

Media Release

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Updated report card on the ACT's infrastructure

The release today of the Engineers Australia 2010 Australian Capital Territory Infrastructure Report Card indicates that while the ACT has benefitted from high quality infrastructure that existed prior to self government, much of that infrastructure is reaching the end of its life or is reaching its capacity.

The Chair of the Engineers Australia ACT infrastructure report card committee, Rolfe Hartley, said, "While the majority of infrastructure sectors are currently of good quality, some flaws are appearing and there are concerns about matching the needs of the Territory's population growth.

"Action is needed now to maintain standards, avoid any further slippages and to address areas that need major changes for the future of a city that is approaching its 100th birthday."

The 2010 report card reviewed infrastructure categories across energy, telecommunications, transport and water and assigned ratings * within the scales of A – F, and provides many comparisons with the initial 2005 ACT Infrastructure Report Card. The 2010 report card includes ratings for the additional categories of Rail and Telecommunications.

Across the nine report card categories – one gets a very good "A" rating, five get a good "B" rating (needing minor changes), two get a "C" (needing major changes); and one gets an "F" (inadequate).

The "A" rating was for Gas (A-) and the "B" ratings were for Roads (B), Airport (B-), Potable Water (B-), Electricity (B+) and Telecommunications (B-). The "C" ratings were for Stormwater (C+) and Wastewater (C+). The "F" rating was for Rail.

The 2010 report shows that reasonable improvements have been made since 2005 in the areas of Potable Water, Stormwater and Electricity. The ratings for Roads and Gas have remained the same, but the Airport and Wastewater ratings have slipped.

Also, while the 2010 report rated Telecommunications reasonably well with a B minus, the first-time assessment of Rail is of major concern.

"The 'F' rating for Rail is based on the fact that there is no clear vision for the future of rail services in the ACT at any level – heavy rail, light rail or high speed rail," Hartley said.

Recommendations of the Report include:

1. Provide timely infrastructure to meet population growth.
2. Increase attention on maintaining existing assets, through adequate funding to implement asset management plans.
3. Implement and further develop the 2010 ACT Government Infrastructure Plan.

4. Integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation into the plans of infrastructure owners and operators.
5. Transform the ACT's transport systems over the long-term by better coordination between the ACT Government and National Capital Authority on complementary demand management measures, encouraging urban infill and development along transport corridors, and setting aside corridors for mass transport routes and intercity high speed rail.
6. Prevent the simultaneous implementation of multiple projects that cause significant disruption to users through better coordination of major road and other infrastructure projects.
7. Place a higher priority on flood prevention when upgrading stormwater systems.
8. Develop a long-term rail vision for both within Canberra and between Canberra and other Australian cities.
9. Address broadband blackspots to ensure quality broadband services are universally available.
10. The Australian Government to provide a level of planning attention and infrastructure funding for Canberra that recognises its national significance.

The report includes comprehensive analysis and comment and includes the ratings table below for the current and past ACT and National Report Cards.

Infrastructure Type	ACT 2010	ACT 2005	National 2005	National 2001
Roads	B	B	C	Not rated
Rail	F	Not rated	C-	D-
Airports	B-	B	B	B
Potable Water	B-	C	B-	C
Wastewater	C+	B	C+	C-
Stormwater	C+	C	C-	D
Electricity	B+	B	C+	B-
Gas	A-	A-	C+	C
Telecommunications	B-	Not rated	Not rated	B

Further Information: Summaries of each infrastructure type, grade and comment **are attached** and a copy of the full report is available at www.engineersaustralia.org.au/ircact . This report card is the fourth released in the new series that will be completed for all States and Territories by November 2010.

(* **The ratings** have been based on an assessment of asset condition, asset availability and reliability, asset management and sustainability. An "A" means very good and the infrastructure is fit for its current and anticipated future purposes; "B" is good, with minor changes needed to meeting current and future needs; "C" is adequate, but major changes required; "D" is poor, with critical changes required; and "F" is inadequate).

Media Contact: John Bright - 0407 234 490 / jbright@engineersaustralia.org.au
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The following summarises the 2010 ACT Infrastructure Report Card ratings.

Infrastructure Type	Grade	Comment
Roads	B	This rating recognises that while improvements in road infrastructure have occurred, road usage has increased at a faster rate. More work is needed to manage demand. Without this, sustainable transport outcomes cannot be achieved.
Rail	F	This rating recognises that there is a lack of definition on the rationale and future of rail – heavy rail, light rail and high speed rail services – in the ACT and the existing infrastructure, including its connections into the NSW system, is inadequate for competitive passenger and freight services.
Airports	B-	This rating recognises that the capacity and quality of the airport has improved as there has been significant development, much of which is not related to the core purpose of the airport. However, there is a range of matters that remain to be addressed, notably operations during fog, and land planning issues.
Potable Water	B-	This rating recognises the good quality of the water reticulation system, and that significant planning has occurred resulting in several major water security projects being initiated. The rating also recognises the advances made in water demand management. However, given the uncertainty of rainfall and the ACT's growing population, further augmentation to water supply and improved demand reduction measures may be required to prevent water shortages in the medium to long-term.
Wastewater	C+	This rating recognises that there has been a decline in the network's performance and lack of progress towards achieving the ACT Government's target of 20% reuse of wastewater by 2013. There has also been a decline in effluent discharge quality from the treatment plant, however, a program of works is addressing this.
Stormwater	C+	This rating recognises the increased attention given to stormwater use and water quality improvement and the increased allocation of funding for stormwater upgrades. However, this is offset by the fact that there still remains inadequate funding for maintenance and upgrades of stormwater systems to meet current standards of drainage and flood protection, particularly in the older areas of Canberra. It is also of concern that the current service standards for stormwater assets, as specified by Roads ACT, indicate that the target service standards are not being met. There is a need to establish a more rigorous asset management approach to the maintenance of stormwater assets, based on asset life and condition assessment.
Electricity	B+	This rating recognises that there has been an improvement in the security of supply and infrastructure asset management. However, continual funding for maintenance and renewals is essential to prevent bulk obsolescence of infrastructure over the next decade. More work needs to be done in encouraging an economic, locally generated, sustainable energy supply.
Gas	A-	This rating recognises the high quality of the relatively young gas network and significant improvements in the security of supply. However, the ACT's gas supply is still vulnerable to loss of supply due to upstream disruptions.
Telecommunications	B-	This rating recognises that there has been improvement in mobile and broadband infrastructure, but there are still a number of blackspots where services are inadequate.