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IN TOUGH TIMES, BUSINESSES CAN EASILY DO MORE, LEADING BUSINESSMAN URGES

One of Australia's leading businessmen Mr David Gonski has expressed sadness at the wind-back of corporate giving programs in tough economic times. He urged employers to respond to growing community needs not to cut back such programs and where possible partner with their employees in payroll giving programs.

Mr Gonski, chair of Coca Cola-Amatil, the Australian Stock Exchange and board director for the Centre for Social Impact said, "The concept that companies are dropping all or part of their support for community benefit activities because of the economic outlook is very sad."

"Even, or especially, in tough times, the case for business to encourage payroll giving is strong," said Mr Gonski.

His calls come following the release today of new research into Australian payroll giving commissioned by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), The Australian Charities Fund (ACF), Charities Aid Foundation, United Way and the Centre for Social Impact (CSI).

The research demonstrates that businesses mistakenly believe payroll giving programs are complex to set up and administer, yet the majority of payroll giving program managers spend less than two hours per week on them.

There were many excellent stories of the enormous benefits to the community which came from payroll giving. "For example, a payroll giving program allowed PricewaterhouseCoopers' to raise \$650,000 in ten days in a simple, immediate response to the Victorian bushfire crisis, with donations received from 70% of staff which were matched by the firm. In another example, in 2008 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the merger between Pricewaterhouse and Coopers Lybrand, the firm globally raised more than AUD\$5 million for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in just ten days. This represents the largest corporate donation ever made to the UNHCR," said Mr Gonski.

PwC chief executive officer Mark Johnson said, "Payroll giving is one of the most efficient, tax deductible ways for people to contribute to causes they are passionate about. By implementing payroll giving in the workplace businesses can make a real difference to the community and to employee fulfilment."

In 2008, law firm Mallesons Stephen Jaques staff and partners donated more than \$1 million to charities including the National Breast Cancer Foundation, with 700 members of the firm attending Pink Ribbon breakfasts last year.

Families of children living with cancer are supported by over 60 per cent of employees of leading independent investment bank Caliburn in a payroll giving program partnership with the charity Redkite, kicked off by \$20,000 from the bank.

Pre-tax payroll giving results in an immediate tax deduction for employees without the need to get receipts or claim them on a tax return. Currently, less than one per cent of Australian adults donate through a payroll giving program, with total annual donations using this method estimated at around \$20 million. But if just ten per cent of Australians donated \$5 a week through their pay, some \$260 million would be raised.