

DÉJÀ VU ON LIGHT RAIL STAGE TWO.

Industry Association repeats call for independent infrastructure body in ACT.

The industry association for consulting firms in the built environment has repeated its call for an independent infrastructure body in the ACT, as politicians clash over the proposed route for the second stage of light rail in the nation's capital.

The call by Consult Australia comes following a series of statements from politicians over the last few months. In February ACT Senator Zed Seselja called for a public inquiry on the project to which ACT MP Andrew Leigh MP replied 'get on board.' This month Senator Seselja has talked of 'commuter hell' if 'ACT Labor got their way.'

Kevin Keith, National Media Adviser and ACT State Manager for Consult Australia, said: "With politics comes the pressure of shorter cycles, encouraging leaders to zoom in: daily headlines, fortnightly newspolls, seemingly continuous campaigns for endless local, regional and national elections. Yet infrastructure requires leaders to zoom out, to think in decades and focus on a vision way beyond their tenure. It requires genuine long term planning."

Consult Australia published a report earlier this year [30/01/18] calling for an independent statutory body (or iBody) in the ACT following a detailed analysis of equivalent bodies elsewhere including Infrastructure NSW, Infrastructure Victoria, and Building Queensland. The report recommended parliament, as opposed to the government-of-the-day, control activities; a credible long-term plan is developed and project-priority list published; an independent board of public and private sector be appointed; and greater compatibility with Infrastructure Australia to develop best practice and consistency.

Mr. Keith added: "An independent infrastructure body would take the party-colour out of critical conversations on how we connect people to places and products to markets in a sustainable way for continued economic growth. This has to be a good thing."

The report 'Infrastructure Governance in Australia' is available at www.consultaustralia.com.au

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NOTES TO EDITOR

1. About the report

Consult Australia launched its thought leadership Paper entitled, 'Infrastructure Governance in Australia', on the 30th January 2018. It proposes a model for independent infrastructure bodies ('Ibodies') in all jurisdictions.

2. Recommendations for ACT

Consult Australia recommends that in the Australian Capital Territory an independent infrastructure body be created, in each, by an Act of Parliament. The Acts will set out the function and structure of the infrastructure bodies based on four core components, independence, planning, assessment, and prioritisation.

Independence

- 1) The functions of the infrastructure body will be set out in legislation, and the Government (via the Minister) will not be allowed to direct or control its activities.
- 2) All strategies and plans prepared by the infrastructure body will be responded to by the Government within a specified period. The strategy, plans, and Government response must be presented to Parliament, thus promoting bipartisan support and accountability to Parliament.
- 3) If the Government wants to deliver an infrastructure project that is not included in the pipeline, or change the order of priority, it must seek Parliamentary approval.
- 4) The Board of the infrastructure body will be a balance of representatives from the public and private sectors. Private sector representatives must have appropriate skills relevant to infrastructure strategy/planning/delivery, including design and construction.

Planning

- 5) The infrastructure body will be responsible for developing:
 - Long-term infrastructure strategies, and
 - Shorter-term plans to underpin and deliver against the aims of the strategy.
- 6) The strategies and plans will be developed with a formal process of engagement across all stakeholders, political, public sector, business, interest groups, community groups etc. The other infrastructure bodies should also be included to ensure that the strategy and plans have cross-jurisdictional alignment and interconnectedness.

- 7) The plans will have consistent assessment components (objectives) formed around productivity, livability, and sustainability (including integrated land-use) that can be reported and measured against.

Assessment

- 8) The Infrastructure body will provide project implementation plans for major infrastructure projects (the amount to be defined in the legislation).
- 9) Project evaluation and benefit realisation will be embedded within the decision-making processes, as a condition of funding and as a core component of project scoping.
- 10) Infrastructure Australia and the other infrastructure bodies, are to work together to develop national guidelines for business case development, consistent with Infrastructure Australia's assessment guidelines.

Prioritisation

- 11) The infrastructure body will assess and publish a pipeline of priority infrastructure projects.
- 12) The methodology for the assessment of priority projects should be based on an agreed framework of assessment principles.
- 13) The infrastructure body will have responsibility for the review, evaluation, oversight, and monitoring of infrastructure delivery (but not project delivery).

3. About Consult Australia

Consult Australia is the industry association representing consulting firms operating in the built and natural environment sectors. These services include design, engineering, architecture, technology, survey, legal and management solutions for individual consumers through to major companies in the private and public sector including local, state and federal governments. We represent an industry comprising some 48, 900 firms across Australia, ranging from sole practitioners through to some of Australia's top 500 firms with combined revenue exceeding \$40 billion a year.

4. For more information and to arrange an interview

Contact Kevin Keith on +61 420 90 12 76 or email kevin@consultaaustralia.com.au