.

Since then the Government has released our Transport Improvement Plan and Light Rail Network Plan, which set out clearly how every Canberran benefits from a transport network that is convenient, reliable, affordable and efficient. It is mirrored by the Chamber's Destination 2030's support for an integrated transport network.

Work has begun. A single agency, Transport Canberra, will commence on 1 July to join the bus and light rail operations, our road network and walking and riding infrastructure.

Transport Canberra's key deliverable is: **one network, one ticket and one fare**.

We must do this to achieve our future ambitions; and consolidate our current advantages.

If we want life in this city to keep its essential character, integrated public transport is an absolute must.

That will be our **competitive advantage over every other major East Coast city**.

Direct flights

If light rail and integrated public transport are an opportunity to connect every part of our city, there is no bigger opportunity to connect Canberra to the world than securing direct international flights.

They are a fundamental game changer.

This achievement is a massive statement of confidence in us as a growing, high value city.

Singapore Airlines – indisputably one of the world's best airlines – has announced to the world that Canberra is a great place to do business.

They see our advantage – but this city had the ambition.

This breakthrough moment for our city was only possible because the Airport and the Government saw the opportunity, and did the hard work – over the long haul in more ways than one – to make a compelling case.

These things don't just happen, airlines don't just stumble across growth areas – we all stuck our neck out to make the case for our city, and now it will pay off for every business in Canberra.

The opportunities for Canberra businesses arising from these flights are limitless. I thought ANU Vice-Chancellor Brian Schmidt summed it up beautifully when he said to me, "we will be six hours from Singapore and eight minutes from the airport." There **are no other major Australian cities** that can offer that convenience and immediacy.

And it could be even closer – I will be taking to the election a commitment to extend the light rail to the next stage. The Parliamentary triangle is an obvious extension, and beyond that the airport is very, very close.

I urge everyone in this room to take the time to investigate what opportunities there are for you. There are serious buyers in Singapore and the Asia-Pacific region that want the high quality goods and services the Canberra region has to offer.

Now we can deliver them – **why shouldn't you take the advantage**?

Growing our Higher-Education sector

An area where we are already pulling away from our competition is our higher education offering, with its associated research and commercialisation arms.

It's something I am determined to support with every lever Government has at its disposal.

That's why, for instance, over the past year we have worked with UC to ensure the legislation and governance structures are in place to foster growth in one of our most important employers.

Because a strong and ambitious UC benefits everyone in this room.

We must build a comparative advantage in retaining smart people, to attract smart businesses and create smart jobs.

We are already on the world stage in this area. We have just been ranked the 17th best student city in the world – alongside Vienna and Auckland, and ahead of New York – a big achievement, but still room to improve.

That's why we are working with the ANU, UC, UNSW Canberra, ACU and CIT to see how we can best cater for the students of today, who will be the industry leaders and creators of tomorrow.

It is essential to improve the liveability of our city if we are to keep these people, and their ideas, here in Canberra.

I particularly want to acknowledge the vision and hard work of Professor Stephen Parker for driving the University of Canberra into the highest echelons of universities around the world. His legacy is a University that is confident in its direction; a vibrant and inclusive campus; and recognised world-ranked institution that has drawn a leading academic administrator to carry on his vision.

It's a testament to our universities that people like Professor Brian Schmidt, and now Professor H. Deep Saini, want to lead them.

And this research excellence directly translates into highly skilled jobs for our city and our young people.

For example, we are working with ANU and UNSW Canberra to develop opportunities in the space and spatial economy. This industry, currently estimated to be worth US$330 billion world wide and growing at 8% per year,

The recent Defence White Paper committed the Commonwealth to spend 9% of Defence's capital expenditure on intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, space, electronic warfare and cyber security. Canberra is well-placed to house this new investment.

We are working closely with local partners ANU, UNSW Canberra, UC and Data61 on the development of the cyber security industry in Canberra. Because of this close relationship, we were able to respond immediately when the Commonwealth Government announced the establishment of a Cyber Security Industry Growth Centre, and mount a compelling case why it must have a strong presence in Canberra.

