

18 February 2026

## **Response to the 2026 National Infrastructure Plan:**

### **Sustainable Infrastructure Starts with Strong Asset Management**

The 2026 National Infrastructure Plan from Te Waihanga is clear, practical, and realistic. It shows real-world thinking about infrastructure and, importantly, reframes decision-making rather than simply announcing what will be built next.

There will always be new project ideas. That's how infrastructure responds to growth, demand, and political needs. But the real question is whether we can afford these projects while also keeping up with maintenance and renewal of what we already have. The Plan's strength is that it doesn't ignore new investment; instead, it focuses on long-term care, clear performance, and affordability.

The Plan acknowledges a key fact: most of the infrastructure New Zealand will use in the next thirty years is already in place. Renewing and replacing these assets could take up to 60 cents of every infrastructure dollar. With tight budgets, changing populations, and climate risks, it's essential to understand how these assets are performing and how resilient they are.

At its core, asset management is about knowing your assets. This means keeping strong asset records, making reliable forecasts, and clearly reporting on performance, costs, and risks in line with global standards. It also means understanding what drives demand, the level of resilience expected, and how much risk the community is willing to accept, as these factors shape future upgrades and new investments.

This is exactly where the National State of the Assets (NSoA) work comes in, which we have worked with the Australian Local Government (ALGA) for many years. NSoA looks not just at the condition and renewal needs of assets, but also at whether assets are fit for purpose, can handle future demand, and are managed with a plan that matches the long-term financial plan. If these plans aren't aligned, it's worth asking: What are we planning for?

The National Infrastructure Plan clearly calls for better reporting on asset information and how well asset management is working, including tracking progress against investment and management plans. This aligns with IPWEA's focus on evidence, transparency, and comparisons through initiatives such as the State of the Assets report. The main point is simple: you can't fund something sustainably if you don't measure it. Importantly, the Plan is refreshingly honest about trade-offs. It

does not pretend that every desired project can be delivered. Instead, it calls for disciplined prioritisation, stronger asset management capability, and investment decisions that genuinely stack up over the full life cycle. Affordability is not treated as an afterthought but as a recurring, central theme, reinforcing the idea that economics and finance must be integral to infrastructure strategy.

If the Plan is carried out as described, it will give New Zealand a clear national direction for managing infrastructure in a more consistent, transparent, and resilient way. Many countries still struggle to achieve this kind of alignment.

Sustainable infrastructure doesn't start with announcements. It starts with careful management grounded in evidence, financial reality, and a focus on long-term performance.

The 2026 National Infrastructure Plan deserves support for putting strong asset management at its core.

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### **About IPWEA Aotearoa**

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 the delivery of sustainable infrastructure asset management, financial planning and reporting.