TAKING THE NAME OF THE CAPITAL IN VAIN

Address to the National Press Club, April 4 2012

By Robyn Archer AO
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cR Archer, April 2012, Canberra
Thank you,

Sir William Deane, Patron of the Centenary of Canberra, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land we meet on today and pay my respects to them, their elders past and present, and to the many first peoples who came to this place to meet or to hunt, gather, and trade. The high country was greatly valued.

How much has changed in 200 years? In 100 years?

Let me give you a few examples from the past 12 months of media headlines, largely the work of sub-editors, to indicate the level of respect for this place now.

“Goons, ferals and meowing senators... just another day in Canberra”
(Sydney Morning Herald, April 30, 2011)

Canberra 'issued backpacker's death warrant'
(News.com, November 7, 2011)

Canberra delays pokies technology
(The Australian, February 24, 2012)

and

“Canberra treating public like mugs”

“Condescension, thy name is Canberra”

“Canberra's mixed messages push people towards the boats”

“Proud Timorese are fed up with Canberra's bullying “

“Canberra now a major irritant”

“Exorcising the forces of evil in Canberra”

“Canberra settles after destroying refugee boat”

Why would we be puzzled for even one second that there are some Australians who find it so easy to ‘bash’ their national capital, if Canberra is so often portrayed as such a hateful entity; indeed described relentlessly as an enemy of the people?
Ladies and gentlemen, I am here today, certainly as the Creative Director of the Centenary of Canberra, but also as a proud South Australian who also happens to have lived for long periods in Sydney and Melbourne and worked for substantial periods in Tasmania, Perth, and Darwin to plead with those who work in the media to give 360,000 Australians a break, from now, until the end of 2013, and maybe by then it will have taken on. It’s a very simple plea – when you mean the Federal Government, say explicitly the Federal Government or the Australian Government.

When you mean Canberra, say Canberra. Because they are two different entities. While the new national capital’s beginnings pre-destined this place to serve as the host to federal government, while the city is proud to continue to do so, and the frisson of federal politics here remains fascinating, Canberra is not the same thing as the Federal Government.

I appreciate full well, that our print, audio, televisual and digital media are essential conduits of information, I respect the profession of journalism; and I sincerely thank those, including the ABC, for the partnerships they have already offered in both support and content production for the Centenary of Canberra. These productive partnerships notwithstanding, we should not ignore the fact, that each time the name of the national capital is used in a pejorative context as a substitute to mean the Federal Government it effectively abuses 360,000 Australians in a way that would never happen to the citizens of any other Australian town or city. It causes genuine pain and shame, to the extent that many Canberrans themselves have become apologetic for the place they call home.

Further than the basics, we did a little casual research and found that by and large when it’s good news the media tend to say The Federal Government “The Federal Government today pledged major aid and assistance for earthquake and tsunami relief in Eastern Japan”, and when it’s bad news they say Canberra: “Vic govt lashes out at Canberra’s alpine rules”.

Did you notice that the sub did not say Melbourne lashes out at Canberra’s Alpine rules? Funny that. Canberra’s proud to be so conveniently close to glorious alpine regions, but Canberra is not alpine and has no rules about alpine regions, which are in NSW and in Victoria. So a lot of this synonim actually results in nonsense and non-sequiturs.

I know that people never say London today declared war on the Falkland Islands – it’s always the British Government or Westminster or 10 Downing Street. And I had thought that Americans didn’t substitute Washington for the US government either. Alas – just recently, towards the end of an otherwise utterly inspiring State of the
Union address by President Obama, he said, with reference to Congress, something like “The problem is not with America, the problem is with Washington”. Gee, I wonder how the people of Washington felt about that?

In addition, beyond the sheer non-sequiturs, a number of journalists, and even some much admired elder statesmen, also feel they have permission to knock the national capital. These are frequently people who, for some inexplicable reason, need Canberra to be Sydney.

“Canberra is an angry, dour and bad-mannered place, a drearily conformist totem pole of petty competition… You only have to leave the city for a few days and venture to Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane, or even nearby Goulburn for that matter – and the social climate changes dramatically.”

This writer for the *Spectator* in 2010 is tagged with the information that he has worked in Canberra for 20 years but chooses to live in Queanbeyan. Maaate – if you don’t like it, go somewhere else to work... it’s not that hard: and you might cure that painful case of spleen you appear to have retained for 2 decades? That any magazine would want to print soured opinion of this kind without giving a Canberra devotee an equal chance to put another opinion, indicts that publication as seriously prejudiced.

