

Depolitisation key to linking infrastructure vision and delivery

NZCID Media Statement
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"The Castalia report 'Raising the Bar: Towards an Effective National Infrastructure Plan' should be on the must read list for those preparing the National Infrastructure Plan and the "Auckland Unleashed" spatial plan about to be launched this week ", says the New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development Chief Executive, Stephen Selwood.

The report commissioned by Business New Zealand, proposes institutional separation between planning and political decision making and correctly places heavy emphasis on linking vision and delivery.

"We think this is critical for long term infrastructure planning in New Zealand", Selwood says.

"Since infrastructure involves investments with life spans of 50 years and more, and implementation lead times of 10 - 15 years, plans must be able to survive changes of government without major changes to goals and objectives. De-politicising infrastructure planning would improve long-term coordination between the Government agencies, regional bodies and the private sector.

"It also allows controversial policies to be floated and tested with reduced political risk. It can then be up to politicians of the day to respond, having had the benefit of testing public reaction in a less political context.

"This is the kind of approach that Scandinavian nations adopt and is very successful, Selwood says.

"Its one of the reasons why they have garnered public support for big policy changes.

"The Castalia report also focuses on implementation. It sets out a strong case for quantified goals and targets, developed through a thorough consultation process, a hierarchy of strategies, tactics and measures for achievement of those goals and clarity of responsibilities and actions.

"We agree with this approach but would also advocate that the National Infrastructure Plan and the Auckland Plan should both be intrinsically aligned in the same manner.

"Both will need to factor in the need to rebuild Christchurch. Both plans must clearly spell out how infrastructure will contribute to improved social, economic and environmental development in New Zealand. They must enable the policies that will facilitate timely public and private sector investment in infrastructure. Most importantly the National Infrastructure Plan and the Auckland Plan need to be in sync. This will inevitably require high level political trade-offs on project priorities and funding.

"Castalia's recommendations mirror NZCID's view that an effective infrastructure plan must link vision to funding and delivery as illustrated below:

Essential components of an effective National Infrastructure Plan



"The tragic events in Christchurch and Japan serve to remind us that infrastructure is as much about providing the essentials of life as it is supporting the social, economic and environmental heartbeat of New Zealand. We need to adopt best practice in planning for the infrastructure that the nation depends upon. The Castalia report makes a very positive contribution in that regard", Stephen Selwood, NZCID.

The Castalia report Raising the Bar: Towards an Effective National Infrastructure Plan can be found under 'commentaries' on www.businessnz.org.nz