The CBR Innovation Network also brings together our key institutions to support innovation and the commercialisation of good ideas. This model is attracting interest from all around Australia.

Attracting the best

I can't emphasise this too strongly: to win as a city, we must win ***people***. In today's highly mobile world, simply being the seat of Government isn't enough to attract the world's best and brightest any more.

We need to offer the lifestyle, event and housing options that people want.

We are already the world's most liveable city, so we start with a significant advantage.

Jobs now follow smart people and talent to the places they want to be. That's why liveability is so central to Canberra's advantages. And that means better access to talent for our businesses and higher education and research facilities.

Just last week I met an owner of a growing business who has moved his base of operations from NSW – in part, he said, because of the payroll tax, stamp duty, housing and workforce advantages over other states.

My Government's ambitious urban renewal program is shaping the way our city grows to reflect our contemporary community: how and where people want to live, to improve our productivity, liveability and economic competitiveness.

Our challenge is not to be a monument to the twentieth century's conception of a good lifestyle. Rather, we must be a showcase of how the people of this century want to live and work.

Regulatory and public sector reform

Growing our own generation of industry leaders, and getting them to join us – and to stay – is only half the battle of creating 21st century jobs

Everyone here knows that if someone has a good business idea, **I want to find 100 ways we can make it happen, not 100 ways to say no.**

I know that hasn't always been the way it worked here.

So I've challenged the ACT public sector to reflect this ambition in everything they do, and they are responding.

Earlier this month, I introduced another Red Tape Reduction package focussed on practical measures to help businesses strengthen their operations, expand their services, and employ more people.

This will build on the great work of Access Canberra in bringing together customer service and regulatory agencies to make things easier, simpler, and faster.

And the recently-appointed Local Industry Advocate, Kate Lundy, is working hard with great local businesses like Smartward and others, so that everyone has a fair chance to show Government how their products will improve efficiency and productivity.

There's big picture regulatory reform happening too. We were the first jurisdiction in Australia to regulate ride-sharing, with new entrants delivering immediate cost and convenience benefits for people moving around our city.

I am sure many people in this room have used Uber since it commenced in October. More platforms are entering the market, and costs like compulsory third party insurance are being driven down to more accurately reflect risk, not monopoly pricing.

That benefits taxi drivers and owners, new entrants – and, most importantly, consumers.

And it's why we are pursuing opportunities in semi-autonomous and autonomous vehicles. We recognise the mobility and growth benefits that will flow from attracting one or more of the major players to Canberra.

Autonomous vehicles are not a mass transit solution and they are not the solution to congestion. But they are a very promising complement to strong public transport networks and will give mobility to those who need it most, which will make our city even more inclusive.

That's why we have been engaging with the main players in this space – companies like Google and Tesla – to see what structures they need, so that we have the best idea of future advances before we move to develop a particular regulatory regime. That approach worked for ridesharing in the ACT, and it will work for this technology too.

ACT companies, such as Seeing Machines, are also at the forefront of technology supporting autonomous and semi-autonomous vehicles with the work they are doing here and with overseas research partners.

Conclusion

The Canberra Statement of Ambition contains a striking phrase: "A city like no other."

That is the Canberra many people from around the world are coming to know. The sleepy country town of last century, totally subject to the decisions of others, is no more. Our fate and our future are in our hands.

Something's happening in Canberra. **This is a real moment for us**. We can feel it – and not just in Barton and Braddon but from Bonner to Banks.

Canberra's ambition must be to lead the world as a 21st century city – where our digital capability, lifestyle, connectivity, diverse and inclusive community, jobs and opportunities coalesce into a city like no other in our country and our region.

Ours will always be a city of lakes. But ours is a city of *bridges* too: of things we build, of projects we share.

A community with ambition; a city with advantage.

These are coming together to make this Canberra's century.

Thank you.

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