

Media Statement
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Infrastructure leaders agree on the need for a visionary National Infrastructure Plan for New Zealand

Over sixty leaders in the infrastructure sector met in Auckland yesterday to help shape thinking for the next National Infrastructure Plan. Facilitated by the New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development and professional services company GHD, the forum included representatives from central and local government and the private sector.

"There was very strong consensus for an agreed vision about how timely investment in infrastructure can help deliver New Zealand's growth objectives," said Stephen Selwood, Chief Executive New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development.

It was recognised that the purpose of infrastructure investment is to improve quality of life which necessarily requires a balance between environmental, social and economic imperatives.

Participants expressed a strong desire to see alignment in the development of the Auckland Spatial Plan and the National Infrastructure Plan. The idea of a National Spatial Plan that would ensure balanced development and more strategic funding and project prioritisation across the country was also explored. Conceptually, it should be possible for agreed regional spatial plans to be fully integrated into a national plan in the longer term.

Improved alignment of planning at both a national and local level is seen by the industry to be critical to improving productivity in the construction sector. Reducing boom-bust cycles will enable the industry to both attract and retain a highly skilled workforce and commit the capital necessary to deliver the infrastructure capacity New Zealand needs to grow.

Debt in the form of infrastructure bonds public private partnerships were seen as a means of funding the investment required and delivering intergenerational equity to build infrastructure that would last for many decades to come. However it was also recognised that given the continued escalation of debt at the national level the investments would have to yield a positive economic return and would have to be supported by new revenues from user charges. This could be in the form of tolls, congestion pricing and pricing for water.

Industry participants highlighted opportunities for aggregation of projects and shared services across local government boundaries and government ministries to achieve economies of scale in the delivery of services.

Workshop feedback consistently emphasised the need for multi-party support for a long term infrastructure plan for the future development of New Zealand. There was also recognition that funding for infrastructure should follow a robust and well-researched strategic plan.

The forum was particularly useful in building consensus around the key issues that must be addressed. Feedback from each of the workshop sessions will be collated by GHD into a series of recommendations for input into the National Infrastructure Plan process.

"Residual benefit will be the ongoing discussion and improved alignment among key industry stakeholders in the development of the plan," Selwood says.

"Our sponsorship of this forum" says GHD General Manager Gary Payne, "underlines our commitment to providing opportunities for industry engagement as part of the development process for the National Infrastructure Plan, which has the potential to improve quality of life for all New Zealanders."

For further comment please contact:

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