



Questacon History

In September 1980, Questacon began as a project of the Australian National University (ANU), in spare space at the Ainslie Public School in Canberra. It opened with 15 exhibits and was staffed entirely by volunteers.

Questacon was founded by ANU Professor Mike Gore AM, whose great love of teaching both students and the general public inspired him to develop Australia's first interactive science centre, based on the Exploratorium in San Francisco. The name 'Questacon' combines two words—'quest' meaning 'to discover' and 'con' meaning 'to study'.

Despite a modest beginning, by the mid-1980s Questacon had achieved national and international recognition. Today Questacon is Australia's largest science centre and is among the world's leading science centres.

In 1982, the Australian Bicentennial Authority proposed that a national science centre be established as a lasting memorial to the 1988 Australian Bicentenary. The first sod was turned on the site in 1986 and the building was completed in 1988 at a total capital cost of \$19.64 million. The Centre was built as a joint Australia–Japan Bicentennial Project with the Japanese Government and business community contributing half the cost of the building.

On 23 November 1988, Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre was officially opened by the then Prime Minister, the Hon R.J.L. Hawke AC, MP.

From its inception Questacon has had a strong national focus. In 1985 the *Shell Questacon Science Circus*, Australia's first science outreach programme, commenced a successful touring programme of exhibits and science shows to regional Australia. Today the *Science Circus* is recognised as the most extensive and longest running touring science outreach program in the world, celebrating its 25th birthday in 2010.

Over 9.5 million people have visited Questacon in Canberra, with over 28 million engaging with Questacon via the Centre, travelling exhibitions, outreach or other programmes.

Questacon celebrated its 25th Anniversary in November 2013.



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Questacon

The National Science and Technology Centre