



# Gift of the century: a refreshed reputation for the nation's capital

By **Scott Hannaford**  
Business Reporter

A group of local marketing professionals is planning a special present for Canberra's 100th birthday — an improved national reputation for the city.

The recently established Canberra chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators will announce plans today to devise a positive image for Canberra that can be used universally in the promotion of the ACT.

President Bob Crawshaw said Canberra continued to come in for unwarranted criticism from outside, and the group was keen to lend its professional skills to try to turn that around in time for the city's centenary in 2013.

"What we are looking for is a series of frameworks, or values that all the organisations that promote Canberra can swing in behind or use," he said.

"We're not telling everyone to say the same thing, but one thing we've found is there doesn't seem to be much consolidation of the message or consistency of promotion."

As the home of Federal Parliament and the core of the country's federal public service, Canberra has long suffered a negative outside image as being a one-dimensional government town.

The group is part of an international association of more than 13,000 businesses in 60 countries and has a chapter in Sydney.

The Canberra chapter includes representatives of the Chief Minister's Department, Actew, the Federal Government and a number of private



**CHANGED VIEW:** Plans are to be announced to devise a positive image for Canberra for universal use.

ACT marketing and public relations firms.

The association intends to contact its international chapters in Washington, Ottawa, London and Paris to glean any lessons those cities had gained in similar projects, and a community forum is also being planned for Canberra in March to involve residents and the local business community.

"We are going to approach all the key organisations, including government, the universities and the national institutions, because they are all doing some good work. Whether they are all singing an individual song or are part of the Canberra choir, that's the question," Mr Crawshaw said.

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## New reputation for the capital

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Australian Capital Tourism chief executive Ross MacDiarmid, who is now in charge of setting the strategic direction for Canberra's branding campaign, said research into the attitudes of visitors clearly showed that the focus for the ACT should remain on it being the place of the Australian story.

"My concern would be that we need to make sure we focus on what visitors are telling us is important and that we do not stray away from that core message of Canberra as the place to tell the Australian story. Internal perceptions might be nice for us, but our job is to look at what other people think of the national capital."

Australian Capital Tourism made minor changes to its See Yourself in Canberra campaign earlier this month, opting to use the term "national capital" instead of

Canberra, to reflect desires of interstate visitors to experience the history of the country when coming to Canberra for a visit. The city's place as the national capital remained the dominant theme in visitor research conducted by ACT authorities, and Mr MacDiarmid said it would remain the key selling point in the city's marketing interstate.

The Chief Minister's Department is also examining a range of activities and events to celebrate the centenary, including initiatives such as the international arboretum, which will leave lasting legacies for the city. There have also been discussions between the ACT and Federal governments over the possibility of the city receiving a new iconic building such as a convention centre or a new Legislative Assembly to mark the milestone.

The association hopes to have a white



paper completed and ready to be issued by  
late March.