In any case, what happened to prizing diversity and difference?

I hear other writers, who should know better, praising the idea of ‘the city’ as if there is only one kind of high density sexy city model. That’s simply not the case. Many critics sustain infantile prattle about roundabouts – oh I see, no-one ever in the history of first visiting Sydney ever wound up mistakenly on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and found themselves lost in the wilds of north shore middle class suburbia? Just yesterday I saw a recent piece which was headlined ‘the capital’s cultural cringe’ – what would that be exactly – when the National Gallery of Australia posts the highest attendance ever for any Australian exhibition, when more people per capita attend arts and cultural events than any other Australian city? Even in jest, it’s just not true. There are no cultural cringes in Canberra.

The *Spectator*, again, only too willing to publish opinion as if it is the truth about Australia’s national capital.

“Canberra is an anonymous backwater where people have no place”
Maaaaate – did you ever get out of your car?

Did you ever once think, that this is a very young city? It is changing before our eyes, there are increasing numbers of people, and in terms of human activity, I can’t ever find a night to flop in front of the TV because there is so much on here. If I accept an invitation to two things on one night, I miss out on four, every night of the week. I can’t keep up with the number of exhibitions, performances, intriguing lectures and addresses.

Just because you don’t see it, doesn’t mean it isn’t there; that’s not the city’s fault, it’s your shortcoming in not being curious enough, not adventurous enough. I lived more than a decade in London, was resident in Sydney for thirty years, lived in Melbourne for four years, have spent extended periods in New York, Paris, Tokyo, Mexico City. I love big cities, I enjoy the ‘in ya face’ experience of the megalopolis. And I don’t have a problem with Canberra: I enjoy its difference.

I love its unique combination of village and vista: bicycling from one cool little village to another and being struck along the journey with glimpses of the monumental vistas: love being so close to nature, trees, water, yet never more than 10 minutes from the most intense intellectual, scientific, political endeavour.

And I know many people, who are not Canberrans, who feel the same, the ABC’s Kerry O’Brien and Mark Scott, the author Frank Moorehouse, astronomer Fred Watson, composer Peter Sculthorpe, Capitals and Opals Coach Carrie Graff, three leading members of the Mitchell Giurgola Thorpe team who built Parliament House and chose to stay here more than 25 years ago and are still here living and working. There are as many fans as detractors, it’s just that the latter appear to have the need constantly to whinge and be overtly critical perhaps in the futile hope that somehow our capital will one day upsticks and go somewhere else. Guys, it’s not going to happen.

Whether you think there should have been a different place or different design, it’s here, it’s been here for almost 100 years.

By all means, join Canberrans in thinking positively about the changes this city will need in the twenty-first century: they would all, for instance, rejoice in a high-speed rail network linking Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane with the Capital – what a boon for our western Sydney neighbours, with whom we now share a footy team (who looked pretty good in their very first AFL match). But with a high speed connector, how people would then suddenly see what an exquisitely beautiful place this is to live: quicker to get to work from clean, green Canberra then to cross the city. How
about getting that phlegmatic thing off your chest and start to enjoy what your
capital has to offer. How about looking at what it does have rather than what it
doesn’t – what it is rather than what it is not.

You see I have a couple of thoughts around this ‘permission to knock’ thing.

For a start, we should be clear, that despite appearances and despite these
relentless portrayals, albeit, I will grant, sometimes simply thoughtlessly and not
always maliciously; our early research showed very clearly that a majority of
Australians believe that the Centenary of Canberra is a celebration to be shared by
all Australians. A majority recognise the undeniable fact, that all Australians have a
stake in their national capital, their seat of federal government, the repository of
their national treasures.

Yes there are a handful of dedicated negativists, and we should feel sorry for anyone
who has the capacity to nurture vitriol so close to their bosom for so long, but the
majority of those who bag Canberra have never been here, and so their negative
opinions are formed largely by what they read and the disaffection they have, from
time to time, with Federal Government policy.

The perfectly fine and capable mind of the average Australian is set against its own
capital through silly diatribe about roundabouts and cold climate, and the constant
reinforcement that it is Canberra which must be blamed for any party, politician or
policy they do not like.

Me, checking into any Australian airport – “Good morning Miss Archer, where are
we off to today?” “Canberra” “Oh ya poor thing – roundabouts, freezing, nowhere to
eat, bloody pollies, overpaid public servants”.

