

Australia 2016 CFEE Study Travel Project Mission Statement

California Leadership Public Policy Tour to Australia

The California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE) is leading a delegation to Australia, consisting of California State Legislators, environmental and labor leaders, as well as senior executives from California companies. The delegation will meet with elected and government officials, regulatory authorities, and business leaders in order to explore best practices and technologies from the Australian experiences in water, transportation infrastructure, and energy.

The Millennium Drought from 1995 to 2007 was an existential threat to Australian society. Government, working with citizens and the private sector, was forced to make radical institutional changes in the way in which water is collected, owned, distributed, and consumed. All areas of Australian society were profoundly impacted by this experience. California is in the fourth year in one of a series of multi-year droughts.

Australia has pioneered methods to plan, fund, finance and deliver critical water, transportation, and social infrastructure, in a manner that integrates environmental and other mitigation issues into projects necessary to maintain job and income growth.

Water

Australia and California share many similarities including the cyclical periods of drought. The most recent in Australia, the 12 year Millennial Drought, accelerated major structural reforms and radical changes in behavior. The National Water Initiative, agreed on in 2004 by the intergovernmental Council of Australian Governments (COAG), created a market, regulatory authority, and planning system to manage surface and groundwater for both rural and urban use in order to optimize economic, social, and environmental outcomes. Significant elements of the Water Initiative include water pricing, markets, urban water reform, water access entitlements, community partnerships, and integrated management of environmental water.

Drastic reductions of water supply forced ordinary citizens and industries to adjust. Many homeowners purchased “rain tanks” to store water from the runoffs from their roofs and gutters. The agricultural sector innovated in areas such as leakage control, irrigation technology, and better surface and groundwater management. Entire cities and regions had to adjust their urban planning models to account for the changes caused by the drought, while industries, such as plumbing, found themselves in high demand to ensure not one drop of water was wasted.

The delegation will explore how Australia transformed water management from the different perspectives in each of the cities on the study tour: Canberra, Melbourne, and Sydney.

Infrastructure Project Delivery

Infrastructure development has an enormous impact growth patterns in response to climate change. Policies that encourage infrastructure development, which reduces congestion, encourages energy efficiency and conservation, and manage growth to minimize negative impacts, and provide infrastructure for treatment and delivery of safe and secure water, an essential part of a comprehensive climate strategy. Australia's pension funds have pioneered the development of alternative delivery mechanisms to fund, finance, and deliver public infrastructure in the most efficient and highest value for the public. Various public/private mechanisms have been used in a wide variety of projects, especially roads, bridges, and tunnels, but also for desalination and water treatment plants, courthouses, schools, and other public buildings. The delegation will discuss the performance of these projects, especially regarding cost containment, life-cycle maintenance, and any impacts on public employee unions.

CFEE will tour Barangaroo, a 54-acre environmentally sustainable, multiuse urban renewal project. Located on the Western edge of Sydney and funded by private sector investment, the project will be "climate positive" with no net cost to the taxpayer.

The delegation will participate in a roundtable discussion on how Australia successfully delivers major transportation, water, and social infrastructure projects.

Information Communication Technology

Australia has been successful in the implementation of wireless technology in agriculture in response to the increased need to monitor and measure water and energy efficiency. Australia has been a leader in broadband expansion beginning with the construction of the wholesale-only National Broadband Network (NBN). The NBN is designed to provide faster and more reliable data through infrastructure built on behalf of the federal government through public-private partnerships.

CFEE will study how Australia has been able to foster investment in broadband expansion and how access to broadband has accelerated the implementation of smart technologies.