

'IBODIES'

Call for greater independence to aid Build Queensland

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.

Jillian Carney, Queensland State Manager for Consult Australia, said: "Whilst Building Queensland has strengthened the notion of independent infrastructure planning it is useful to take stock, reflect on what works best, and standardise practices now taking place across jurisdictions."

The report highlights those state and territories without an independent infrastructure body including the ACT, Northern Territory and South Australia. It also draws comparison between those that do, including Building Queensland, Infrastructure NSW and Infrastructure Victoria who each have a different definition of *long-term*: 15 years, 20 years, and 30 years respectively.

Carney added: "Queensland's definition of long term is half that of Victoria. Yet the definition of *long-term* is not the only difference. Building Queensland reports to the Premier as oppose to Parliament. Our view is the latter strengthens independence. It helps avoid the clash of short-term political and long-term economic cycles, which can see decades of foresight required for infrastructure planning potentially lost in the weeks of an election campaign."

"A standardised approach across all jurisdictions 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

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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.

2. Queensland recommendations in the report

Building Queensland was established under the Building Act 2015. The Act needs to be reviewed to ensure that its functions and structure are based on four core components, independence, planning, assessment, and prioritisation.

Independence

- 1) The Queensland Government (via the Premier/Minister) must not be allowed to direct or control its activities.
- 2) All strategies and plans prepared by Building Queensland must 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 Building Queensland must 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) Building Queensland must 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 Ibodies 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) Building Queensland must provide project implementation plans for major infrastructure projects (as defined in the legislation).
- 9) Project evaluation and benefit realisation must be embedded within the decision-making processes, as a condition of funding and as a core component of project scoping.
- 10) Infrastructure Australia, Building Queensland, and the other Ibodies, must to work together to develop national guidelines for business case development, consistent with Infrastructure Australia's assessment guidelines.

Prioritisation

- 11) Building Queensland must 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) Building Queensland must 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