I no longer cop this. The bag goes down, the arms fold...

“ So, when were you last there?”

“Ah, yes 30 years ago, well, let me just tell you .... Terrific new airport, greenest
capital in the country (not just trees, but buildings) yup, first Australian city to have
an electric car network. Any idea how many Nobel prize-winning scientists Canberra
has produced ( yup, last year Physics- Brian Schmidt)?

Per capita highest percentage of cyclists, highest percentage of people participating
in sport, highest percentage of people who attend cultural events, yup, highest rated
university in the country, yup, greatest collections of Australian Indigenous art in the
world, yup, hour and a half from the coast, hour and a half from the snow. Exquisite
seasons - autumn, spring – and if it’s cold, gee they do cold well, the wine, the food, the cozy fires. Yup, it’s a pretty cool city – but that’s not the point really, it’s YOUR capital, and YOU should get to know it better...

...and did you know that Jackie Chan’s bedroom is still there – yup he lived there and that Mia Wasikowska comes from Canberra, and James Hird went to school here and Lauren Jackson is the best b-baller in the world and she lives here, and, yeah – you should come, come in 2013 for the Centenary - you could update your opinion, save yourself the embarrassment of displaying your ignorance about your own capital city: you can re-mix your attitude toward Canberra which I swear, is going to do some very surprisingly beautiful things in 2013.

So, first of all, it’s frequently just ignorance. Secondly, it’s a generational thing. For baby boomers and before, there still remains what appears to be a tangible link to history: this generation and older is still wondering whether there could have been a better choice of site and design.

Unlike other cities which just grew and spread and over time, remember this, developed a dense inner city and sprawling suburbia, this city was chosen. So somehow in the minds of our elders it is still legitimate to continue to question the choice of site and design. But for the 160,000 (and escalating) Year 6 kids who come to their capital every year through the PACER program, and for newcomers to Australia, this is always where it has been: it is appropriately monumental for a national capital, and these people do not need it to be anywhere else, or like any other city. The anti-Canberra thing is rapidly becoming something from the past: it’s old-fashioned, and those who continue the senseless Canberra bash already appear to be outnumbered and outdated.

But the vital channels of information and education for so many millions, the media, must take responsibility for their, often accidental but no less damaging role, in fostering the mythology that there’s something wrong with our national capital. Whatever the reason behind this iniquity, it has to stop.

And why, you may ask?

When the idea of a new capital started to emerge, even before the formal act of Federation, a passionate public dialogue surrounded that idea. It was never a mere stoush between Melbourne and Sydney and the quality of commitment and optimism of that period is still refreshing and heartening to re-visit today.
I am indebted for my Canberra education to Dr David Headon, the history advisor on our team. I will quote from his book *The Symbolic Role of the National Capital* – which I believe is essential reading for us all. Here are some of the voices of the time, heard again through Dave’s painstaking research.

Senator Arthur Rae in 1910:

“...I contend that we should make a magnificent offer so as to attract the best talent, because no country in the world can be always planning a new Capital...

...Such an opportunity will probably never arise again, and we should endeavour to obtain the most up-to-date plan for a Capital which the mind of man is capable of evolving... It should be a city which will be an object of pride, and I might almost say of veneration to future generations of Australians”

An international design competition was a bold step for 1911. Walter Burley Griffin of Chicago wrote to King O’Malley then Minister for Home Affairs:

*I...entered this Australian event to be my first and last competition, solely because I have for many years greatly admired the bold radical steps in politics and economics which your country has dared to take, and which for a long time set ideals for Europe and America ahead of their possibility of achievement”*

In late 1913 Griffin published the following in the magazine *Building*:

*Australia, of most democratic tendencies and bold radical government, may well be expected to look upon her great future, and with it her Federal capital, with characteristic big vision... Australia has, in fact, so well learned some of the lessons taught through modern civilisation, as seen in broad perspective from her isolated vantage point, that we may be justified in believing that she will fully express the possibilities for individual freedom, comfort and convenience for public spirit, wealth and splendour of the great democratic city ideal for which her capital offers the best opportunity so far*
It’s worth pointing out that these spirited champions of democracy ignored the plight of disenfranchised Indigenous Australians who were at this time a sub-class at best..

