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Ambassador John Berry – Innovation Roundtable

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**Ambassador Berry’s Remarks for the  
Opening Plenary of the Innovation Roundtable**

*(As prepared for delivery, July 30, 2014)*

Innovation lies at the very heart of what America is. From the beginning, our country was a grand experiment. We believed then – and now – that freedom plus sweat equals progress. And if you add creativity or innovation, you get progress squared.

One of our greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln, was not just a tremendous leader but an innovator as well. In 1849, he was granted patent 6,469 for a device that would lift boats stuck on sandbars.

He liked to call the U.S. patent system one of the greatest human achievements to spur invention, by adding the “fuel of interest to the fire of genius.”

In case you were wondering, the other achievements were writing and printing.

Lincoln was fascinated by new technology. Before his presidency, he lectured on “discoveries and inventions.” While a member of Congress, he liked to take his son to the patent office to see the models on display. He approved the construction of the USS Monitor – the United States’ first armored gunboat.

As president, he pioneered the use of the telegraph as a kind of early BlackBerry, and he daily monitored the unfolding of our Civil War through its telegrams.

Lincoln knew then what many of us know now – innovation, invention, and creativity are necessary ingredients for success.

President’s Innovation Initiative

President Obama believes our world is full “of unprecedented perils, but also unparalleled potential.” Because of this, investment in science, technology, and research is the most important guarantee we can make for our future.

We don’t know where our economies will take us. We don’t know where the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be. We don’t know where the next super storm or pandemic will hit. We do know that we need to be prepared.



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Innovation is essential for success. It will help us face the challenges of an uncertain climate, an aging population, and a changing energy landscape. Innovation will help us cure the most devastating diseases, bring life to new planets, and clean water, plentiful food, and safe housing to the billions of people living on this one.

And so, the United States is investing in basic research through the President's Strategy for American Innovation. We are promoting U.S. exports. We are encouraging entrepreneurs. And, we are making historic investments in – among other things – clean energy technology, medical research, and advanced vehicle technologies.

Finally, we are promoting investment in science, technology, engineering and math – or STEM – education, because without the scientists and engineers of tomorrow, none of the rest of this will matter.

### Innovation Partnerships

Americans, of course, don't have a monopoly on good ideas or talented people. Scientists and engineers from every country are revolutionizing the world we live in. And if we want to solve the world's greatest problems, we must look beyond our borders and increase our cooperation. We would be hard pressed to find better partners in that effort than our friends here in Australia.

Since my arrival here, I have been to every state and territory. Everywhere I go, I have been impressed by Australia's dynamism. Australians, like Americans, are natural innovators, builders, creators.

Like us, you see problems as opportunities with solutions. Like us, Australians have the drive, ambition, and skill to solve any problem that comes your way.

And that is why we are here today.

Our cooperation in research and development already spans universities and government, think tanks and corporations.

Australian ingenuity has helped us reach the moon, allowed us to drive together on Mars, and sent us beyond the limits of our solar system. It is helping Boeing build better aircraft in Melbourne at its largest research and development hub outside the United States. It is helping GE cut costs and improve productivity in Western Australia by streamlining operations and improving sub-sea production technology.



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This cooperation helps both of our economies expand, develop, and remain competitive on the world markets.

We are also working together in medicine. A young Australian woman – Dr. Claire Smith – studying at the University of Massachusetts -- may have found a potential cure for malaria – a life changer for millions. Additionally, research into brain injuries and disorders is advancing by leaps and bounds.

We are making unprecedented investments in clean energy technologies. Our friends at Google in particular have devoted more than \$1 billion to wind and solar projects. And Australia's BlueScope Steel is developing a more cost-effective solar roof that produces both heat and electricity for homes and businesses.

What all of these things have in common, is that we are achieving great things together. But there is so much more that we could do if we put our minds to it.

### STEM Education

I think this is a great time to take a moment to recognize our hosts here at Questacon especially director Graham Durant. They do a tremendous job of introducing young people to math and science – and making sure they know it's a lot of fun.

This is especially important now, because we cannot solve the challenges of tomorrow without the next generation of scientists, astronauts, engineers, and programmers.

The United States needs to improve the education children receive in science, technology, engineering, and math if we want to maintain our competitive edge. And so we are bolstering our federal investments in STEM education, we are building public-private partnerships, and we will put 100,000 more STEM teachers into classrooms over the next decade.

More teachers will help us improve science and math education for all students – especially minorities and those from low-income families. More teachers will help us broaden participation in STEM fields to include more women and girls. We can't remain competitive if we don't get maximum participation across the board.

And so we are working with various agencies such as NASA and the Department of Energy to develop mentorships. We are giving students more hands on experience.

The private sector is stepping up all over the world to do the same. They recognize that getting kids interested and involved now is important to their success in the future. We're working on



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that ourselves – we have students from Narrabundah College, Hawker College, Gungahlin College, and Dickson College here today. We're very pleased you could join us.

Northrop Grumman has a partnership here in Australia with Dickson College. As part of that program, employees are mentoring students – can you raise your hands so we can see you? – participating in the company's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Outback Challenge. Students will design and build – and hopefully fly – a UAV capable of search and rescue operations.

Not to be outdone, Microsoft, Intel, and Google are challenging young people from all over the world to develop new and creative technologies with their global science and engineering fairs. Australian students have discovered new ways to screen for anemia and manage diabetes. They have built portable water purifiers that also generate electricity.

These companies are unlocking the extraordinary creative potential in these students.

### Conclusions

Of course, not all innovation cooperation is – or needs to be – serious.

Some of our most widespread innovation cooperation takes place in the realm of entertainment.

*The LEGO Movie* – it's awesome! – distributed by Warner Brothers has made nearly half a billion dollars worldwide. The brains behind it are Sydney studio, Animal Logic. This studio is a prime example of the talent and creativity that is typical of Australians. They were the first studio in Australia to make a feature length animated film – *Happy Feet*. That year, Animal Logic's singing and dancing penguins beat out *Cars* – made by those underdog animators at Disney – for an Oscar. Not bad for a first try.

Whether we are making people's days a little lighter with entertainment, or improving their health with medical advances, it is important to remember our greatest responsibility. If we want to give our children a better world, we must pursue the research that will make it happen. Together, partners for peace and progress.

In ancient Athens, young people took an oath before they could assume the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In it, they swore to leave their city not only not less, but greater, more beautiful, and more prosperous than they found it.

We must hold those words in our hearts. They are the core of civic morality still today. If we do, we will be well prepared to meet whatever challenges the future may bring.