

Media Release

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Canberra's new Centre of ICT Excellence Officially Launched Today

Canberra is to become a centre of excellence for research and development in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) with the official launch of the Canberra Node of National ICT Australia Limited (NICTA) in the ACT today.

NICTA is the organisation selected by the Commonwealth Government to establish the nation's pre-eminent Centre of Excellence for ICT research, research training and commercialisation.

NICTA is funded by the Commonwealth Government's Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and the Australian Research Council through 'Backing Australia's Ability' and the ICT Centre of Excellence program.

NICTA's founding members are the Australian National University, the ACT Government, the NSW Government and the University of NSW.

Today's launch celebrates the significant progress that has been made towards establishing ICT research in Canberra at the highest international standard and scale, with the ACT community benefiting from approximately a third of the \$129 million being provided for NICTA from the Commonwealth Government over the next five years.

NICTA's Canberra headquarters have initially been established at the Australian National University. The ACT Government is making a \$10 million contribution to enable NICTA to begin work on establishing a purpose-built building in Civic.

Key management personnel are in place and a world-wide recruitment drive is taking place to attract the world's best researchers in ICT. In addition to this recruitment drive, the Australian National University as a major partner has now officially contributed many of its leading researchers to ensure that NICTA's research effort is off to a flying start.

A number of initial NICTA research programs have already begun. Those being conducted in Canberra include, Wireless Signal Processing, Autonomous Systems and Sensing Technologies, Logic and Computation, Statistical Machine Learning and Sensor Signal Processing, and Systems Engineering and Complex Systems.

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NICTA's plan will see the creation of over 80 research jobs and more than 20 support positions created in the national capital over the next 5 years.

Chairman of NICTA, Neville Roach (AO) said the Canberra Node would play a key role in NICTA's development as it sought to build Australia's ICT research capability and output.

"The generous support of our ACT partners, the ACT Government and ANU, who are each contributing \$20 million to NICTA over 5 years, plus the significant funding by the Commonwealth Government, enables us to create an ICT research, education and commercialisation institution in Canberra which has the capacity to achieve a world class standard of excellence," Mr Roach said.

"The ACT Government's contribution includes cash, payroll concessions and financial support to acquire and develop a significant parcel of land. Add to this the ANU's contribution of staff and other key resources and infrastructure and NICTA's Canberra node is well positioned to grow to the critical mass required to sustain global scale programs."

NICTA CEO, Dr Mel Slater, said NICTA's Canberra presence would deliver significant benefits to the ACT economy and community.

"NICTA's Canberra node is an ICT hub attracting world renowned researchers and students. It will strengthen and stimulate the development of local ICT industries, especially small and medium enterprises, attract industry investment and generate employment in the ACT."

Mr Ted Quinlan MLA, the ACT Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, echoed those sentiments.

"Today marks an exciting step on the path to this city's future. Canberra is set to ensure the local ICT sector capitalises on the opportunities the Canberra Node of NICTA will present."

The ACT Government, a member of NICTA, will ensure collaboration with the local sector to progress our ICT innovation capabilities and to assist the local sector to reach its scientific and commercial potential.

The Minister said, "Importantly NICTA will serve as a catalyst for the development of strong networks and a local cluster of ICT activities and organisations. I welcome the role that NICTA will play in raising the profile of our city, Canberra, the unbeatable lifestyle it offers, and the wealth of talent we have to exploit."

ANU Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Chubb said NICTA would build on the University's achievements in ICT research.

"The ANU is proud to be a major partner in NICTA. This organization holds great promise for the ANU, the Canberra region and the nation, with the capability of generating jobs, investment and a new momentum for ICT research in our region."

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For more information, please contact Peter Russell, NICTA Communications Manager on 02 92024743 or 0438 755 115.