

Media Release

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Thirty billion reasons to get local infrastructure right

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is partnering with the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) to address the country's \$30 billion national local government infrastructure backlog.

The two organisations will work together – and with local councils around the country – to produce the “National State of the Assets” (NSoA) report providing detailed and informed analysis of local government-owned assets.

The last NSoA report put the cost of renewing and replacing roads, bridges, stormwater drainage, water supply, waste-water treatment plants, parks, and buildings classified as being in poor and very poor condition at \$30 billion and continuing to grow as governments seek productivity and safety improvements.

“Renewing creaky timber bridges, rutted tracks, corrugations, road pavements so thin you can see the rocks through them, ticking rust-bombs hidden in underground pipes, cracked buildings and access ramps so steep only a four wheel drive can manage them – they all constitute job-ready projects to improve local communities,” ALGA President David O’Loughlin said today.

“Local councils own 75 percent of the nation’s road length, and 33 percent of the nation’s non-financial assets. It’s a near-impossible task to maintain when we only collect around 3.6 percent of the nation’s taxes.”

ALGA established its National State of the Assets project in 2012 to improve the performance and management of the \$345 billion of infrastructure owned and operated by Australia’s 537 councils. The first NSoA report was published in 2013.

“We’re pleased to have IPWEA as a partner in our ongoing efforts to assess our roads, bridges, and other community infrastructure and to ensure they are fit for purpose and our limited funds are targeted as efficiently as possible,” Mayor O’Loughlin said.

IPWEA President Rita Excell said: “We are delighted to be working with ALGA on the State of the Assets project.

“Information from the assessments will drive more informed discussions on infrastructure investments, and that will not only deliver efficiencies but, ultimately, better infrastructure for communities around Australia.”

The 2018 NSoA Report, based on the responses of more than 400 councils, found that 63 percent of infrastructure assets was rated as being in good condition, while 9 percent was rated as poor. The remaining 28 percent was rated as fair.

The report stated that local government was at the beginning of a period of renewing infrastructure built during the 1960s and 1970s, when cities were expanding rapidly.

While there had been a steady increase in spending since 2005, the report said the proportion of infrastructure rated as being in a good condition was falling, indicating that a major renewal phase would be required over the next two decades.

“A significant and growing amount of our infrastructure inventory is nearing the end of its lifecycle,” Mayor O’Loughlin said.

“So, it’s essential to collate the very best facts and analysis to guide spending our scarce dollars and hard-won federal government funding.

“ALGA’s partnership with IPWEA on the National State of the Assets project will help drive this undertaking,” Mayor O’Loughlin said.

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) is the peak association for the professionals who deliver public works and engineering services to communities in Australia and New Zealand. IPWEA provides services to its members and advocacy on their behalf.

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