



Media Release

Friday, 25 October 2002

Confidence from discussions on Stadium funding

The Chairman of the Hunter International Sports Centre Trust, Mr Ted Atchison said that he believed a sound result was achieved out of yesterday's discussions with the Prime Minister's office on efforts to secure Federal Government funding for the redevelopment of EnergyAustralia Stadium.

Mr Atchison said the group representing the Hunter, which went to Canberra yesterday was afforded its first opportunity to officially speak to the Prime Minister's senior staff since the funding submission was presented to the State and Federal Governments in May this year.

He said the group, which included Newcastle Knights captain Andrew Johns, Lord Mayor John Tate and Michael Hill in his dual role as Knights and Newcastle & Hunter Majors Events Chairman was not disappointed at missing the chance to meet personally with the Prime Minister.

"We understood from the outset this week that it was going to be extremely difficult to meet him, considering other events and issues in Canberra this week. Mr Howard's time was committed to more significant events," he said.

"It should also be stated that the group never expected to come home from yesterday's discussions with a straight up financial commitment from the Federal Government.

"The detailed discussions with the Prime Minister Chief of Staff allowed us to outline the scope of the project to develop the entire Hunter ISC Precinct and to show how the redevelopment of EnergyAustralia Stadium was the catalyst for the project.

"This involves an investment of more than \$132 million from the private and government sector, with \$23.6 million already committed by the NSW Government.

"Our case was also supported by a study completed in the last week by the University of Newcastle's Centre for Business Innovation, Research & Development which addressed the economic impacts of the redevelopment of EnergyAustralia Stadium within the context of the broader development of the HISC precinct.

Mr Atchison said the group also had the opportunity to present a number of proposed initiatives which received strong interest from the Prime Minister's office.

"We will develop these concepts further and continue to work with Mr Howard's people and the Government's Hunter representatives, Senator John Tierney and Paterson MP, Bob Baldwin."

"As much as many people in the Hunter want a quicker answer from the Federal Government, we must continue to show diligence and patience in the process to secure the best outcome for the region," Mr Atchison said.

"We were complemented on the quality of our submission and presentation, with the statement that it was the best the Prime Minister's office had seen for a project of this nature," Mr Atchison said.

Details of the Hunter ISC precinct Master Plan

- Redevelopment of EnergyAustralia Stadium which involves a \$44 million rebuild of the Hunter Regions only major sports arena
- An \$80 million dedicated leisure, indoor sports and accommodation complex developed by private sector investment
- Continue further redevelopment over the next five years of the modern Newcastle International Paceway, which is already one of Australia's premier harness racing tracks
- Taking the Newcastle International Hockey Centre facility to national and international championship standard incorporating three synthetic playing fields in addition to training and warm-up fields
- Three first-class, all weather training fields for multi-sport use
- Up to 13 touch football playing fields incorporating in the centre ring area of the Newcastle International Paceway and adjoining Sports Centre precinct, again providing the ability to support State and national championships
- An international standard indoor tennis centre developed from the existing District Park Tennis complex, which is to be incorporated under the Master Plan for the precinct and would enable the facility to pitch for Davis Cup qualifying rounds
- A complex of walking and cycling tracks around the perimeter and through the precinct linking all facilities with the network of existing cycleway facilities across Newcastle
- Public recreation and landscaped areas
- A Celtic Village to teach language, customs and host the biennial Celtic Games, an event which is larger than the Australian Masters Games

The University of Newcastle's Centre for Business Innovation, Research & Development (BIRD) study concluded that the proposed development could:

- Generate improved outcomes in the areas of economic development, health, crime and social cohesion
- Act as a significant catalyst for the development of an international standard sports and entertainment precinct, funded primarily through private sector which could exceed \$100 million
- Result in an economic impact on Australia's GDP of more than \$60 million and create more than 1000 jobs in a region where unemployment is well in excess of the national average
- Provide production and consumption induced taxation revenues that mitigate the risk of investing in this project over another potential project.