

'IBODIES'

Model proposed for South Australia 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 South Australia in a 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 including South Australia following a nation-wide review of existing practices.

Jan Irvine, State Manager for South Australia, said: "To connect people to places and products to markets via infrastructure is critical for continued economic growth. Yet politics can interfere with this process, placing stress on jobs and growth, and wasting taxpayer funding. This is why independent bodies are needed."

The report identifies 'notable advocacy' for an independent statutory body in South Australia and recommends it becomes part of a nation-wide approach to infrastructure planning and delivery. This includes Parliament, as opposed to the Premier or Government, controlling activities; a long-term plan developed; a project priority list published; and working with Infrastructure Australia and other jurisdictions to develop best practice and consistency.

Irvine added: "It's not just about getting an infrastructure body, it's about getting the right infrastructure body. This means real independence because if advice is provided to the government of the day and not parliament, it is independence-on-a-leash. It risks the clash of short electoral and long-term economic cycles, with decades of foresight required for infrastructure potentially lost in the weeks of a campaign trail. This is particularly relevant as we approach the election."

"An IBody would buffer this, locking in independence through statute so only Parliament could make changes. This also gives industry more certainty that what is planned to happen will, so they can skill their workforce accordingly."

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

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 ('lbodies') in all jurisdictions.

2. Recommendations for South Australia

Consult Australia recommends that in South Australia an independent infrastructure body be created by an Act of Parliament. The Act 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 Premier) 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

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