

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau / Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
Committee

Comisiwn Seilwaith Cenedlaethol i Gymru / National Infrastructure
Commission for Wales

Gan/From: Infrastructure Australia

What principles do you believe represent good practice in establishing an independent infrastructure advisory agency?

- Independent governance is crucial.
- Clarity of purpose – We are an independent advisor that provide policy guidance and analysis. Importantly, we do not fund projects and are not advocates for particular project solutions.
- Strategic role with projects – Infrastructure Australia is increasingly moving to a model where it helps guide projects before a business case is developed allowing us to gather information early. We assess projects on economic grounds (Cost Benefit Analysis) but also more strategically – where they fit into a system, the size of the problem they solve etc.

How has creating Infrastructure Australia as a statutory body delivered independence and good governance, and what impact has the strengthening of Infrastructure Australia's powers in 2014 has on the independence of the organisation?

- Infrastructure Australia was established in July 2008 to provide advice to the Australian Government under the Infrastructure Australia Act 2008.
- In 2014, the Infrastructure Australia Act 2008 was amended to give Infrastructure Australia new powers, and to create an independent board with the right to appoint its own Chief Executive Officer. The amended Act came into effect on 1 September 2014.
- The new Infrastructure Australia Board was formed in September 2014 led by Chairman Mark Birrell, the 12 members bring experience from business, academia, the public and private sectors.
- Under the Act, Infrastructure Australia has responsibility to strategically audit Australia's nationally significant infrastructure, and develop 15 year rolling Infrastructure Plans that specify national and state level priorities.
- The Act also states that the Minister must not give directions about the content of any audit, list, evaluation, plan or advice provided by Infrastructure Australia. However, the Minister issues a Statement of Expectations to Infrastructure Australia.
- The changes to the Infrastructure Australia Act defined the responsibilities of CEO, Board and Minister more clearly. This has allowed the organisation to operate more effectively and independently.
- Our Board members also come from a wide variety of infrastructure backgrounds, from the public and private sector and from right across the country. The diversity of experience they bring assists Infrastructure Australia greatly.

To what extent do you consider that the arguments for setting up Infrastructure Australia as a statutory body to advise on infrastructure would apply in other countries, or was this more related to factors specific to Australia?

- The role of Infrastructure Australia has and will continue to evolve, however from our regular interaction with other countries, we can see that the model is transferrable and applicable.

Given that Infrastructure Australia looks at economic infrastructure, what factors led you to focus specifically on this type of infrastructure rather than having a broader remit that includes social infrastructure?

- Under the Infrastructure Australia Act 2008 we are required to look at nationally significant infrastructure. This is defined as including:
 - transport infrastructure;
 - energy infrastructure;
 - communications infrastructure;
 - water infrastructure; and
 - in which investment or further investment will materially improve national productivity.
- We have to date focused on economic infrastructure, as outlined in the Act, but that does not preclude us from looking at social infrastructure in the future, and the last Statement of Expectations from the Minister outlined a social infrastructure role for the future.

How do you work with the infrastructure advisory bodies of state governments where your responsibilities interact?

- We work closely and positively with the State and Territory bodies, including Infrastructure New South Wales; Building QLD; Infrastructure Victoria and Infrastructure Tasmania. We have an ongoing meeting schedule with the CEOs of those bodies and consult closely with their staff on policy and project advisory work.
- We also work closely with state government departments on project business cases.