

Positives to be found in COVID response

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As we ponder a post-COVID future, one thing is clear: we must adjust to a new normal and the reality that things will never go back to the way they were.

While the pandemic has thrown the world into disarray, there are more and more positives emerging as we rally to counter the health, economic and social impacts.

What I'm seeing after a series of roundtables with CEOs and leaders across industries, government and other sectors is that Australian businesses are resilient and agile. Interestingly, it's becoming clear that Australian businesses are not just looking to continue to build this resilience and agility into their own structures and processes but are increasingly figuring out how they can ensure the health and viability of their communities and extended supply chains.

During COVID, industry has had greater collaboration with unions, clients, government, associations and peers. There's been more inter-government collaboration, as well as inter-jurisdictional collaboration, and even interdepartmental collaboration.

CEOs are keen to see the pandemic's collaboration continue. They understand that Australia's recovery and future prosperity is reliant on this cooperative approach.

The right skills and projects are also important. Identifying and implementing shovel-ready projects is critical to creating new employment opportunities in metropolitan and regional communities.

However, it's not just about new projects. A thorough strategy for the maintenance of existing infrastructure, an investment in the full asset management lifecycle, is also vital. This will not only encourage innovation but will be good for communities and for the building of a vibrant economy.

Communications infrastructure will be critically important. As the dynamic of the economy changes and there is more remote and flexible working, it will only be successful with a strong and resilient communications network. The other benefit is that good communications technology ensures the city–region divide is narrowed.

We are also witnessing a workplace revolution. Working from home is working, and we are currently witnessing leaders shift their focus to creating a place of psychological and physical safety for their people.

COVID-19 has challenged all nations, all industries and every profession. Encouragingly it has been experts in all fields of endeavour that governments and communities have turned to for advice and solutions. I'm proud that engineers have been a vital part of the healthcare response and will also bring their expertise to bear in support of Australia's efforts to achieve widespread recovery.

Competing interests

None declared.