

'IBODIES'

New model proposed to separate politics and infrastructure planning

The industry association for consulting firms in the built environment has called for greater separation between politics, planning and projects in a major new report, 'Infrastructure Governance in Australia,' published today [30/01/18].

The report by Consult Australia presents a model infrastructure body or "IBody" for adoption by all jurisdictions following a comprehensive review of their existing governance procedures. Its four key recommendations include: independence locked in by statute; long-term planning; assessment in line with Infrastructure Australia guidelines; and a published pipeline of priority projects.

Megan Motto, CEO of Consult Australia, said: "Our nation's ability to efficiently connect people to places and products to markets is critical for continued economic growth. Yet still politics can interfere with this process, placing stress on jobs and growth, and wasting taxpayer funding."

"IBodies will address this by presenting a model of uniformity across all jurisdictions. They will strengthen independence through reporting directly to Parliament, and build stronger collaboration across jurisdictions in conjunction with Infrastructure Australia."

The report examines current decision-making processes and plans in all jurisdictions, including the governance arrangements of existing bodies: Infrastructure NSW, Infrastructure Victoria, and Building Queensland.

"Independent advice provided to the government of the day is independence-on-a-leash. It risks the clash of short and long-term cycles, with decades of foresight required for infrastructure potentially lost in the weeks of a campaign trail. An IBody would buffer this, locking in independence through statute so only Parliament could make changes, and ensure we can plan beyond the short term for sustainable economic growth."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR

1. About the report

Consult Australia has launched its Thought Leadership Paper entitled, 'Infrastructure Governance in Australia', which proposes the following model for independent infrastructure bodies ('Ibodies') in all jurisdictions.

The Model

The Ibodies will be established by an Act of Parliament, which will set out its functions and structure based on four core components, independence, planning, assessment, and prioritisation. Consult Australia is proposing that those states, which have already established an Ibody (NSW, QLD and Victoria), review their legislation so that it aligns with the model.

Independence

- 1) To be enacted as an independent statutory body. Its functions will be set out in legislation, and the Government (via the Premier/Minister) will not be allowed to direct or control its activities.
- 2) All strategies and plans prepared by the Ibody 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 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

- 1) Ibodies are to be responsible for developing:
 - Long-term infrastructure strategies, and
 - Shorter-term plans to underpin and deliver against the aims of the strategy.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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 Ibodies should also be included to ensure that the strategy and plans have cross-jurisdictional alignment and interconnectedness.

Assessment

- 1) Ibodies will provide project implementation plans for major infrastructure projects (the amount to be defined in the legislation).
- 2) 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.
- 3) Infrastructure Australia and the other Ibodies, are to work together to develop national guidelines for business case development, consistent with Infrastructure Australia's assessment guidelines.

Prioritisation

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

This briefing has been drawn from Consult Australia's Thought Leadership Report on Infrastructure Governance in Australia. A copy of the full report [is available here](#).

2. 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.

3. About Megan Motto

Megan Motto is the Chief Executive Officer of Consult Australia; Member of the Government's new Cities Reference Group; a Director of Standards Australia; Councillor of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI); Treasurer of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) and sits on the NSW State Advisory Council for the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA).

4. For more information and to arrange an interview

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