

Statement of Intent

March 2022

Infrastructure Australia is an independent advisor to government, industry and the community on nationally significant infrastructure investment and reforms that will materially improve the lives of all Australians.

Infrastructure Australia will continue to provide a transparent, robust, evidence-based approach to determining the adequacy, capacity and capability of nationally significant infrastructure primarily focused on transport, energy, communications and water infrastructure. We will do this by identifying, evaluating, and informing policy to assist governments in making investment decisions. This will include an increased focus on development in rural, regional and remote areas.

Under the *Infrastructure Australia Act*, we will do this by:

- Conducting audits and preparing the **Australian Infrastructure Audit**
- Maintaining the **Infrastructure Priority List** to promote Australia's infrastructure needs
- Evaluating **Business Cases** for project proposals that are nationally significant or where Commonwealth funding of \$250 million or more is sought
- Developing the **Australian Infrastructure Plan** to specify priorities for nationally significant infrastructure
- Annually assessing infrastructure **market conditions and capacity**, identifying impediments to investment, promoting investment, and reviewing, researching and providing advice.

Collaborate across government, industry and the community

We will collaborate, engage and partner with key stakeholders, including our responsible Minister, all levels of government, investors, infrastructure owners, industry organisations, research bodies and community groups.

We will continue to provide accurate and timely advice on infrastructure investment matters to the responsible Minister, and other relevant Ministers to assist Government decision-making processes.

Taking a leading role in efforts to streamline and harmonise assessment processes, we will work closely with national, state and territory infrastructure advisory bodies and delivery agencies to support the efficient and timely delivery of infrastructure projects.

We will maintain our effective working relationship with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the Department). We will work with the Secretary of the Department to keep them informed of our work program and views to support the Department's development of its policy advice including advice and reports submitted to our responsible Minister and other relevant Ministers.

Maintain a pipeline of nationally significant infrastructure opportunities

Through the *Infrastructure Priority List*, we will maintain a pipeline of nationally significant investment opportunities. Nationally significant infrastructure is defined to include:

- Transport infrastructure

- Energy infrastructure
- Communications infrastructure, and
- Water infrastructure

This includes investments that are needed in the near and medium term to respond to immediate challenges, as well as forward-thinking proposals that will deliver longer-term productivity and community benefits, with an increased focus on rural, regional and remote development, drawing from our 2022 Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps research.

Developed through a transparent and merit-based assessment process, the Infrastructure Priority List will be updated regularly as new unfunded proposals are received and assessed by Infrastructure Australia and are determined to be nationally significant or where Commonwealth funding of \$250 million or more is sought. The Infrastructure Australia Assessment Framework provides clear guidance on how we assess proposals for inclusion on the *Infrastructure Priority List*.

Enable the efficient and effective delivery of high-quality infrastructure investment

Giving priority consideration to the Australian Government's infrastructure objectives, we will provide timely, transparent and evidence-based advice. The Infrastructure Australia Assessment Framework and our business case evaluation process will continue to support robust decision-making and ensure project proposals are progressed efficiently.

To encourage effective project delivery and information-sharing, we will work with the Department to apply the Assessment Framework to undertake reviews across the project lifecycle, including project investigations on costs, delivery, benefits and, with additional funding, post completion for nationally significant projects.

Undertake policy work to address the Australian Government's priorities

We will expand our consideration of regional, rural and remote infrastructure to improve productivity, connectivity and economic prosperity, including economic and social benefits.

We will continue to partner with the Department to pursue reform through the Transport National Cabinet Reform Committee, and elsewhere, to expedite major infrastructure projects through appropriate approvals and assist with the coordination of the Government's ten-year infrastructure program.

Working with the Department and other stakeholders, our pre-existing Industry Productivity and Innovation policy focus will be expanded to build on the Market Capacity Program National Study of Infrastructure Risk to undertake reviews of pre-construction costs and benefits focusing on pre-construction benefits such as business case development, planning and approvals (both environmental and statutory), contracting and procurement as well as design and engineering.

Support our stakeholders in demonstrating economic and social benefits

The Infrastructure Australia Assessment Framework also supports the development of business cases for nationally significant infrastructure to capture wider project benefits, including environmental outcomes, resilience and improvements to quality of life.

Our Assessment Framework will continually evolve to ensure it reflects contemporary approaches to business case evaluation and is responsive to stakeholder feedback. Our technical guidance will support best practice project evaluation, and support efficient and evidence-based investment decisions.

Developing an evidence base for productivity-enhancing infrastructure reform

Through the *Australian Infrastructure Audit*, *Australian Infrastructure Plan* and supplementary data and research projects, we will develop an evidence base to determine the adequacy, capacity and condition of nationally significant infrastructure, and its relationship with the communities and regions that it serves and operates. We will adopt an approach taking into account forecast growth and economic, social and environmental sustainability, as well as governance and outcomes for the community.

We will maintain a focus on contemporary policy considerations, including immediate priorities of the Government including:

- Australia's current and future needs and priorities relating to nationally significant infrastructure, with an increased focus on remote, rural and regional development
- Policy, pricing and regulatory issues that may impact on the utilisation of infrastructure.
- Options and reform, including regulatory reforms, to make the utilisation of national infrastructure networks more efficient.
- Impediments to the efficient utilisation of national infrastructure networks.

We will work collaboratively with jurisdictions and other stakeholders to deliver pragmatic and practical policy advice.

An increased focus on supporting development in regional, rural and remote areas

Building on the recommendations relating to equitable service delivery in the *2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit* and *2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan* and the potential for broader economic activity and productivity in regional Australia, Infrastructure Australia will increase focus on supporting development in regional, rural and remote areas.

Drawing from the *2022 Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps report* we will work collaboratively with stakeholders to support the development of further planning, policy and investment solutions to enable growth in regional communities.

The *2021 Infrastructure Market Capacity* program highlighted how shortages in skills, labour and materials are impacting infrastructure delivery in Regional Australia. As part of future iterations of this program, we will continue to monitor how market constraints are impacting project delivery in regional, rural and remote areas .

Strong governance to support how we deliver against our mandate

Infrastructure Australia's Board will continue to provide strategic and governance oversight to ensure the organisation meets the performance requirements detailed in the *Infrastructure Australia Act 2008* (Cth).

Complying with all relevant legislation and administrative policies and operating in accordance with the Government's Directions, we will be accountable to the Parliament and the community through the responsible Minister and Parliamentary Committee processes. We will publish corporate plans on an annual basis and deliver an Annual Report to our responsible Minister for tabling in Parliament.

We will continue to support good data governance, including a prioritisation of Open Data principles. Infrastructure Australia will further prioritise its role as an independent custodian of data and will recognise commitments to data owners for the control of their data for commercial or other reasons.

We will keep our responsible Minister informed of our governance and performance arrangements, and our progress in providing high-quality advice on nationally significant infrastructure investment and reform opportunities.