…but I would argue that part of the story of the growth of our nation and the evolution of our democracy is about attempts, more to come, to redress that injustice— and that a lot of that has happened in Canberra – from suffrage to the Mabo case at the High Court, the establishment of the Tent Embassy outside old Parliament House, the Apology in New Parliament House and the current quest for inclusion in the Constitution.

This aside, and it’s a big aside, many interpreted the choice of the Griffins, as winners of the competition to design Australia’s new capital, as symbolic of Australia’s youth, sense of adventure and leadership.

The Editor of Building, George Taylor:

“The more I study this matter the more I am convinced that Australia did something more than secure a great design for her Capital city. She proved her motto of ‘Advance’, by publicly recognising an architect who is an absolute rebel against dogmatic ideas, methods and manners…”

March 12 is now acknowledged as Canberra Day, the anniversary of this city’s naming, and around this weekend in 2013 we will invite Canberrans and visitors alike to participate in a huge lakeside event as a part of the year-long celebrations. On this day in 1913, Prime Minister Andrew Fisher waxed eloquent:

“Here, on this spot, in the near future, and, I hope, the distant future too, the best thoughts of Australia will be given expression to, both in legislative and administrative acts. I hope this City will be the seat of learning as well as of politics, and it will also be the home of art”

I trust that in 2013, with all our hard work and planning, and with such spirited participation as we are starting to see in the Canberra communities, we will demonstrate that Fisher’s hopes were not in vain.

While it was Lady Denman who declared that the name of the capital would be Canberra, it was the Governor General himself who in Dave Headon’s words
concluded his remarks with a challenge to present and future Australian generations, as eloquent now as it was stirring to those present:

The City that is to be should have a splendid destiny before it, but the making of that destiny lies in your hands, the hands of your children, and those who come after them. Remember that the traditions of this City will be the traditions of Australia. Let us hope that they will be traditions of peace, of honour, and of prosperity: that here will be reflected all that is finest and noblest in the national life of the country: that here a city may rise where those responsible for the government of this country in the future may seek and find inspiration in its noble buildings, its broad avenues, its shaded parks, and sheltered gardens – a city bearing perhaps some resemblance to the city beautiful of our dreams.

In the face of this idealism, this poetic hope for our future, the kind of language often used about our capital now is actually a national disgrace.

What happened to respect for the capital between then and now?

Now, and forgive me, but it is partly to do with the way the word Canberra is used as a substitute for The Federal Government, some Australians feel they have to say they ‘hate Canberra’ and it’s usually because of particular politicians, or policies or parties. Plainly speaking, that’s arse-up. Any capital, of any country, should somehow symbolise and enshrine all that that country aspires to, its noblest values and its highest ideals. Particular politicians, policies and parties should be judged on how well or how ill they uphold those values enshrined in the national capital – not the other way round.

Sir John Sulman said something very similar in 1909:

“Such a chance as we now have of showing the world what we can do has rarely been vouchsafed to a young nation. My aim... is primarily to direct public attention to our unequalled opportunity, and to arouse a patriotic interest in the future capital of our Commonwealth... No people can live without ideals, and these ideals to be effective must find expression in action. It is surely well that we should enshrine all that we hold dear in the preservation of our liberties, and our rights, in a fitting setting. We may find fault with our representatives as
individuals, and become irate at the inefficiencies of departments, but, after all is said and done, they represent to us as free a system of government as the world has ever seen...

.....Let us by all means try and make it better, and the way to do so in connection with the Federal City is to treat it as a matter of grave national concern.
If we show that we regard our system of government as worthy of admiration and respect, its members will, at any rate, try and live up to the reputation.”

Why do we need that symbolism, especially now? I think it’s because we are in many ways a country of contradictions. Many people who have come here as immigrants or refugees, new Australians, cherish the democratic system of which they are now part. They also tend to relish Canberra’s symbolism. We need powerful symbols, and our Capital is perfectly placed to be one of them.

King O’Malley said on that same day in 1913:

“All subsequent Australian political history will concentrate its searchlight on this place where we congregate—a magnetic centre of attraction to the eyes of countless generations still unborn, and forever the visible evidence of Australia’s national destiny.”

In 2013 we celebrate the capital – we reflect both on its bold genesis, subsequent pioneering days and the courage of those who built this city: we bust the silly myths that prevail and reveal what the city really is today: and we look to the future of both the actual city and its much-needed symbolic role.

