

Response to the NZ Infrastructure Commission's 2025 Draft National Infrastructure Plan
From the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) – Representing Local Government and the Public Works Sector

7 July 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2025 Draft National Infrastructure Plan. As a public works member association dedicated to the sustainable management of essential public infrastructure, we commend the Commission's integrated and future-focused approach. We are especially pleased to see the emphasis on maintenance, resilience, funding sustainability, and fit-for-purpose investment—all strongly aligned with principles promoted in [IPWEA's White Paper](#) on best practice asset management.

Below are our comments structured against the four focus areas of the Draft Plan:

1. Establish Affordable and Sustainable Funding (4 Recommendations)

Our Position:

We strongly support this focus. Long-term financial sustainability underpins the value, performance, and service delivery of infrastructure assets. It is critical that infrastructure funding models reflect the full lifecycle costs of assets—including capital renewal and maintenance—not just capital **upgrade/new** development.

Recommendations:

- Embed lifecycle asset management planning as a mandatory requirement for funding allocations to ensure affordability across the asset's life.
- Attention is drawn to the International Infrastructure Financial Management Manual (IIFMM) that promotes transparency through financial performance indicators, such as the Asset Sustainability Ratio and Life Cycle Funding Ratio, which assess whether sufficient funding is allocated to maintain service levels over time.
- Support capacity-building for infrastructure owners to implement robust long-term financial and asset strategies by aligning education pathways to the World Partners in Asset Management (WPiAM) Global Certification Scheme.
- Building better internal capacity in agencies and central government will deliver a better outcome.
 - A Canadian asset management success story
 - The Canadian federal government established a long-term funding initiative to build the country's asset management capabilities for the purpose of ensuring greater long-term success of infrastructure projects - the Municipal Asset Management Program (MAMP). The IPWEA Professional Certificate in Asset Management Planning Course is a key program of MAMP. IPWEA was chosen by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to be one of the strategic partners to deliver educational training in infrastructure asset management.

- Read the full story – [here](#).
- The New Zealand Government could consider introducing a similar program nationally, to ensure central government agencies have the right resources and skills to maximise the capacity and lifespan of all infrastructure assets.

2. Clear the Way for Infrastructure (3 Recommendations)

Our Position:

Reducing red tape and aligning planning frameworks is necessary, but must not come at the expense of robust, evidence-based asset planning.

Recommendations:

- Ensure integrated planning systems require and reward good asset management practices, rather than bypassing them for expediency.
- Strengthen alignment between land use planning, service delivery, and infrastructure investment, using long-term asset management plans as the common thread.
- Promote infrastructure governance models outlined in the International Infrastructure Management Manual (IIMM) that foster cross-agency collaboration and ensure infrastructure decisions are based on long-term community outcomes. Note – Audit NZ reference the IIMM for Benchmarking Local Government Asset Management Plans.

3. Start with Maintenance (3 Recommendations)

Our Position:

We strongly endorse this section—maintenance is the foundation of service delivery and asset preservation. Starting with maintenance before new investment is the most cost-effective and sustainable approach.

Recommendations:

- Prioritise investment in deferred maintenance and renewals before funding new infrastructure.
- Develop and publish national maintenance performance benchmarks, using core measures such as asset condition, function, and capacity per asset class.
- Support workforce development and procurement strategies that build internal capability in maintenance delivery and planning.

4. Right-Size New Investment (3 Recommendations)

Our Position:

We agree with the call for infrastructure that is fit-for-purpose, adaptable, and resilient. This requires robust options analysis, including consideration of non-asset solutions, adaptive reuse, and shared use of existing infrastructure.

Recommendations:

- Require business cases to include analysis of existing asset performance and capacity and potential non-infrastructure solutions, before proposing new builds.
- Adopt an “avoid, adapt, invest” hierarchy to right-size new infrastructure based on service needs, not asset accumulation.
- Encourage investment in digital infrastructure that supports smart, real-time asset management and service optimisation.

Conclusion

The Draft National Infrastructure Plan presents a welcome shift toward sustainability, evidence-based planning, and greater value-for-money. However, its success depends on embedding sound asset management practice across all four strategic areas. IPWEA’s White Paper highlights that maintenance-first, lifecycle-based asset management is not just technical good practice—it is a strategic enabler of infrastructure resilience, community wellbeing, and intergenerational equity.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to contribute further to implementation strategies or future policy guidance arising from this plan.

Sincerely,

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