

# Campbelltown Macarthur Advertiser

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## UP AND ATOM ■ Campaign for a science centre in Macarthur

Campbelltown could be home to a science centre that would rival Canberra's famous Questacon — if a UWS academic has his way. **Ben Chenoweth** reports.

DR RAGHIB Bhathal — who played a key role in establishing the University of Western Sydney's observatory at Campbelltown — wants to create a science centre at the same local campus.

It would target what he says is a "serious" national problem.

"The number of HSC students doing science and physics is declining — this is serious," he said.

"There is not enough technical power to run [science and engineering] industries. The best way to get children into science is to get kids, mums and dads learning in a hands-on environment rather than me lecturing them."

While still at proposal stage, Dr Bhathal said his imagined facility would be 2000-3000 square metres and would be the only science centre

with an omni theatre, a science playground and an observatory.

With the closest similar science centre at Wollongong, he also believed that there would be no problem in attracting visitors.

Dr Bhathal said the capital cost would be about \$6 million.

He told the *Advertiser* that with the possible help of organisations such as Rotary — which was instrumental in the establishment of the observatory — and federal and state government funding, the project would be feasible.

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## Science centre plea

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"With a population of 1.8 million in greater western Sydney, it's estimated that the number of visitors who will utilise the centre will be about 100,000 a year," he said.

"The average ticket price has been taken as \$12. The base figure for the first year is estimated to be 100,000, providing a revenue of \$1.2 million.

"The science centre is planned to be self-supporting."

Dr Bhathal — an adviser in the establishment of Canberra's Questacon — believed with the predicted population growth and major infrastructure projects such as Badgerys Creek Airport, the local campus was an ideal location.

■ Canberra's Questacon is the third most popular attraction for school groups in the ACT. Last year it had 433,000 visitors and a turnover of \$37.6m.

A NEW structure is dazzling the University of Western Sydney at sunrise and sunset. The *Gates of Light* structure, designed by Khaled Sabsabi, has just been unveiled at the UWS Campbelltown campus.

To mirror the celestial street names of Macarthur Heights, the artwork is adorned with stars and constellations, which UWS astronomer Raghib Bhathal noted in his speech at the structure's unveiling are named after cultures and nationalities from all over the world.

"It's been built at a time when the world needs more light to get us through one of the most turbulent times in the history of humankind," Dr Bhathal said in his speech. The structure, he said, will complement viewing the night sky from the Campbelltown Rotary Observatory and all the beauty it encompasses.

*Gates of Light* comprises three giant arches, red on one side and blue the other, and lights up in a stunning neon display at nighttime.

Dr Bhathal said the artwork was a tribute to art and science and he hoped the Macarthur area would come to house a Questacon-like institution to further engage the public with the wonders of science.

"This will be the greatest contribution that we can make to the education and wellbeing of our youth," he said.

"I hope that [local MPs and service groups] will take up the challenge — if they do they will be remembered in years to come as the champions of the west."



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