MEDIA RELEASE
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NATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES EVOLVING: IS DIGITAL AND DATA NEXT?

The Peak Industry group for smart cities in Australia has celebrated the launch of the nation's Infrastructure Priority List, published by Infrastructure Australia (IA) as part of their central role in guiding priority investments in the nation's future.

Adam Beck, Executive Director of Smart Cities Council Australia New Zealand (SCC) says "Today's launch marks another important step to ensuring Australia remains focused on delivering infrastructure that serves the community, and our economy.

"Ensuring we invest in future-focused infrastructure that is resilient, digitally enabled and serving the needs of the community should be the priority, and today's launch shows strong signs we're moving in the right direction."

The Infrastructure priority list is the key follow-up the 2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit, which last year signaled a call to action for a smarter and more sustainable infrastructure future.

A key finding from the Audit was a detailed looked at the major challenges and opportunities facing the nation across a range of elements, such as social well-being, technology and data and economic productivity.

"Productivity growth in Australia is slowing, and this was a stark message from the 2019 Infrastructure Audit." "We need to harness the opportunity in lifting this productivity through adopting a data driven approach in planning, delivering and operating our infrastructure.

This data driven approach can be enabled through a national digital built environment policy," Beck says.

"We applaud the acknowledgement by IA in last year's Infrastructure Audit of the role that technology and data can play in our infrastructure future and hope to see that translate into new initiatives over the coming years," Beck stated.

Driving better decisions, improving social well-being and taking advantage of the interconnected nature of our cities was a core goal identified in the Audit. It also identified better access to services, driving greater efficiency and creating new industries as critical opportunities.

"We believe IA can play a critical role in driving the nation's infrastructure productivity, catalysing critical initiatives in digital transformation and hosting key programs such as the Centre for Digital Built Australia - a policy initiative proposed by the Council in 2018," Beck explained.

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Beck says "the time has come for a Centre for Digital Built Australia, modelled on the outcomes-driven work by the UK through the Centre for Digital Built Britain (CDBB).

"The CDBB has a mandate to 'support the digitally enabled transformation of the full lifecycle of the built environment to increase productivity and improve economic and social outcomes in the UK."

This mandate is underpinned by the work the UK has advanced on realising the benefits of smart infrastructure, through key enablers such as procuring and sharing data, embedding artificial intelligence and generating value from data via digital twins.

"Modelling from the UK National Infrastructure Commission identifies a £50B contribution to the UK economy per year from leveraging data as infrastructure," Beck says. "Digitising asset information and driving efficiencies through planning, design and construction processes are delivering savings that are paying for public schools and other social infrastructure."

"Requiring this type of project level analysis during the business case development and review phase could reveal significant benefits to the Australian economy not currently captured."

The CDBB uses a partnership-driven approach between government, industry and academia to drive market transformation - something Australia has displayed at the highest level with the green building movement," Beck stated.

"The Infrastructure Priority List released today clearly signals a move to increase investment in infrastructure that is resilient to a changing climate and reduces its carbon deficit." The role that technology and data can play in helping accelerate data-driven infrastructure planning and development is an exciting one, and one that Data61 identifies as potentially generating a $5-10 billion export opportunity for Australia.

"We look forward to working with IA to find additional opportunities for building a digital built environment future for the nation, and leverage the value to the community, and national productivity, from treating data as critical infrastructure," Beck says

About the Smart Cities Council
The Smart Cities Council is the world's largest network of smart cities companies, practitioners and policy makers, embracing technology, data, and intelligent design to accelerate liveability, workability, and sustainability in our cities and towns.

Further information about the Smart Cities Council can be found here.

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