

Federal Budget 2025: Future Generations Analysis

What is the Budget Measure?

Infrastructure Spending: Better transport for cities, regions and suburbs – “*The Government is focusing its over \$120 billion ten-year infrastructure investment pipeline on nationally significant projects which improve the prosperity, accessibility and liveability of our cities, regions and communities. This Budget provides \$16.5 billion over 10 years from 2024–25 for priority road and rail infrastructure projects*” Budget Paper 1, page 13.

This funding includes additional funding of \$3.3 billion for the North East Link in Melbourne, an additional \$1.4 billion to existing METRONET projects in Perth, \$1.9 billion for priority road and rail projects in Western Sydney 1.2 billion for the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail in South East Queensland and \$2.6 billion in road and rail projects in regional Australia.

The majority, around 50% of the budget is focused on road transport, with 30% on rail and only \$100 million (0.6%) over four years from 2025–26 for an Active Transport Fund to support the construction and upgrade of bicycle and walking paths across Australia.

How does this Budget Measure relate to the five major forces in [The Intergenerational Report 2023](#)

- Climate change and a net zero transformation
 - Increased roads will increase traffic, which will only support decarbonisation with a rapid shift to electric vehicles. It is likely that in the short term increased roads will significantly increase transport emissions.

How does this Budget Measure relate to the Measuring What Matters Framework

- **Healthy:** A society in which people feel well and are in good physical and mental health, can access services when they need, and have the information they require to take action to improve their health.
 - Increased road traffic will result in increased health impacts, including road injuries and deaths (especially of children) and air pollution health impacts. The Welsh Commissioner for Future Generations has notes that “An over-reliance on the car has led to increased noise, poorer air quality, time wasted in traffic and an unacceptable burden on communities living near our most congested roads, often in areas where fewer people drive a car.”
<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/news/sophie-howe-future-generations-commissioner-for-wales-welcomes-the-news-that-all-new-road-building-projects-in-wales-are-being-paused-by-welsh-government/>
 - Increased opportunities for cycling through the \$100m investment in cycle ways might encourage cycling, including among school children and the younger generation, which could contribute to improved health. However, investment in cycling consists of only 0.6% of new spending in the budget.

- **Sustainable:** A society that sustainably uses natural and financial resources, protects and repairs the environment and builds resilience to combat challenges.
 - Road transport and road building is in response to congestion caused largely by private vehicles. Public transport is significantly more sustainable, regardless of any shift to electrification. Continued focus on road building will not support more sustainable transport use, while encouraging a dependency on private roads.
 - Funding for rail and light rail transport is likely to encourage more sustainable transport and travel.
 - Funding for cycling and walking infrastructure will support more sustainable, active travel but accounts for only 0.6% of funding in the budget.
- **Inclusion, equity and fairness** are cross-cutting dimensions of the Framework.
 - The Welsh Commissioner for Future Generations highlighted the multiple issues and unfairness of continuing car-dependency. They note that "Transport poverty is exacerbated by policy-making geared towards motorised travel as the main means for accessing employment and services, as it excludes people who don't have access to a car or adequate alternative transport options." and "Equal access to affordable public transport is key to achieving effective, sustainable mobility in cities of all sizes. An imperative for urban design is to make walking, cycling and taking a bus or riding rail transit more attractive than sitting in traffic." <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/20180912-Transport-Fit-for-Future-Generations-C-1.pdf>
 - The same issues apply to Australia. With approximately 50% of the new money to be spent on road-related spending, the budget continues to increase car dependency, the continued focus on cars does not address longterm social inequities.

Applying the Welsh Government Budget Questions

Does this Budget measure:

- Move the country away from its vision for the future?
 - The continued focus on car transport moves Australia away from its vision of the future, especially in terms of sustainability.
- Disadvantage any generations, alive now or in the future?
 - Continued road building locks in car transport dependency, disadvantaging future generations.
- Strengthen the transmission of inequality through generations?
- Restrict the choice of future generations?
 - Increased road building locks in car transport dependency, reducing options for future generations.

Analysis - Happy baby or sad baby?



Continued focus on car transport and limited funding on public transport and particularly active travel – walking and cycling – locks future generations into car dependency, with associated health, climate change, pollution and inequity issues.

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ABOUT EVERYGEN

EveryGen, convened by the Policy Innovation Hub at Griffith University, is a coalition of multidisciplinary policy experts collaborating to create an equitable, just and transformative path towards intergenerational justice. EveryGen promotes policy research, collaboration and action on intergenerational equity and justice and seeks to influence the policy agenda and inspire evidence-based thinking on intergenerational equity and justice. EveryGen promotes a law reform agenda by advocating for a Future Generations Act in Australia and by amplifying the voices of current and future generations to both highlight and transform the long-term impacts of today's policy decisions.

www.everygen.online

EveryGen is a member of the [Intergenerational Fairness Coalition](#).



Our collective mission is to see an intergenerational lens embedded in Australian policymaking supported by meaningful intergenerational engagement, data-driven measurement and accountability mechanisms.

We believe in the potential of pragmatic and economically-minded approaches to safeguarding Australia's future to address long-standing and emerging challenges.