

Are Things Getting Better, Staying the Same, Or Getting Worse...?

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Abstract:

Since the Australian federal government committed to improving local government infrastructure planning in 2009 by implementing a capacity and capability building framework, the question being posed is: *“has the Local Government Reform Fund delivered on this objective ten years on?”*

Despite all levels of government committing to the process at the time, local government across Australia today faces the following challenges:

1. Infrastructure ownership is highly concentrated in local government compared with other levels of government; they typically have a very large stock of long-lived infrastructure assets relative to their income;
2. Service needs are varied, and circumstances change, forcing innovation and reallocation of available resources to where the greatest need is;
3. Evidence suggests local infrastructure plans have been poorly integrated with state and federal initiatives; and
4. An integrated long-term national infrastructure plan is needed to account for regional differences in population, climate, and topography; to manage risk ensuring equitable access to local services and infrastructure is maintained for all communities.

Using evidence provided by local governments across Australia, this paper presents a response to the question: *“Are things getting better, staying the same, or getting worse...?”*