We are doing this through a vast array of programs which we, myself and the team of the Centenary Unit, have generated, but programs also arising from local and national cultural, scientific, sporting, environmental, and educational institutions and organizations, and also widespread initiatives from the Canberra communities, and then programs which stretch out to the nation and also invite the nation in. I invite you all to go to our website, canberra100.com.au and have a look at what we are already doing, and the programs you can all participate in right now (The Canberra Diaspora, Portrait of a Nation, Dollars for Dili).

You’ll also find the things we announced at our Preview launch a couple of weeks ago: including major sporting events, a celebration of the history of discovery and
innovation at places like Questacon, the CSIRO and ANU’s John Curtin Medical Centre, some of the 20 commissions including the world premiere of a new work by the Australian Ballet to celebrate the democratic architecture of new Parliament House, and a range of Indigenous cultural programs.

I believe it will be very odd indeed if Australians start to see for the first time in many years just what a complex and progressive 21st century city this is, in and of itself (local, regional, national, international) and come to understand better the capacity of this place to symbolize the things we aspire to, while the media continue to use the language of disease, murder, war and betrayal in connection with this city.

It has to stop.

And I believe there’s an even more serious side to this problem. Every time you say Canberra instead of the Federal Government, you release the Australian People from their political responsibility. Somehow, some ‘other’ place, called Canberra, is responsible for every travesty. Would people change somewhat if the headlines in News.com November 7, 2011 read:

“The people of Australia ‘issued backpacker’s death warrant’”

Because, it’s the people of Australia who elect their politicians to run the country on their behalf – it is a much more accurate description to substitute the people of Australia for the Federal Government than to substitute Canberra for the Federal Government, the latter often making no sense at all.

Don’t we think that the people of Australia would be deeply offended at the suggestion that they need “evil exorcised”, or that they themselves “pushed people to the boats”.

And if they started to think that they were responsible for that, which in some sense they are because of the way they voted, then could we assume that the people of Australia might start thinking about their role in a democracy, considering carefully and in the greatest detail they can access, the policies which any party puts forward, rather than voting according to the often inflammatory and biased opinions of certain shock jocks and other prominent commentators.

Bringing responsibility back to the citizens (all almost 23 million of them) where it must lie in any authentic democracy, instead of weirdly hiving it off to the 360,000 people who make the national capital run, would be a good thing for this country.

As Greg Sheridan wrote March 24/25 in The Weekend Australian
“It is a commonplace of international political analysis now that social democracy faces an existential crisis.”

I recall that a few years ago, more millions of Americans voted for American Idol, than they did in their political election. Globally people have adopted cultural democracy – ‘I can vote for what I like and my vote counts’. The Australian Ballet through its major sponsor lets audiences vote by phone for their favourite dancer on the night. Many people vote in these ways and somehow trust that their vote counts in this realm, but do not trust the one vote that actually makes them responsible for what goes on in their state and their country – and that is their political vote.

I repeat, this is not the same for all Australians. Those who have sought refuge here intensely value their right to vote in Australia. As in the uprisings to overthrow long-seated dictators in North African states being all about the right to vote in democratic elections, they are passionate about participatory democracy. But there are other Australians who are increasingly cynical, or take our system of government for granted. And some Australians are equally, and to my mind unjustifiably, cynical about their capital. But can we really blame the people of Australia for this?

About ten days ago there was a block of text in larger font sitting in the middle of an article headed Following the mining tax leader - the larger font text had a picture of a mining executive to whom the text was attributed. It read “I blame Canberra as that’s where the disease started”.

These comments, highlighted by a sub-editor who could have chosen not to highlight that particular comment, go beyond insulting: many of them are in this vein. They express opposition to policy in a way that unfairly produces, towards the notion of Canberra, reactions of disgust, revulsion, horror, violence and even satanic fear.

I mark my words, I care about language and the way we express ourselves, so I hold back from using that kind of language about things that concern me, but that should not be mistaken for any lack of passion about this subject. It’s not just semantics. I am an Ambassador for this year’s National Year of Reading: I believe in the power and symbolism of words. When people argue that discussing Republicanism, for example, is a waste of time because we are already independent, I disagree. Some say any change would only be symbolic. But that’s the point. It’s about the symbolism.

Typically to frame this as some personal dislike of the British Royal family is just a tactic, a distraction. I admire Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I admire Her Excellency Quentin Bryce, our Governor General. That does not mean I have to abandon my desires for my country to have strong symbols of pride and independence, and owned by us.
I long for the time when we as a nation can let go of the endless questing for identity because by then it would be self-evident, that we are a strong and independent nation. Clearly we are no longer a colony, but the symbols of colonisation continue to hold us back and those symbols have particular resonance for Indigenous Australia.

