

23 April 2020

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP
NSW Premier

Via email

Dear Premier



Australian Institute of Architects

RE: State-making infrastructure initiatives for immediate impact and positive legacy

The forthcoming announcement of criteria and projects for infrastructure funding are of considerable interest to the Institute as we consider the current circumstances present an extraordinary opportunity for the government to take visionary steps toward a better future underpinned by major positive transformations supporting health and wellbeing, the environment, and public enjoyment of our cities and towns.

The disrupted 'normal' of people's daily lives combined with infrastructure funding commitments present a rare chance to invest in economy-stimulating projects that will (a) enable critical shifts in how we enjoy our cities and towns, and (2) deliver long-lasting public and environmental benefits.

State-making initiatives we propose that can deliver immediate impact and create a positive legacy are as follows:

1) Making space for cycling and walking

During the lockdown, there has been a huge uptake of cycling by the people of all ages as they look for new ways to get active or seek alternatives to public transport. Fewer cars on roads and improved air quality have also contributed to people's willingness to cycle for transport as they feel safer. Likewise, more people are walking both for exercise and for transport.

These behavioural shifts around street use have powerfully positive impacts for health and wellbeing (including reducing COVID mortality rates, with research showing that high levels of air pollution are one of the most important contributors to death rates), the environment and potentially for transport congestion.

To support these behavioural shifts and the benefits they deliver now and beyond the immediate COVID-19 crisis we stand with a growing movement of doctors and other health professionals, community groups and transport researchers in calling for the following initiatives:

- Introduce a 'Go Slow' program reducing road speeds to 30-40km
We support the proposal submitted to the NSW Public Health Emergency Operations to reduce speeds to 30km in cities and towns this initiative and we also wish to see speed reductions continue post-COVID to improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians. There are many successful international examples of speed reduction initiatives, including San Francisco, where maximum speed limits of 20 miles per hour (32km/h) are now in effect citywide.
- Prioritise further development of cycle and pedestrian networks, including integration with transport hubs so that people can securely combine cycling and public transport. Many low-cost measures are already being implemented in cities around the world such as in New Zealand, [Milan](#), [Paris](#) and the UK who have moved quickly to implement initiatives such as widened footpaths, temporary bicycle lanes, streets closed to motor traffic and removal of automated pedestrian buttons.

2) Pedestrianised main streets in every LGA

Alongside interventions to make space for pedestrians and cyclists, we support making space for pedestrians to shop and enjoy socially activated outdoor space through pedestrianised and pedestrian priority main streets. We strongly recommend that in every LGA at least one main street is pedestrianised to create this open space for open economy and for both passive and active community participation.

3) Local community construction projects for improved facilities public domain

There is tremendous potential for well-considered local projects to become catalysts for regeneration, deliver significant positive outcomes for communities; promoting social wellbeing and enabling people to engage in their cities and towns. Local councils and communities have the high-resolution understanding to identify these transformative projects.

The Riverlink project in Maitland is an outstanding example of such a project; this relatively small intervention in the public domain has yielded immense public benefit, helping to boost high street retail occupancy, reconnecting the community with its natural and built environment and connecting locals with each other. Although relatively low cost, these projects are still often beyond the means of LGAs and require funding support from state government to be realised.

We urge the NSW government to establish a fund offering appropriately scaled grants designed to permit rapid application and funding approval and to engage directly with LGAs – and with the advisory support of GANSW – to identify projects that can deliver these outcomes. We also offer the Institute's support and assistance as it may be of benefit in this undertaking.

4) Sustainable infrastructure to support solar energy generation and electric vehicle use

To extend the environmental benefits that have resulted from COVID-19 measures, we strongly recommend the government look to invest in capacity-building infrastructure that can provide employment, leverage renewable resources and generate long term, continued environmental and cost benefits. Specifically, we suggest:

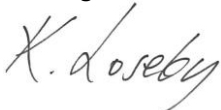
- Investing in the installation of solar panels on educational and public buildings as an immediately actionable and benefit generating initiative
- Establishing a network of electric vehicle charging stations.

5) Underground power lines

As an additional recommendation for an infrastructure projects that can provide employment to help stimulate the economy and deliver meaningful public benefit, we suggest power lines be relocated underground. Power lines are a considerable eyesore and their placement underground can significantly improve our streetscapes and vistas.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further with you as well as to provide support to the government in its initiatives to deliver economy-stimulating built environment projects of significant public benefit.

Kind regards



Kathlyn Loseby FRAIA

NSW CHAPTER PRESIDENT

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

cc: The Hon. Rob Stokes MP – NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces
Mr Marcus Ray – Group Deputy Secretary Planning and Assessment, DPIE
Ms Alex O'Mara – Deputy Secretary Place Design and Public Spaces, DPIE
Dr Sarah Hill – Deputy Secretary Strategic Directions and Integration, DPIE and CEO Greater Sydney Commission
Ms Abbie Galvin – Government Architect NSW, DPIE