

INFRASTRUCTURE AUDIT A CALL TO ACTION

The case for overhauling the planning, funding and delivery of infrastructure to meet the needs of modern, growing cities is the stark lesson of Infrastructure Australia's Infrastructure Audit.

The Urban Development Institute of Australia's National Executive Director Connie Kirk has welcomed the report as a frank assessment of the current deficiencies in the system.

"The alarm bells are ringing loudly about the nation's capacity to deliver the infrastructure needed to underpin productive and liveable cities," Ms Kirk said.

"Population growth, demographic trends, technology and densification are fueling a radical transformation of our cities that is well underway and will continue to accelerate.

"However, the economic, social and environmental infrastructure that communities expect is lagging and we risk falling so far behind the curve that the gap will be unsustainable.

"The Government has unveiled some positive initiatives to plot a better way forward – new population forecasts, increased infrastructure pipelines and sharper analysis of housing supply and demand.

"These represent a sound first step but there is clear demand for an aggressive wave of reforms to lift infrastructure above politics and better connect land use, population growth, settlement patterns, housing supply and infrastructure delivery.

"This also requires a sharpened focus by the states and local government on responding to the issues raised by the report and working in smarter ways to respond to community needs.

"Policy inertia carries twin risks – failing to respond to the RBA's call for a short-term stimulus to economic activity via infrastructure spending, and leaving our cities exposed to congestion in the long-term."

UDIA National's Policy Priorities released in June contains a suite of recommendations to fix the approach to infrastructure, including:

- An Infrastructure Accord that would insulate project identification, funding and delivery of significant infrastructure projects from partisan politics
- Ensuring the business case for all major projects includes analysis of land use and housing opportunities to maximise the benefit of investment
- Referencing the Priority List established by Infrastructure Australia as the baseline for decisions on prioritisation
- Using the proposed new population forecasts to better inform strategic land use and infrastructure plans at a national, state and local level
- Better assessing trunk infrastructure requirements needed to unlock housing opportunities that emerge from major transport projects
- Providing financial incentives to the states to fund key infrastructure, including asset recycling and broadening the tax base
- Reform the current mix of taxes, charges and levies imposed on new housing that both fail to provide new infrastructure and add to the housing affordability challenge.

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