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BUILDERS WANT WA INFRASTRUCTURE BODY

Master Builders, as part of its 2017 State election policies, wants the creation of an independent statutory WA Government Infrastructure Body.

Master Builders Construction Director, Kim Richardson, said there is a glaring need for this infrastructure planning body to provide transparent and co-ordinated long term planning of major WA Government construction projects which are driven by priority needs of the State.

“As the needs of WA grow, we will need to not only provide additional infrastructure but also replace ageing existing infrastructure. Our future governments will therefore face increasing financial pressure to deliver these strategically important projects to provide the future economic security of the State and WA population,” Mr Richardson said.

That is why Master Builders supports the creation of this new body which delivers on the important KPIs of:

- Transparent economic assessment;
- Bi-partisan support on the long-term planning of major WA Government construction projects;
- Prioritisation of major projects based on the needs of WA and WA taxpayers;
- Informed public debate about the basis of the benefit and need for the project;
- Assessing alternate finance models outside the limited Government funding model as a means to grow and/or replace existing infrastructure such as unsolicited expressions of interest or value capture; and
- Providing certainty for industry to allow long term forecasting of projects including labour requirements.

Mr Richardson said these planning bodies are already being established by other State Governments which demonstrate the accepted need for a coordinated approach on delivering increasingly complex and costly infrastructure projects.

“Western Australia cannot be left behind the other States, especially as the WA economy transitions from the resource sector construction boom spike of the last decade to a more sustainable economic climate for the foreseeable future,” Mr Richardson concluded.

Master Builders is part of the Infrastructure Coalition which released a Report in November 2016 titled, Building the West, which also advocates for an Infrastructure WA body (copy of Report attached).

Issues for consideration:

1. Why is the current WA Government Infrastructure Planning regime not working?

Lengthy process that lacks transparency with little exposure to the public, meaning the public is only aware when projects are announced, and with little public engagement. Public support for, or opposition to, cannot be gauged nor assessed which can cause disruption/opposition to a project.

Announcement of Strategic Infrastructure projects has historically and at times been driven by a short term political agenda outside any long-term government planning. The intent is Infrastructure WA would map out a sustainable, logical and justifiable infrastructure road map, say 15-20 years in advance, which the Government of the day could change the mix of as it deems necessary, but the overall long term planning outcome is not compromised.

2. How will the new Body improve the situation?

Decisions on major infrastructure projects are currently dealt with under the Infrastructure Coordinating Committee (ICC), a Government body which operates behind closed doors with announcements made on major projects having little meaningful public awareness. In most cases, it is a *fait accompli* outcome with the public often unaware of the analysis of the need for the project, which can be controversial at times for various reasons.

A new independent body removes the perception of political influences on any particular project, rather, is based on a needs analysis and can bring the public along with the reasoning on why the project is needed.

3. What about Vested Interests?

This argument ignores the body being an independent statutory authority which removes the vested interest line. Opponents who argue that builders are beneficiaries from infrastructure projects and will therefore try and influence the outcomes take a very narrow and short-sighted point of view. This position is flawed as the builders already benefit from undertaking infrastructure work meaning little changes on that point.

Master Builders simply calls for a better and more transparent process.

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