And I feel the same about our national capital. The language that represents distaste, revulsion and hate actively holds back respect for participatory democracy and deprives the Australian people of the confidence they need to see Canberra as a twenty first century city most apt to symbolise the best we wish for. This city was born through passionate public discourse and a bold step to advertise an international design competition. That boldness has been picked up time and time again in the last 99 years and it has ensured Canberra as a cradle for the development of democracy, education, all manner of scientific achievements and remarkable cultural institutions which hold the clues about, and the evidence of, this country’s history.

Every now and then its power as a symbol is also clearly evident: many citizens are moved by a visit to the Australian War Memorial, many are in awe of the sporting achievements generated through training at the Australian Institute for Sport, almost all are amazed at their personal connection with Canberra when they explore for the first time the collections of the National Film and Sound Archive, the National Library of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Museum of Australia and the National Gallery of Australia. People gathered by the thousands in public spaces around the nation to hear the Apology: the right thing to say, in the right place, with the right audience right there.

And there’s one final thing...

No matter how much some superficial response may appear indifferent or negative, the truth is that when any Australian is asked to make the pilgrimage to the national capital to offer their opinion in some forum, to join a meeting, in support or in protest, there is a sense of entitlement and ownership, a sense that ‘my opinion counts’ and ‘my participation in democracy is important’. Behind the knee-jerk tendency to ‘diss’ the capital, there stands an army of closet respecters of what Canberra really stands for. They feel a pride they are almost too shy to admit: that their voice counts, and especially when it is heard in the capital.

Next year in Canberra will be quite remarkable. The Centenary of Canberra offers Canberrans a huge opportunity to re-examine the place where they live and work. Many have been here a very long time: it is a myth that this place is only a place of constantly shifting politicians and public servants.
Yes, it is a transitory place and we’ve picked up on that with our project called The Canberra Diaspora (do go online and have a look – there are some great stories and we invite you all to contribute yours). We also acknowledge an Indigenous presence from way back, a pastoral presence in a rich food producing area, the families who were here from the start and built a new city in the bush, the workers who moved down from the Snowies and planted market gardens, the surveyors, the master builders, the monument-constructors, and then that legion of educators, scientists, defence personnel, artists, diplomats.

But we are also engaging with all Australians, all of whom have a vested interest in this place. There are programs that take Canberra to the nation, and those in which the nation comes to us. We have involvement not only with all the capital cities, but with the Pilbara, the Northern Territory, far north Queensland, the length and breadth of the Murray-Darling Basin which takes in five states and has Canberra as the largest city in that system, and regional Tasmania.

This is as it should be, and I ask all of you to keep an eye out for our launches right around the country in September. In the meantime, there are multiple entry points for everyone and the best way to access these is to go to the website or Facebook and get involved.

It will be a splendid year for us all to re-visit, re-imagine, and re-mix our take on the national capital, and as we look forward not only to the 100th anniversary of Canberra’s naming, but also Goulburn’s 150th, Queanbeyan’s 175th, the 25th anniversary of both New Parliament House and Questacon, the Centenary of the Royal Australian Navy, and the 50th anniversary of this National Press Club, there is every opportunity to look at Canberra again via the myriad spectra of interactive projects, programs, touring exhibitions, sporting events, performance, and debate that the Centenary celebrations provide.

No social demographic is overlooked, no area of endeavour is neglected. By the end of 2013 there will be no excuse for shameless ignorance about Canberra, our national capital. And in the interests of our system of democracy, the cultivation of an intelligent and responsible electorate, and the proud future of this country, I restate my plea to the ladies and gentlemen of the press.

I would never suggest it’s the only or even key factor in constructing resilience for our system of government, but I think nurturing respect for our capital and building pride in it will help. People won’t increase their pride because any one individual is passionate about it. People have to feel it, and have evidence that there’s something to be proud of. We will offer that evidence in 2013, you won’t have to take my word for it.
We will demonstrate throughout next year that this is a capital of noble origins and dynamic present: a place which already symbolises a huge spectrum of what Australians aspire to.

And symbols can be powerful things. They can turn countries around. So when you mean the Federal government, say the Federal government, if you mean Canberra, say Canberra –and believe me, there will be plenty to say about *Canberra* in 2013.

Thank you.