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Investment in infrastructure is key to growth and post-COVID-19 recovery but Australians more likely to say the nation is not doing enough to meet infrastructure needs – Ipsos survey

76% expect the Australian Government to make investment in infrastructure a priority for post COVID-19 recovery

13 November 2020: A majority (84%) of Australians believe that investing in infrastructure is vital to our country's future economic growth, however 58% say Australia is not doing enough to meet infrastructure needs, according to the Ipsos *2020 Global Infrastructure Index*, the largest global survey of public attitudes towards infrastructure and investment.

The research was conducted as a partnership with the Global Infrastructure Investor Association (GIIA).

Key Australian and global findings:

- Globally, investment in infrastructure is recognised as important to a COVID-19 recovery. On average, 68% agree they expect this from their governments. Australians have higher expectations than the global average, with 76% agreeing.
- The majority (84%) of Australians believe that investing in infrastructure is vital to our country's future economic growth (higher than the global average of 79%). This agreement has increased since 2019 when 77% agreed (and 75% agreed in 2018).
- Australians are more positive about the power of infrastructure to help the national economy than the global average: 85% of Australians agree that investing in infrastructure will create new jobs and boost the economy, compared with a 79% globally.
- Most Australians think that as a country, Australia is not doing enough to meet infrastructure needs (58% agreed with this, consistent with global sentiment of 59% average across countries surveyed). Australians have not really changed their minds on this in recent years (60% agreed in 2019; 61% in 2018).
- Despite the feeling that more investment is needed in infrastructure, Australia is within the top 10 most satisfied countries surveyed about current infrastructure - half (52%) advised they were satisfied. Furthermore, this satisfaction has notably risen over time; in 2017, 35% of Australians were satisfied with the nation's infrastructure.
- The residents most satisfied with their country's infrastructure in 2020 were China (90%), Saudi Arabia (80%) and Netherlands (77%).

Infrastructure investment priorities

- Australians see solar energy infrastructure investment as a priority for the country (51% identified this). Other types of infrastructure that rated highly for prioritising for investment

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were rail, local roads, and water and sewerage (all 42%); and digital infrastructure (including broadband) and major roads (including freeways) - both at 41%.

- Solar energy infrastructure also topped the list of priorities for Australians in 2019 (44%).
- Australians' preference in the type of infrastructure is on par between social (39%), such as schools and hospitals, and economic (42%) including road, rail and air. Globally, countries involved in the study tend to favour social infrastructure investment (48%), compared with economic (32%).

Approaches to investment in infrastructure

- Private sector investment in infrastructure is well received, with 68% of Australians supporting this type of funding if it means our country gets the infrastructure it needs (in line with the average global result at 68%). Support for private sector investment has jumped in the last year, up from 59% in 2019.
- Australia is one of the least keen of the countries surveyed when it comes to foreign investment in infrastructure. There is a limited level of support for foreign investment in new infrastructure in Australia (31% agreed they were fine with foreign investment in new infrastructure in Australia if it means it is better quality), sitting within the bottom three countries between Japan (33%) and US (30%) which is well behind the global average with 52%.

Community engagement

- The trade-off between allowing community engagement and delivering infrastructure projects on time generates mixed opinions. Around two in five Australians prefer decisions to be delayed so that the public's views can be heard (40%), while a similar proportion (37%) prefer not to delay decisions even if it means that the impact of infrastructure projects cannot be fully understood, and the public's views cannot be heard properly.

Ipsos Director, Jennifer Brook, said: "Australians see large scale infrastructure projects as a key driver of growth, something everyone is acutely aware of as Australia maps out a recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The potential of infrastructure construction and renewal projects to boost economic development and create jobs and opportunities for local businesses drives public support for this investment.

"This support for infrastructure investment is reflected in government spending across the country. High profile infrastructure projects currently underway, recently completed or announced include the east coast Inland Rail, NorthConnex in NSW, the Metro Tunnel Project in Victoria, the Reid Highway upgrade in Western Australia and the Townsville Ring Road project in Queensland.



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“These infrastructure projects up and down the country are well regarded as positive signs of investment, but solar energy infrastructure stands out as an area where Australians believe the nation should be doing more to invest.”

GIIA CEO, Lawrence Slade, said he believed that the impact of Covid-19 appears to have shifted public opinion in terms of who is best placed to deliver UK infrastructure needs for future generations.

“These results indicate strong support for private sector investment in economic infrastructure which then allows Government to focus on the provision of social infrastructure such as healthcare and education in the wake of the global pandemic,” he said.

“GIIA urges the Government to address some of the current impediments to private investment to ensure we can build and access the modern, innovative and socially responsible infrastructure needed for future generations.”

Note to editors

The fifth GIIA / Ipsos Global Infrastructure Index surveyed 19,516 people across 27 countries from 24 July – 7 August 2020.

The survey used an online methodology, sampled via Ipsos’ Global @dvisor. Participants were adults aged 18-64 in the US and Canada, and adults aged 16-64 in all other countries. Countries were Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the USA. Further detail is available at www.ipsos.com/en-au

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