

TOBY KENT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Toby Kent, a renowned leader in sustainability and resilience, was recently appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Infrastructure Sustainability Council (ISC).



With over 25 years of experience across public and private sectors, Toby Kent brings a wealth of knowledge in sustainable development, energy transition, and infrastructure planning. Known for his innovative, collaborative approach, Toby is set to lead the Infrastructure Sustainability Council (ISC) toward a future of more sustainable and resilient infrastructure across Australia and New Zealand.

What is your vision for the ISC?

My vision for the ISC is to be a critical part of every infrastructure decision across Australia, and New Zealand, and perhaps in coming years, the Asia-Pacific. Infrastructure is inherently multi-generational, and we need to transform our approach to ensure sustainable impacts for future generations.

This requires whole of sector change, not just those projects that are currently seeking to be certified 'sustainable'.

What are the key priorities you plan to focus on during your tenure?

It's still early in my tenure, but I've identified several priorities. First, our membership base is strong, but we need to connect more broadly outside of the current circle.

We also offer fantastic training programs that go beyond our membership, and there's potential to expand these.

Our IS Ratings tools provide benchmarks for what sustainable infrastructure looks like, but we need to streamline some of the processes and make them easier to use, while retaining the rigour of our tools.

We also need to broaden the number of sectors that are using the tools. For example, we have some fabulous water and energy projects using IS ratings but we are not yet fully embedded across those sectors.

As demands for financiers to communicate the sustainability impacts of their lending and investments grows, we offer a clear solution to that and I expect us to be much more active in that space.

Some of this talks to the final point, which is that ISC has strong support among a core group of users. We need to expand this group, make it easier for people to engage with us.

Ultimately, the goal is to achieve greater transformation in how infrastructure is developed and to drive more significant sustainable impact.

How does your experience in resilience and sustainability shape your approach to leading the ISC?

In my role as Chief Resilience Officer for Melbourne, I often heard the question, 'Isn't resilience just another name for sustainability?'

There is lots of cross-over, but resilience thinking acknowledges that while pursuing sustainable development, things will still go wrong along the way. The question becomes: 'How do we plan for that?'

My experience has taught me to recognise the strengths of an organisation and amplify those to create real impact. Whether it's for infrastructure or entire communities, it's about preparing for the stresses and shocks that will inevitably come, and designing systems that can survive and ultimately thrive despite them.

Achieving Net Zero in construction is a major goal for the industry. How close are we, and what challenges do you see ahead?

We're still quite far from achieving Net Zero, but national commitments in Australia and New Zealand provide a helpful framework. Collaboration across the private and public sectors is critical, and we're seeing more of this now than ever.

Tools like IS Ratings are helping guide projects toward sustainability goals, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation. Over the past six years, projects certified under IS As Built Ratings have avoided more than 23 million tonnes of carbon emissions and in FY24 alone, projects diverted almost 35 million tonnes of resources from landfill. The challenge from a net zero perspective is that we're moving forward with initiatives now that should have been implemented 20 years ago.

What role does innovation play in reaching sustainability targets within the infrastructure sector?

Innovation is essential. We're seeing improvements in resource management, with

more materials being reused and recycled, reducing landfill waste. The use of renewable energy and energy-efficient practices is becoming more mainstream, which is encouraging. However, we still have work to do in preparing infrastructure that looks generations ahead, rather than focusing on short-term needs.

Integrating Internet of Things (IoT) technology, AI, and other smart infrastructure solutions will allow us to build systems that can evolve as technology does. We need to design infrastructure that isn't just built for today but for decades into the future.

This means thinking about connected infrastructure – the aggregated opportunities that come from different infrastructure elements connecting effectively, as well as their interdependencies and consequent inter-vulnerabilities.

How does the ISC measure the impact of its work?

We've been fortunate to have an independent assessment that found for every dollar invested in IS Ratings, the return was \$1.6 - \$2.4 across the lifecycle of any given asset.

We're also continuously refining how we articulate the financial and environmental benefits of our ratings tools. The numbers are clear—through IS Ratings last year alone projects have saved over half a million tonnes of asphalt.

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Toby Kent, CEO, Infrastructure Sustainability Council

Also, the ISC provided training to over 1,700 professionals in sustainability and leadership. We produce an annual impact report that captures all such information.

Again, we need to communicate these impacts ever more effectively to demonstrate the value we bring to the industry.

Looking forward, what initiatives or projects at the ISC excite you the most?

I'm particularly excited about the new IS Essentials Design & As Built tool, which is designed for projects between \$5 million and \$100 million. This allows smaller projects to benefit from sustainability standards without compromising on quality.

Additionally, IS 2.1 ratings, which are now fully in the market, are receiving good feedback and we have significant work program in

place to make the tool more effective for users, supporting better outcomes.

These tools are helping the industry not only meet immediate needs but also set the stage for long-term sustainable infrastructure development.

Our new Sustainability Academy and enhanced membership model, both to be rolled out this year, are both important developments that will see us offer more benefits to the market and improve sustainability practices.

What legacy do you hope to leave at the ISC, and what impact do you want to have on the infrastructure sector?

My goal is to ensure that the standards we develop become the norm for preparing for and achieving infrastructure outcomes across Australia and New Zealand and, potentially,

the Asia-Pacific.

I want the ISC to be a well-resourced organisation that can be an employer of choice and afford to invest in more inclusivity and innovation ourselves. I see us driving sustainability outcomes for decades to come.

Ultimately, I hope to leave a legacy where infrastructure is inherently sustainable, resilient, and prepared for the future, serving communities in the long term and not just in the immediate.



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