



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 28 April 2017

Seven peak organisations unite to support “good debt” approach

The federal government should not shy away from borrowing for public infrastructure investment, particularly while interest rates are low and Australia’s economic credibility remains competitively high, argue a group of influential peak bodies.

The Australian Local Government Association, Planning Institute of Australia, National Growth Areas Alliance, Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia, Australian Logistics Council, Green Building Council of Australia and National Farmer’s Federation have issued a joint statement on Australia’s infrastructure future in the lead-up to the May budget.

While the organisations support fiscal discipline to reduce budget deficits, they argue this discipline should not come at the expense of good debt used to invest in productivity-enhancing nation-building.

The seven peak bodies also said that Infrastructure Australia has made a good start on national infrastructure identification and prioritisation, but a 30-year funded pipeline of quality infrastructure projects is essential to provide investment certainty and stability for the private sector.

The joint statement has urged for cross-party support and calls for immediate action to invest in productivity-enhancing infrastructure projects that consider wider economic whole-of-life costs and social benefits such as growing jobs and boosting housing supply and affordability.

A copy of the full joint statement is [available online](#).

Quotes attributable to Mayor David O’Loughlin, President of the Australian Local Government Association

“Australia’s prosperity depends on increasing its productivity and that requires long-term commitment to investment in productive infrastructure by all levels of government and across all regions.”

Quotes attributable to Brendan Nelson, President of the Planning Institute of Australia

“The timely provision of accessible, sustainable, effective and well-integrated infrastructure is critical to our liveability and productivity. However, such infrastructure can't simply pop up and meet the needs of a growing and changing society overnight. PIA supports an extension of Infrastructure Australia's projects pipeline to 30 years. This will ensure our future infrastructure is the result of truly thorough and strategic planning and forward vision, rather than being developed to alleviate problems once they've taken hold.”

Quotes attributable to Mayor Glenn Docherty, Chair of the National Growth Areas Alliance

“The Government has acknowledged that people living in Australia's fast-growing outer suburbs are worse off than their inner metropolitan counterparts.

Despite this, the level of investment required continues to lag. Our fast-growing outer suburbs are providing affordable housing for Australia's growing population. But they are not getting the investment needed to allow both residents and businesses to flourish.”

Quotes attributable to Robert Fuller, CEO Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia

“While we applaud the work Infrastructure Australia has done so far, IPWEA firmly believes that a strong, 30-year pipeline of infrastructure projects – coupled with whole-of-life asset management – is the right choice to secure our nation's future prosperity. Australia's cities are growing rapidly, and we need forward-thinking infrastructure plans to keep them from grinding to a halt. We also advocate that, contrary to what many think, debt is not a dirty word – borrowing money in order to provide communities with capital infrastructure projects is eminently responsible.”

Quotes attributable to Mr Ian Murray AM, Chairman Australian Logistics Council

“Greater certainty and more effective long-term planning around infrastructure investment will be critical to enabling Australia's freight and logistics operators to meet growing freight demand, as our population increases.”

Quotes attributable to Romilly Madew, Chief Executive Officer, Green Building Council of Australia

“Smart infrastructure investment, coupled with effective land-use planning, has a multiplier effect on our cities and the cross benefits extend far beyond productivity to resilience, sustainability and healthier, more positive places for people to live and work. We should invest in our cities like we would a business, borrowing when it's prudent to invest to lock-in benefits for the long-term.”

Quotes attributable to Tony Mahar, Chief Executive National Farmers' Federation

“Agriculture is an industry that competes in the global marketplace. In order to maintain and build our international competitiveness, strategic infrastructure investment is vital.”

“Farmers are some of the best innovators in growing our produce, but only so much can be done on farm. Once our products leave the farm gate we are heavily reliant on our transport and infrastructure networks to reach consumers. Getting this right is fundamental”

Media enquiries:

A list of media contacts from the seven organisations is [available in this document](#).

Please note that high resolution head shots of the above spokespeople are available [at this Dropbox link](#).