

MEDIA STATEMENT

**FOR RELEASE:
Tuesday 13 June 2023**



Digital by default: “An all-win no-lose opportunity”

Consult Australia has released a new roadmap for digital transformation that aims to address industry fragmentation, innovation inertia, sluggish productivity and the profitless boom.

Digital by Default is a green paper that outlines how Australia’s governments can take the lead to increase productivity and produce better outcomes from infrastructure investment.

Consult Australia’s roadmap to reform starts with the establishment of a national Office for Digital by Default in Infrastructure.

“Despite dozens of studies and a clear business case for digital transformation, billions of dollars of infrastructure projects around Australia are still being delivered with paper plans and PDFs,” says Consult Australia’s Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Cartledge.

“Businesses in the infrastructure sector are waiting for governments to set standards for digital working. Governments are waiting for market forces to determine the pathway forward. What we need is a national body that coordinates efforts and champions digital by default on every infrastructure project.”

Consult Australia’s green paper follows recommendations from the [2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan](#), which recommended a “digital by default” approach to infrastructure planning, delivery and operations.

“Everyone knows our industry must change. We can all see the consequences of being slow off the digital mark: decades of sluggish productivity and lost data insights that could help us make better decisions,” Mr Cartledge notes.

The [Australian Constructors Association has estimated](#) the construction industry’s poor productivity performance costs the nation \$47 billion a year.

Consult Australia’s report notes that “pockets” of world-leading digital practice remain siloed, and innovative ideas are not replicated across projects or states. Australia trails many other developed nations for digital capacity and readiness, the report finds.

“Government, as regulators, owners, funders and benefactors of public infrastructure, can play a lead role in the transition away from ‘digital by exception’ towards ‘digital by default’.”

A national coordinating office is a “common-sense solution and a modest investment” given the scale of public expenditure on infrastructure, Mr Cartledge adds.

“The Australian Government maintains a commitment to a \$120 billion 10-year rolling infrastructure pipeline. It makes sense to invest just a fraction of this on a national office to coordinate digital by default.”

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The office would establish a forum for digital champions to share information and set national standards. “We cannot have eight different standards for digital in infrastructure – that’s just revisiting the rail gauge problem that plagued the nation for 150 years. Instead, we can use our federation as a source of competitive strength.”

The release of the report marks the start of a period of “deep engagement” with the industry, Mr Cartledge notes. Roundtables around the country will confirm the consensus view and set the direction for national leadership, before Consult Australia launches a white paper with the final plan by the end of 2023.

“Some states are already driving a strong digital agenda, and the green paper process gives us a platform to share best practice. We know technology enables greater collaboration and that starts from the way we work together to champion digital by default.

“To invest in our national capability we need standards, policy, coordination and leadership – and an Office for Digital by Default in Infrastructure can deliver all these things.”

“Digital by default can help us boost productivity, accelerate innovation and catalyse a range of co-benefits like net zero emissions reduction. Most of all, harnessing digital technology will help us build a better future for people.”

Download [*Digital by default: Increasing productivity and delivering better outcomes from our infrastructure investment.*](#)

About Consult Australia

Consult Australia is the industry association representing consulting businesses in design, advisory and engineering – an industry with 58,600-plus businesses across Australia. Consult Australia champions the full spectrum of a sector that directly employs more than 285,000 people. Our members provide professional consulting solutions to individual consumers, private sector companies, and public sector clients across all three tiers of government. From building design to advisory services on major infrastructure, our members shape, create and sustain Australia’s built and national environments. See: www.consultaustralia.com.au

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Images and interviews available on request.

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