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Driving business success for consulting firms in the built and natural environment

15 September 2021

Mr Phil Helberg
Chief Executive Officer
Infrastructure WA
Via email: iwaconsultation@infrastructure.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Helberg,

Submission – Draft Western Australian State Infrastructure Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Foundations for a Stronger Tomorrow: State Infrastructure Strategy* (SIS). I am writing on behalf of Consult Australia member businesses. We strongly support the development of long range infrastructure strategies and congratulate Infrastructure WA (IWA) on the significant work it has completed to date to deliver Western Australia's (WA) first 20 year Infrastructure Strategy.

Consult Australia is the industry association representing consulting businesses in design, advisory and engineering, an industry comprised of over 55,000 businesses across Australia. This includes some of Australia's top 500 companies and many small businesses (97%). Our members provide solutions for individual consumers through to major companies in the private sector and across all tiers of government. Our industry is a job creator for the Australian economy, directly employing 240,000 people. The services we provide unlock many more jobs across the construction industry and the broader community.

Our members play a vital role in the creation of some of Australia's iconic public infrastructure, including road, rail, hospital, airport, educational facilities, water and energy utilities, justice, aged care, sports stadia and urban renewal projects. Our members are passionate about getting the planning and investment right in WA to make our state more liveable, more workable and more sustainable – economically, socially and environmentally.

Consult Australia has actively participated in the Industry Stakeholder Reference Group in the lead up to the drafting and release of the draft SIS and has been an active participant in providing feedback in several consultation sessions that were run during the consultation process. In addition to this submission, Consult Australia has completed the online survey to provide a response to key recommendations of importance to our members.

Consult Australia has been extremely pleased with the level of government consultation undertaken over the past 12 months in relation to the development of this inaugural SIS. We note that IWA has incorporated some of our key concerns and recommendations from the submission we made in relation to the discussion paper released in 2020 including:

- Review and further reform of the procurement policies, legislation and practices within the government agencies
- The importance of a transparent pipeline of infrastructure projects (both capital and maintenance) to ensure value for money and best practice delivery
- Adoption of key guiding themes within the strategy of sustainability, social equity, technology and health industry ecosystem
- Development of industry planning, capacity and capability to deliver on the strategy

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We would like to provide the following key additional items for Infrastructure WA to consider in finalising the SIS which aligns with our work and submission to the Infrastructure Strategy released by Infrastructure Australia in September 2021:

- **Adopt the Model Client Policy.** Consult Australia calls on the WA government and IWA to champion 'model client behaviour' by embracing collaboration opportunities, appropriately distributing risk as opposed to avoiding risk, and using standard form contracts that consider the extent of the roles and responsibilities of contracting parties. This is set out in Consult Australia's [Model Client Policy](#).
- **Going slow to go fast for pipeline planning and delivery.** Consult Australia's call for a smarter approach to pipeline planning and is calling on governments to have a networked focus and to produce better sequencing of works. We encourage the WA government to introduce five-yearly investment strategies for infrastructure sectors such as roads, rail, and water, focusing on a more strategic approach to investment decisions. We have also promoted asset recycling.
- **The future is now – digital by default.** We have successfully made the case that for too long digitalisation has been treated as optional rather than a default, and that we're missing out on the opportunity it provides for greater collaboration, risk mitigation, and innovation. The WA government needs to lead the way for small businesses to confidently invest in digital technology.
- **Addressing the systemic skill shortage** – Consult Australia has shown that the current skills shortage is exacerbated in a hot market when infrastructure spend is high. Consult Australia is keen to continue working with the WA government to recognise and promote emerging occupations. The WA government can positively influence in this area by supporting non-linear career paths and encouraging different ways of entering the industry.

For your information I attach Consult Australia's:

- *Procurement Practices for Government-Funded Infrastructure: Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities* which can be accessed [here](#)
- *Submission Role of the Private Insurance Market – Independent Strategic Review: Commercial Insurance June 2021* which provides an overview to the challenges currently within the insurance market and government policy that can assist in this area. The document can be accessed [here](#)
- *Considering social impacts in infrastructure business cases.* This is a recent thought paper prepared to encourage the consideration of social elements when developing business case and can be accessed [here](#)

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the consultation process for the development of the SIS for WA and I look forward to the final result. If you have any queries regarding the information, please do not hesitate to contact me at diane@consultaaustralia.com.au or on 0407 190571.

Yours sincerely,

Diane Dowdell
Manager, Western Australia