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**2017-18 Detailed Budget Consultation Submission**

**Belconnen Arts Centre Inc. - Key Arts Organisation & Operator Belconnen Arts Centre**

**Introduction & Background – A community’s twenty year campaign to complete an Arts Centre**

The Board, staff, volunteers, participants, visitors and the community of supporters of Belconnen Arts Centre (BAC) are absolutely delighted with the commitment to complete BAC made by the ACT Government and found in the Green and Labor Parliamentary Agreement for the 9th Legislative Assembly:

*“Construct Stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre, to allow a wider range of use by community, artistic and performance groups”*

This commitment to complete BAC’s Stage 2 follows a 20 year story of community activism directed toward creating a cultural and community heart in Belconnen Town Centre and on the shores of Lake Ginninderra.

A brief review of the campaign to complete Belconnen Arts Centre invites an understanding of the time frame and level of commitment required by an engaged community, by their government and of committed individuals and organisations seeking to secure meaningful investment in community and cultural infrastructure.

1997 – Belconnen Cultural Planning Group formulates a cultural plan for Belconnen and provides feedback to ACT Government on the Lakeshore Plan

1998 – Section 187 (BAC site) identified as an ideal location for a cultural centre

2001 - *Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan* includes a cultural site on Emu Bank

2002 - Belconnen Community Service, Belconnen Community Council and Belconnen Cultural Planning Group request ACT Government for Section 187 to be kept for a community cultural centre

2003 – $27,000 in ACT Government funding for Belconnen Arts & Cultural Facilities Study project

2004 - Arts and Heritage Minister allocates $200,000 for design of a community arts and cultural centre for Belconnen

2006 – William Ross Architects engaged to design Stage 1 of Belconnen Arts Centre

2008 – Tender awarded for construction

2009 – BAC Stage 1 opens

2010 – First 12 months BAC achieves 28,000 attendance

2012 - ACT Government allocates $300,000 for Stage 2 plans. BAC wins the first of three Chief Minister’s Inclusion Award for the Arts (2012, 2013 & 2015)

2013 – BAC achieves 40,000 annual attendance

2014 - Cox Architecture delivers Stage 2 Preliminary Sketch Plans and Quantity Surveyor Costing

2015 -

1. BAC commences new 5 year strategic plan and commits to community arts and cultural development (CACD) as the core practice for inclusion in the arts
2. BAC’s IGNITE: Alternative Arts Academy for artists with disability and Dance for People with Parkinson’s become BAC’s core inclusion programs.
3. Select Committee Estimates for 2015-16 Budget recommends completing BAC Stage 2 and Lake Foreshore

2016 -

1. BAC’s commitment to CACD and inclusion practices in the arts secures the Arts Centre’s first national funding from both the Australia Council for the Arts and the Australian Government’s Catalyst fund for IGNITE: Creatives program scheduled for 2017
2. On the final sitting day of 8th ACT Legislative Assembly, the Minister for the Arts tables a petition with 500 plus signatures (produced in 10 days) calling on the ACT Government to commit to a timeline and funding to complete Belconnen Arts Centre
3. During October ACT election campaign Green, Liberal and Labor parties all promise to complete BAC
4. Prior to the election, the Minister for the Arts and the Chief Minister at BAC announce $15 million for construction of BAC Stage 2, $2 million toward operating costs, $225,000 for an architectural lighting system and undertake to complete the Lake Foreshore
5. BAC leads in developing celebrations for Belconnen’s 50th birthday culminating with 5 November’s BELCO Now, the Arts Centre’s largest and most successful community inspired event to date
6. Green and Labor Parliamentary Agreement commits to completion of BAC

**The 2017-18 ACT Budget Consultation Submission**

To assure the timely and successful completion of Belconnen Arts Centre there are a number of questions, opportunities and views about the commitments we believe the ACT’s 2017-18 Budget should set out to provide answers to.

Given the commitment to complete the Arts Centre during the 9th ACT Legislative Assembly what will be the timing of the funds (i.e. cash flow) for the project?

