

Commonwealth review of infrastructure spend launched in May

The federal government are on the verge of slashing over \$1 billion in Tassie infrastructure spending, including over \$300 million slated for projects in the north or north-west of the state, as part of a review of spending, Liberal Party MPs have claimed.

The federal government in its May budget launched an independent 90-day review of all federally-funded infrastructure projects to decide whether they would deliver benefits for Australians.

Among those projects under scrutiny are the \$30 million Bell Bay rail line port extension, the \$120 million fourth tranche of TasRail's Tasmanian Freight Rail Revitalisation project, and \$20 million for upgrades to Bridport Road.

A Commonwealth spokesperson said the review of the infrastructure investment program would ensure projects funded by the Commonwealth were worthy.

"The Liberals and Nationals left a clogged pipeline of projects that were often underfunded, over budget and severely delayed," the spokesperson said.

Liberal infrastructure spokeswoman Bridget McKenzie said if realised, federal Labor's cuts to road and rail projects in the state would unfairly impact Tasmanian travellers.

"The Albanese Labor Government cut and delayed more than \$250 million from Tasmanian infrastructure projects in the October budget," she said.

"Now a further 23 congestion-busting, productivity enhancing and lifesaving road and rail projects are under threat by Labor's 90-day infrastructure review," Senator McKenzie said.

State Infrastructure and Transport Minister Michael Ferguson said he would not accept any unilateral cuts to federal funding for "much-needed" infrastructure projects across Tasmania.

"All of these projects are vitally important for Tasmanians and must be honoured in full and in the spirit of the National Partnership Agreement," Mr Ferguson said, referring to a 2019 agreement signed by the Commonwealth and states that sets out how infrastructure projects are delivered.

Bass Liberal MP Bridget Archer said she wasn't opposed to any review process "provided it's fair and equitable".

"However, I would be interested to know whether the government is applying the same lens towards their own current or future commitments."

The Independent Strategic Review of the Infrastructure Investment Program would "ensure projects funded by the Commonwealth have a lasting benefit for Australia, and enhance our economic and social productivity and prosperity," the spokesperson said.

"This is a genuine review to achieve the best outcome. We have recommitted to the \$120 billion infrastructure pipeline.

"It is looking at how projects can be delivered - what the true cost is, and ensuring that land transport infrastructure projects are nation-building, economically sustainable and resilient to our changing climate," the spokesperson said.

The government would continue to deliver on its 2022 election commitments to the state, and other projects already under construction would not be affected by the review, she said.

Member for Braddon, Gavin Pearce, described the review and potential cuts by the federal government as "shameful".

"The North-West is our state's most productive region and millions of tonnes of product is transported on the back of a truck each year," he said.

"The road funding listed under Labor's review is strategic and crucial to our region's ongoing prosperity and the safety of locals and visitors. It doesn't need to be reviewed."

"Since Labor has been in government all they seem to be doing is slashing the infrastructure investment we need to meet our untapped potential. It's shameful."

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Article by Benjamin Seeder