IPWEA: The 2024-25 Federal Government budget goes some way towards tackling workforce shortages, boosting STEM skills, and supporting women. Whilst welcomed, the focus on housing needs further thinking on how community infrastructure such as local roads, parks, water, and sewerage provided by the public works sector will be supported and adequately funded.

Capacity and capability

While teaching and midwifery professionals will receive additional payments during their practical placements, more support must be given to the engineering profession, specifically in local government. A future-fit Australia that can solve climate change and environmental degradation problems and remain competitive in a turbulent economic world requires more engineers.

“Further investment is required to develop capacity and capability in local government engineering. Services that many take for granted are reliant on skilled professionals to deliver. People are the most important resource, and by taking a long-term approach, we will deliver better outcomes, grow capability, and allow local communities to thrive. That’s good for the economy and Australia.” said Ian Daniels, IPWEA President.

Council asset management practices vary widely for various reasons, including resourcing, methodology, and capability. IPWEA’s White Paper highlights the importance of asset management and recommends that the Federal Government commit to educational programs that raise capacity and capability in asset management practice. An uplift of skills in asset management will improve the value-for-money proposition for infrastructure investments and the services infrastructure provides to our communities.

Road funding

IPWEA is delighted to see the Government follow through on its November 2023 commitment to significantly increase road funding to Councils. Councils maintain 75 per cent of Australia’s local roads, and this year’s Budget includes an extra $150 million for the Roads to Recovery program and a commitment to increase this funding to $1 billion per year over the forward estimates. These additional funds will help maintain and renew the existing roading infrastructure.

Local Governments are the most asset-intensive sphere of Government in Australia. Long-lived infrastructure assets provide essential services to our communities. To put this in perspective, around $60bn of total revenue received in 2022-23 is dwarfed by the $424bn value of fixed infrastructure assets it needs to manage and maintain for its communities.
To manage these assets, appropriate and effective investment is required to ensure essential capacity and capability in local government engineering.

**Net Zero Transition**

The Government’s net zero agenda includes almost $400m over five years from 2023–24 (and an additional $616.8m from 2028–29 to 2034–35 and $93.4m per year ongoing) in additional resourcing for the Net Zero Economy Authority and other agencies to promote decarbonisation.

IPWEA supports using green infrastructure / natural asset solutions as an alternative to grey/hard infrastructure. Green infrastructure has environmental and health benefits, and increasing evidence shows it can be more cost-effective. Infrastructure systems directly influence over 90% of all artificial greenhouse gas emissions. Impediments to further progress green natural/assets include current standards and accounting practices.

In addition, climate change, emerging technology, and population shifts will impact our planning. All this requires a high level of proficiency in asset management to deliver solutions that ensure the long-term financial sustainability of our organisations.

**About**

IPWEA The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia is the peak association for municipal and public works professionals in Australia and New Zealand. IPWEA is a global leader in delivering asset management education, sustainable infrastructure asset management, financial planning, and reporting.

**ENDS**

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