

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Bridging the Gap in Infrastructure Decision Making

Professor Phillip O'Neill of the Urban Research Centre is investigating how the language and technologies we use to design and assess urban infrastructure projects can affect how they are built. This research has been funded by the Australian Research Council Discovery program.

'Public infrastructure, that is the roads, public transport, ports, electricity and water investments that are crucial to urban life, is seen widely as being in crisis,' says Professor O'Neill. 'Infrastructure is central to the operation of cities and is a key ingredient for social and economic success as well as for environmental sustainability. Yet, despite a long history of competent infrastructure provision, Australian governments now struggle to devise, prioritise and deliver new infrastructure projects. The reason why infrastructure provision is failing may well be inattention to the way we think and talk about infrastructure as an idea, a financial project and as a physical entity.'

By analysing key documents around infrastructure projects, such as government policies, corporate and investor reports, specific project documentation, and lobby group proceedings, this research will investigate 40 large infrastructure projects across Australia to better understand the processes and reasoning behind infrastructure procurement and provision. Key work involves the analysis of the language used in infrastructure projects, such as in assessing need and purpose, and in devising criteria to judge success or failure.



This research seeks to recover and rebuild a language for understanding the role of infrastructure in Australian cities and then devise criteria for better enactment of the infrastructure procurement and provisioning processes. The project's prime outcomes intersect with the growing need for better ways to build and operate large economic infrastructure. This will contribute to building cities that perform better economically, are livelier, and contribute to long-term environmental sustainability goals.

Project Title: Developing criteria to help solve Australia's urban infrastructure crisis.

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