

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Definition

Purpose

The *Infrastructure Australia Act 2008* (the Act) establishes Infrastructure Australia (IA) as the Australian Government's independent adviser on nationally significant infrastructure investment planning and project prioritisation.

The Act sets out our main functions, many of which are directly tied to the concept of national significance. These include:

- conducting (or endorsing) evaluations of Commonwealth, state and territory proposals for *nationally significant infrastructure* investment
- developing targeted Infrastructure Priority Lists specifying priorities for investment in *nationally significant infrastructure*
- conducting audits of *nationally significant infrastructure*
- developing Infrastructure Plans on priorities for *nationally significant infrastructure*
- inquiring into and reporting on matters relating to *nationally significant infrastructure*.

The Act defines nationally significant infrastructure as including “transport, energy, communications, water and social infrastructure in which investment or further investment will materially improve national productivity.”

The purpose of this guidance is to describe how IA will interpret and apply this definition in practice, in determining if proposals for infrastructure investment (projects and programs) or other infrastructure matters (such as problems, opportunities or policy issues) are nationally significant, and fall within IA's remit.

This guidance replaces previous guidance set out in IA's [2021 Assessment Framework](#) and will be used to assess national significance for all new proposals for investment received by IA.

Note: There are separate requirements for IA to evaluate business cases for infrastructure proposals seeking an Australian Government funding contribution of more than \$250 million. These requirements are outlined in the [Government's Statement of Expectations to IA \(2024\)](#), [Budget Process Operational Rules \(2023, section 1.27\(b\)\)](#) and the [National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects \(2024-29\)](#).

Under these circumstances, business cases that meet this financial threshold will be evaluated by IA regardless of whether or not the proposal is deemed to be nationally significant. Consequently, this criterion is excluded from IA guidance associated with determining national significance across infrastructure sectors within our remit.

How we determine national significance

This section provides the framework of attributes, criteria and related considerations that we will use in assessing national significance.

It has been designed to apply across the range of sectors and functions within IA's remit, while providing consistency with the Australian Government's definition of 'nationally significant infrastructure' in respect of land transport infrastructure proposals, as set out in the [Infrastructure Policy Statement](#).

Framework for determining national significance

Infrastructure-related problems, opportunities, investment proposals and policy issues that are defined by IA as nationally significant will typically meet both of the following attributes:

1 Clear role for the Australian Government Satisfies <i>at least one</i> of:		2 Contribution to national priorities and outcomes Satisfies <i>both</i> of:	
A The Australian Government's involvement is necessary for reasons of scope, scale, complexity, or material interest	B Relates to identified national infrastructure networks and services in a relevant infrastructure sector	A Directly advances or is an essential enabler of national priorities or commitments	B Expected to materially improve national productivity, economic, livability and/or sustainability outcomes

How criteria will be assessed

As a guide, the tables below summarise the primary considerations that will be used by IA to determine whether a proposal satisfies each of the criteria for nationally significant infrastructure.

1. Clear role for the Australian Government	
Criteria	How these will be assessed
A. The Australian Government's involvement is necessary for reasons of scope, scale, complexity or material interest	<p>Australian Government involvement is necessary due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicability of relevant Australian Government or shared responsibilities (including Intergovernmental Agreements, including Federation Funding Agreements) or existing Australian Government commitments of funding to a specific project or investment proposal; and/or • Relative scope, scale or complexity means it cannot be addressed by states and territories or other stakeholders alone (e.g., involves complex urban environments or interdependencies, affects an extensive geographical area, or impacts multiple jurisdictions); and/or • The criticality of Australian Government involvement where the problem, opportunity or proposal either requires, or is highly unlikely to be addressed without, its involvement; and/or • Impacts a 'material interest' of the Australian Government, including involvement of or implications for an entity or company that is directly or indirectly owned by the Commonwealth (e.g., Government Business Enterprises), or implications for Australia's national identity, cultural standing or international profile.
B. Relates to identified national infrastructure networks and services in a relevant infrastructure sector	<p>Relates to infrastructure in sectors included within IA's remit, which is either physically part of, directly connected to or intersects identified national infrastructure assets, networks and systems, or otherwise directly related in terms of policy, services or other matters, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport – including the National Land Transport Network, National Key Freight Routes, owned or leased federal airports, common-user marine and port infrastructure. • Communications – including the National Broadband Network, mobile network infrastructure and coverage provided by Mobile Network Operators, the Universal Service Guarantee for Telecommunications. • Water – including the National Water Grid and associated supply, treatment, storage and distribution infrastructure, domestic and industrial water and wastewater supply and services. • Energy – including electricity and gas markets (such as the National Electricity Market) and associated generation, storage, transmission and distribution infrastructure for domestic services and export supply chains. • Social – where social infrastructure assets, facilities and associated services form part of broader, integrated city-shaping or region-based infrastructure developments or networks identified as a strategic priority or commitment in infrastructure plans of the Commonwealth, state or territory.

2. Contribution to national priorities and outcomes	
Criteria	How these will be assessed
<p>A.</p> <p>Directly advances or is an essential enabler of national priorities or commitments</p>	<p>A problem, opportunity or proposal that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly relates or contributes to stated national infrastructure priorities or commitments in relevant sectors, as identified by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Australian Government infrastructure policies, strategies, plans and associated objectives (such as the Infrastructure Policy Statement or sectoral strategies); and/or – Intergovernmental priorities, such as those identified by National Cabinet or ministerial councils reporting to National Cabinet, including the Infrastructure and Transport Ministers' Meeting (ITMM), Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council (ECMC) and the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting (NEMMM). – Infrastructure Australia, taking into account audits, evaluations, consultations and other relevant matters. <p>And/or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly supports broader national priorities or commitments, the achievement of which will depend, in whole or in part, on enabling infrastructure activity in relevant sectors, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Achievement of Australia's emissions reduction targets. – Urban and regional development priorities (e.g., National Urban Policy, Northern Australia Agenda) – Supporting growth of priority national existing or emerging industries (e.g., agriculture, critical minerals and hydrogen). – Addressing social disadvantage and inequalities (including for First Nations).
<p>B.</p> <p>Expected to materially improve national productivity, economic, liveability and/or sustainability outcomes</p>	<p>Expected to materially improve national productivity, economic, liveability and/or sustainability outcomes – sufficiently demonstrated by appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a problem, opportunity or proposal with wide-reaching regional or national impact on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic and productivity outcomes – including enhancing productive capacity, addressing infrastructure-related barriers to economic growth and competitiveness, and facilitating growth of regional economies; and/or • Social or environmental outcomes - including enhancing quality of life, equity, climate mitigation and adaptation, decarbonisation and resilience. <p>The significance of impact should have regard to relevant context, which includes taking account of, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact relative to geographical, economic and social context in metropolitan, regional and remote settings. • Whether a proposed investment forms part of, or is a critical enabler for, a broader development or program. • The stage of a proposal, where early-stage proposals may be yet to define a clear solution and provide more limited evidence.