



MEDIA RELEASE

24 MAY 2018

PETER HARRIS CALLS FOR A RENEWED PUBLIC INTEREST FOCUS IN INFRASTRUCTURE TO MOVE THE DIAL ON ROAD REFORM

The Productivity Commission’s Chairman Peter Harris has called on the Federal Government to advance reform on road user charging at Infrastructure Partnerships Australia 2018 Annual Infrastructure Oration and National Infrastructure Awards, insisting that a focus on the public interest is essential.

In one of his last speeches as Chair of the Productivity Commission, Mr Harris outlined that the first step in the road reform journey begins with clearly articulating the public interest objective of reform.

Mr Harris said that Australia needs to first “identify the public interest objective and be open about it, using language that is clear, then establish a structure that aligns the funds raised (today, and forever) from road use with the selection of projects to be funded in future.

Mr Harris made the point that it was critical to involve credible third parties in establishing the linkage between consumers and the road projects and that we shouldn’t just be focused on resolving the terminal decline of road revenues.

“The biggest gains to this reform do not lie in getting more revenue. That will just be the catalyst. The true public interest objective is a system that selects the right projects – projects where, as in other forms of infrastructure, people have a choice and yet show they are prepared to pay,” Mr Harris said.

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia Chief Executive Adrian Dwyer has welcomed Mr Harris’s contribution, remarking that, “it’s refreshing to see a genuine focus on the need for a public interest debate on our dying road funding system and how we can lay the pathway for road reform and future investment in our roads”.

“I’m pleased to hear Mr Harris reiterate our calls to treat electric vehicles as an opportunity rather than a threat. But the window of opportunity for action on road reform is swiftly closing.

“If we act now, we have an opportunity to institute reform at the thin end of the wedge by placing road user charges on electric vehicles before they become a car dealership mainstay,” said Mr Dwyer.

The Head of the Australian Structured Finance Office at MUFG Bank, Geoff Daley, said that “Peter Harris’ call to put the public interest objective front and centre joins the chorus of appeals from various Infrastructure bodies, at the federal and state level, for action on road reform. What we need from





governments and oppositions alike is to heed the collective call for long term solutions, and move beyond the fixation on daily news cycles and monthly opinion polls.”

The Annual Infrastructure Oration provides a unique platform for distinguished sector leaders to bring new and fresh thinking to the critical long-term challenges facing the industry. MUFG Bank is the major sponsor of the 2018 Annual Infrastructure Oration.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Michael Player **0424 698 189**; Mitch Dudley **0430 003 137**