We believe the ACT budget should include detail in both the 2017-18 budget year and in the four year forward estimates to make clear the Government’s time line to complete the Arts Centre. This commitment is required to not only to complete the arts centre but to fulfil the vision in the newly adopted Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan where the completed Arts Centre becomes the cultural and community heart of a town centre on a unique and beautiful lakeside that is integrated successfully into the Emu Bank precinct, a home for the arts, community and cultural events and a destination for dining and entertainment.

*Start & Timing of Funding*

In detailing the ACT Government’s budgetary commitment, or project cash flow for completing BAC, the Government should start the works as soon as possible and then commit to complete the project as quickly as possible. We provide these reasons:

1. The project is ready to go with plans, costings and a development approval in place
2. The Belconnen community has worked toward and consistently advocated for 20 years to develop a community and cultural heart to its town centre and should not have to wait longer than necessary now the commitment to complete BAC has been made
3. Completing BAC will disrupt current operations while the demand for its facilities and services and has never been greater. Therefore committing the maximum amount of funding possible to minimise delay and disruption will reduce the impact on many individuals and groups who consider the activities and their engagement with BAC irreplaceable. This includes people with disability, indigenous and other marginalised members of our community who rely on BAC’s program commitment to inclusion in the arts
4. A further delay will add cost to the project and delay the positive impact on the ACT economy of the project spending

*Lake Ginninderra Foreshore*

The 2017-18 budget needs to advise the extent of the commitment to complete the Lake Ginninderra Foreshore surrounding BAC. We know this includes a long held plan to finally integrate the foreshore and arts centre surrounds with the growing Emu Bank precinct through an infill of the inlet to the immediate east of BAC. And we would also like to understand the extent of landscaping proposed.

Integration of the new Arts Centre facilities with well-designed landscaping will significantly enhance the potential of the Arts Centre to present outdoor activities and inclusion programs including live performances, exhibitions, workshops and community events. Inclusion of a pedestrian and bicycle path would make safe and finally complete the much loved Lake Ginninderra circuit.

While the building of Stage 2 at BAC can be completed without completing the Foreshore, infill and compatible landscaping, the persistence with the current steep, rocky unfinished shoreline poses an untenable safety risk and it is an eyesore which is incompatible with the newly developed Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan. Foreshore completion integrated with building construction works will be the most cost effective approach.

*Development Opportunity*

We believe the planned infill of Lake Ginninderra to the immediate east of BAC is as an important development, and income opportunity, in keeping with the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan’s direction and vision for the Emu Bank precinct. If wisely exploited this new public land could provide a new funding source for the community. Preparation of the 2017-18 budget could take this opportunity into account that has, for example, the potential to assist in funding completion of the Foreshore works. A portion of the created land will be required for BAC external facilities as outlined above.

*Early Access to New Operating Funds*

In relation to the welcome commitment of $2 million in new operating funds the 2017-18 budget should secure the future of the completed facility by enabling access to these funds. Such funds will enable development of a creative program to activate the new facilities and by committing early resources required to establish and generate new trading income from functions and events. Access to new operating funds well in advance of the completed arts centre reopening will be critical to ensuring a viable and sustainable operation able to exploit the full potential of a new facility.

We are keen to develop as soon as possible programs for the new live performance facilities and to establish artist and company residencies that will fulfil our ambition to become a landmark national and international arts organisation that is a leader in community arts and cultural development and inclusion in arts practice. We are also acutely aware of the commercial trading potential of a completed BAC and need to resource and pursue a business development plan to ensure a financially sustainable organisation. We believe access to no less than a quarter of the new operational funding and no later than 18 months prior to completion/opening of BAC would be appropriate.

*BAC is grateful to the ACT Government for this opportunity to make a submission as part of the consultation informing the 2017-18 Budget. We have endeavoured to make our submission brief and to the point and we would be happy to meet with ACT Government officers to provide further detail.*