

Budget 2021 – Infrastructure

Overview

More of the same this year in infrastructure with investments in so called “shovel ready” projects and grant programs. There are some passenger rail and freight investments however there are no significant or transformational infrastructure investments. The total infrastructure investment across more than 45 individual measures is \$15.2bn over 10 years. This reflects a decrease of \$189m from the 2019-20 budget.

There are also further funding rounds for regional grant programs.

Infrastructure

Shovel-ready Infrastructure

The Budget

The budget papers reveal that spending on infrastructure is \$118.7m lower in this Budget, commencing a downward trajectory of \$3.3bn over the four years to 2023-24 due to delays in projects to date.

Further rounds of funding for three regional grant programmes are also included – the Building Better Regions Programme, the Community Development Grants Programme and the Regional Connectivity Programme.

Table 2: Payment measures since the 2020-21 MYEFO^(a) (continued)

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS					
Infrastructure Investment — Australian Capital Territory					
Infrastructure Investment — New South Wales					
Infrastructure Investment — Northern Territory	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure Investment — Queensland	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure Investment — South Australia	-	20.0	20.0	-	-
Infrastructure Investment — Tasmania	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure Investment — Victoria	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure Investment — Western Australia	-	-	-	-	-
Local Roads and Community Infrastructure — extension	-	400.7	600.7	-	-

National Water Grid — new projects	-	-	-	-	-
Supporting Infrastructure Investment	-	26.0	70.6	33.9	-
Supporting Regional Australia	-1.1	51.3	143.7	76.0	75.7
<i>National Capital Authority</i>					
Commonwealth Avenue Bridge Upgrade	-	-	-	-	-

2021-22 Budget Paper No 2, Table 2 pp. 41- 42, abridged

National Capital Authority

The Government will provide \$137.0 million over five years from 2020 21 (including \$131.9 million in capital funding) to upgrade the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge in the Australian Capital Territory to maintain its function and safety through: increasing the load bearing capacity to manage the increasing volume and weight of traffic into the future, and widening the pedestrian pathways and replacing vehicle and pedestrian safety barriers to meet modern design standards (2021-22 Budget Paper No 2, Part 2, p. 147).

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

Infrastructure supports economic growth and equal opportunities by connecting people and increasing access to services. The impacts of infrastructure investment manifest differently for women and men. Investments in road infrastructure to increase road safety improve outcomes principally for men as men are at greater risk of injury and death from road accidents than women. Road design and improvements that focus not just on improving road safety but also improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and experience are inclusive investments as they target women directly. Women are less likely to cycle given perceptions and experiences of being unsafe so road safety infrastructure investments incorporating cycle ways increase the potential for women to access cycle ways. For pedestrians, safe and separated wide walking paths (for prams or with children) with good lighting and visibility enhance perceptions of safety and improve access and connection to services, including public transport waiting areas. This is important for individuals in lower income brackets (the majority of whom are women) who are less likely to own their own car and rely on public transport and walking.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

These measures could have a beneficial impact on women where investments are in public transport and incorporate gender sensitive design. Unfortunately only two of the state and territory infrastructure investments listed are for public transport. Gender sensitive design is not a mandatory element of Australian Government infrastructure investment. The Department of Infrastructure does not apply an explicit gender and inclusion policy to its investments unlike the Australian Government’s *Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific*, with its investment principles that require infrastructure investments to address gender equality. Instead, the specifications for design of shovel ready infrastructure is left to third parties, including local governments. Gender equality and inclusion requirements are yet to be incorporated in a coherent and comprehensive way.

For example, the investment in the Commonwealth Avenue bridge to *inter alia* widen pedestrian pathways and upgrade safety barriers is a welcome inclusion of gender considerations in design with its wider paths (not just for the large numbers of users but to accommodate prams and cycles) and safety barriers. The project should also include an upgrade the adjacent Commonwealth Avenue underpass to enhance the efficiency of the investment, as this location is known safety hazard for women. ¹

Recommendations

The Department of Infrastructure should implement a gender and inclusion policy to guide and apply to all infrastructure investments.

Infrastructure grants

The Budget

Community Development Grants Programme — new projects

Payments (\$m)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	-12.5	0.5	12.5	12.5	-

2021-22 Budget Paper No 2, Part 2 p. 147

Supporting Regional Australia	51.3	143.7	76.0	75.7
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2021-22 Budget Paper No 2, Part 2 p. 169

The *Community Development Grants Programme* supports investments in regional projects including museums, sports centres and regional economic infrastructure to promote the social and economic viability of communities.

The Supporting Regional Australia measure includes \$256m over four years for a further round of the *Building Better Regions Fund* to support investment in community infrastructure and capacity building projects in regional areas. A further \$84.8m over two years is allocated to the *Regional Connectivity Program* for increased access to digital services in regional and remote Australia.

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

One third of Australian women live in regional or remote communities where access to services and other community infrastructure is limited. Women in regions and remote areas face greater

¹ The Canberra Women's Health Matters safety map, [Canberra Safety Map \(crowdspot.com.au\)](http://Canberra.Safety.Map(crowdspot.com.au))

challenges dealing with natural disasters, access to education, health and medical care, jobs and child care.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

These measures can be assessed as positive for women if a gender analysis informs the objectives of the further funding rounds and gender equality is an element for funding eligibility. The significant disadvantages for women in regional and remote Australia mean that investment in digital technology and access to services should be an overall positive benefit from the Regional Connectivity Program. However given the recent significant criticism of the Building Better Regions Fund and the Community Development Grants Programme, as well as the requirement for Community Development Grants Programme projects to be pre-identified by Government, these measures are at best neutral for women.

Recommendations

A gender analysis should inform the grant criteria, and grant eligibility should be determined by the extent to which the application addresses gender gaps.