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National Infrastructure Report Highlights Emerging Risks and Long-Term Legacy for Communities

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) welcomes the release of the 2026 National State of the Assets (NSoA) report by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The report is a critical milestone in strengthening the evidence base for local government infrastructure decision-making across Australia.

IPWEA President Ben Clark said the 2026 NSoA report confirms that local government infrastructure is improving overall but faces a fundamental shift in the nature of risk. "This report shows that sustained investment in local infrastructure is delivering results, with asset condition improving across much of the country. That is a strong outcome for communities and reflects the commitment of councils to maintaining essential services."

However, he said the findings highlight an important change that must inform future policy settings. "The challenge is no longer just about assets wearing out, it is increasingly about whether infrastructure is still fit for purpose in the face of population growth, climate pressures, and rising community expectations."

Local governments collectively manage approximately $497 billion in infrastructure, including roads, bridges, drainage systems, water services, and community facilities that underpin economic activity and quality of life.

Steve Verity, Principal Advisor Asset Management at IPWEA commented: "Local infrastructure is not just a local issue, it is a national productivity issue. The performance of these assets directly impacts freight movement, regional economies, and access to essential services."

He emphasised that the report reinforces the importance of maintaining a strong focus on the fundamentals. "Maintenance and renewal remain absolutely non-negotiable. They are the foundation of safe, reliable infrastructure and must continue to be prioritised."

At the same time, the report identifies growing pressure on infrastructure systems that requires a broader response. "What we are seeing is that maintaining assets in good condition is no longer sufficient on its own. Councils are increasingly needing to upgrade and adapt infrastructure to meet changing demand and risk."

The report also highlights that planning capability and governance are central to achieving sustainable outcomes. "Councils that align asset management planning with long-term financial planning are demonstrably better placed to manage risk, prioritise investment, and deliver sustainable services for their communities."

IPWEA has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the sector through capability development, including its elected member training programs, which focus on strengthening infrastructure governance and long-term decision-making.

Clark said: “Infrastructure is the legacy of local government. The decisions made today will shape communities, service levels, and affordability for decades to come. This report provides a clear and compelling evidence base to support better decisions, not just for today, but for future generations.”

About IPWEA - The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia is the peak association for municipal and public works professionals. IPWEA is a global leader in the delivery of sustainable infrastructure asset management, financial planning and reporting.

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