

Exclusive: Prime Minister Tony Abbott's plan to personally take control of infrastructure

BY: EXCLUSIVE SIMON BENSON NATIONAL POLITICAL REPORTER

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Let's get western Sydney moving ... Prime Minister Tony Abbott. Source: DailyTelegraph

PRIME Minister Tony Abbott will take personal control of rolling out infrastructure for western Sydney, creating a top level cabinet sub-committee to report every fortnight on the delivery of projects.

The committee will be the first of its kind for a federal government and will have the same status as the National Security Committee and Expenditure Review Committee.

The group will consist of Tony Abbott, Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss, Treasurer Joe Hockey and Assistant Infrastructure Minister Jamie Briggs.

BADGERYS CREEK WILL HELP NEXT NSW ECONOMIC BOOM

Mr Abbott will chair the committee, taking the role of infrastructure assessment out of the bureaucracy and into the PM's office. The committee will have the final say on all infrastructure decisions, including the assessment of projects and funding.

Senior government sources said Mr Abbott had become frustrated at the delays and poor planning and had decided to take personal control of the agenda. "This is about delivering instead of announcing," the source said. "We need to start getting things moving."

A key focus will be infrastructure priorities for western Sydney, including the approval of a second airport at Badgerys Creek and new road and rail links throughout the west.



Prime Minister Tony Abbott will take control of infrastructure. *Source: News Corp Australia*

The committee will have its first meeting on Wednesday ahead of a separate summit scheduled for Friday between Mr Hockey and state and territory treasurers to finalise a new commonwealth infrastructure agreement.

Mr Hockey hopes to conclude an accord with the states for further asset sales, including public utilities such as the NSW electricity network, in return for a share of commonwealth infrastructure funds.

But it has also been revealed that Mr Hockey is likely to push for reforms of other non-GST commonwealth-state agreements, including a possible new funding model for public housing.

The government will consider recommendations for a greater role from the private sector in building and managing public housing stock.

The final report of the Commission of Audit has examined the commonwealth's role in funding social housing.

Sources said one option Mr Hockey would consider was how to allow the private sector to invest in existing public housing stock, of which there are more than 300,000 properties, in addition to providing new dwellings.

While the government is committed to subsidised housing for low income families, it is believed to be interested in pursuing a greater role for the private sector.

SOURCE: <http://www.news.com.au/national/exclusive-prime-minister-tony-abbotts-plan-to-personally-take-control-of-infrastructure/story-fncynjr2-1226862759640>