

MEDIA STATEMENT

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IPWEA welcomes Federal Government's \$1.8 billion regional infrastructure boost

The \$1.8 billion funding boost for local government road and community projects announced today is an effective way to facilitate the rapid delivery of much needed infrastructure to regional Australia, according to the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA).

IPWEA President Rita Excell welcomed the statement by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, and Regional Development Michael McCormack, who announced the new \$500 million Local Road and Community Infrastructure Program and the bringing forward of \$1.3 billion of the 2020-21 Financial Assistance Grant payment.

Excell agreed with McCormack that the package would help local councils support jobs and businesses by delivering priority projects focused on infrastructure upgrades and maintenance

"The funds will not only deliver much-needed infrastructure but will also help support employment and stimulate the economy in communities that may have suffered in the drought, the bushfire crisis, and are now challenged by the COVID-19 disruptions," Excell said.

"Well targeted and well-designed infrastructure projects bring a multitude of benefits to regional areas, both in the immediate and longer term, and this funding boost is perfectly timed."

IPWEA has around 4000 members in Australia and New Zealand and around 60 per cent of the membership works in the Local Government sector.

"Many of our members will be key to delivering and executing these projects, and we welcome this forward-looking initiative on behalf of all of our IPWEA divisions," Excell said.

"In many instances, our members will have been involved in planning and designing these initiatives, such as constructing or improving bridges, roads and tunnels, and it is a great result that many of them now receive an early green light."

Funding infrastructure through local government, she said, was the way to achieve optimal results. Local Government organisations were closest to their communities and were best placed to understand local project needs and priorities.

The announcement means that projects allocated funding under the \$1.3 billion Financial Assistance Grant can be brought forward, while the \$500 million under the Local Road and Community Infrastructure Program can fund new projects.

In addition to more traditional road infrastructure, there is also an opportunity to fund social infrastructure projects, such as new or upgraded bicycle and walking paths, picnic and BBQ facilities.

David Jenkins, IPWEA's chief executive, said the announcement was a win-win for regional Australia, and for the nation.

"With infrastructure funding communities get an immediate boost to employment and economic activity during the construction phase, and there are long-term benefits after construction," Jenkins said.

"The timing of the stimulus will be well received, as it is sorely needed in many communities, and in the longer term everyone will benefit from better roads and other transport infrastructure.

"It will help make travelling safer, faster for the public, and also more efficient for the transport and logistics industry."

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