

BIC Column July 2014

I have been writing about the Infrastructure Australia Amendment Bill (Bill) for more than six months and this View from Canberra will bring the saga to a close.

As outlined in previous columns the BIC was concerned the Bill might limit Infrastructure Australia's (IA) ability to compare all types of infrastructure proposals (in particular ones relating to public transport), and to provide transparency on how decisions are made by the current Government.

In early March I appeared at the public hearing into the Senate Inquiry into the Bill. The hearing was quite robust and the BIC gave a good account of the need for the Commonwealth Government to take a role in our cities and public transport through independent bodies like Infrastructure Australia. You can see all of the fireworks of the appearance on the OzeBus website via YouTube www.zebus.com.au.

In late June Government advised the BIC that a number of amendments had been made to the Bill that will guarantee that IA will be able to continue assessing public transport projects and publishing these assessments in an open and transparent manner.

Following the Government's concession to change the Bill it went to the Senate where additional amendments were made. These include:

- The requirement for Infrastructure Australia (IA) as soon as practicable after the end of each quarter, to make a summary of each proposal evaluated during the quarter available on its website
- The requirement for IA to review Commonwealth infrastructure funding programs and their alignment with Infrastructure Plans given to the Minister
- Giving IA the function of promoting public awareness, including by publishing information on its website
- Preventing the Minister from giving IA directions about the content of any audit, list, evaluation, plan or advice to be provided
- Giving IA the function of providing advice on the delivery of infrastructure projects
- Giving IA the power to evaluate the delivery of an infrastructure project against any targets set before or during delivery; and any relevant assumptions made before or during delivery
- Giving IA the power to assess any policy issues arising from climate change that may impact on the utilisation of infrastructure.

In total 29 amendments were made to the Bill and these will beef up the role of IA and make it a comprehensive structural framework for assessing infrastructure that will long outlast the political cycle.

This is a great outcome for the BIC and industry in our Moving People advocacy, and moreover a great outcome for the future of this nation. While a win like this might not be as "sexy" as previous wins for the BIC, like the ones on Effective Life depreciation or direct investment in public transport from the Commonwealth Government, it is important.

This means we have a structural framework that will allow the Australian Government to determine where infrastructure money is best spent and fund public transport infrastructure where it stacks up in the future. Getting this structure right is so vital because it takes us beyond a project by project based approach to public transport and sets us on the path of looking at how we move people in our cities and regions as part of a package that brings together land use and transport planning to deliver the best outcomes.

Finally a quick reminder all bus and coach operators who are members of BIC or a State Association, Government representatives, tourism organisations and passenger transport associations are eligible for a 50% discount on registrations for the 2014 Australasia Bus and Coach Expo.

The full program and information about registration, accommodation, events and much more for delegates is also available at www.ozebus.com.au/delegates. So visit the page and register today. Accommodation at Jupiters Gold Coast is filling fast so get in early and book your stay as well.

Information for businesses that want to display at the Australasia Bus and Coach Expo is now available at Expo Web Central www.ozebus.com.au/expo, the one stop shop for exhibitors.

I look forward to seeing you at the Gold Coast.