

## Media Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **IPWEA urges effective use of Federal Government infrastructure spending**

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) has welcomed the significant infrastructure and disaster recovery spending in the Federal Budget this week but has called for effective planning and consultation as these funds are implemented to ensure they deliver the best results to communities.

David Jenkins, IPWEA's chief executive officer, noted that while the Government is supporting jobs now and into the future by delivering on its \$120 billion 10-year infrastructure investment pipeline, including:

- a \$2.1 billion pre-payment on next year's Financial Assistance Grant to all councils across Australia, and
- an additional \$500 million for local councils through an extension of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program

IPWEA calls for effective planning and increased professional development as these funds are rolled out to ensure it delivers the best results for our communities.

IPWEA represents around 5000 public works professionals across Australia and New Zealand, around 60 per cent of whom work in the local government sector as officers managing some of Australia's most critical public infrastructure assets.

Jenkins said that it was likely that many local councils – and IPWEA members – would be actively involved in spending the Federal Budget allocated to their municipality, and yet in some cases the budget provides little direction on how these assets will be managed over the long-term, and this created risk.

"We welcome this funding but make the point that these public funds must be used wisely, otherwise taxpayers may see a less than optimal return on investment and communities won't receive the benefits they deserve." said Jenkins.

Jenkins said that because many IPWEA members were at the "coalface" of delivering services from infrastructure assets, they should be suitably trained with the skills to effectively manage these investments over the long-term.

"This is a key feature of our White Paper on the best practice asset management of essential public infrastructure." said Jenkins.

The Government has extended its support to the boosting apprenticeships scheme, providing \$5,000 payments to new apprentices over two years and extending subsidies of up to \$15,000 for employers who take them on. There is also \$3.7 billion in support for an additional 800,000 training places.

IPWEA's David Jenkins said this funding is welcomed, and hoped some of it could be used to upskill asset management professionals and train new ones as another critical component in building Australia and strengthening our regions.

"We know there is a skills shortage for managers of infrastructure assets, and that many need further professional development in the asset management discipline," said Jenkins.

"Local Government NSW recently revealed that 80% of NSW councils are experiencing skills shortages in fields such as engineering, asset management and planning."

"While more infrastructure funding is welcome, we must have trained professionals in place to ensure the funds are allocated to where the greatest need is and they are spent wisely to deliver the best outcomes for our communities."

IPWEA is advocating that the Federal Government consider the Institute's suite of training programs, known as the IPWEA Asset Management Pathway as the best way to develop the skills of local government employees and others employed in the infrastructure sector.

The courses draw on IPWEA's respected International Infrastructure Management Manual (IIMM), which has been setting benchmarks for best practice asset management since 2000.

"Our members are already familiar with our manuals and practice notes, and IPWEA courses present as an effective option in further developing their skills," said David Jenkins.

"IPWEA wants our membership to engage with Governments so together we can get the best outcome from these significant investments. That can only flow from coordinated planning, and ensuring we have the skilled workforce in place to directly manage existing assets and deliver new and upgraded ones to the community."

For additional information about IPWEA Australasia, please contact IPWEA CEO David Jenkins at [david.jenkins@ipwea.org](mailto:david.jenkins@ipwea.org).

You can follow IPWEA @IPWEAOfficial on Twitter or subscribe to Intouch newsletter at <http://www.ipwea.org/intouch>.

**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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