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PAVING THE Way

Rod Hook and his team are connecting South Australians to their transport and infrastructure needs with a forward-thinking plan for the state's future.

Images by David Evans

The intricate ecosystem of a state's transport and infrastructure is a precarious balancing act, but one which Rod Hook and his team overcome every day at the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure South Australia. As CEO, Rod has confidently led his team to deliver a variety of complex projects on time and on budget.

The CEO Magazine recently spoke to Rod about the future of South Australia and how his team is creating innovative solutions for the state's upcoming transport and infrastructure needs.

***The CEO Magazine:* What led you to your current role as CEO of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure South Australia?**

Rod: I have had a background of involvement both in the private sector and in the public sector in delivering major projects. That background led to me being asked to lead a major projects group in government in the infrastructure office. I then became deputy of the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure while still

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- Rod Hook

delivering and focusing on the major projects. I was then asked to take over the job of chief executive of that department, which then became the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure.

What have been your greatest achievements as CEO?

As an agency, we have a reputation for delivering outcomes for South Australia. I think, as CEO, I lead an agency that is recognised for delivering good outcomes and making things happen. I try to make this agency the absolutely best place for people to work. I take pride in making things happen, delivering outcomes for the good of the state, and making this a great place to work for our staff. I want people to be proud that they are part of our agency.

How do you create a great place to work and engage your employees?

I have spent a lot of time visiting and talking to our staff about our vision, our story, why we're together, our culture, and our behaviors. We've got 50 worksites throughout the state. I

think you can't undervalue what's achieved when I visit them at their worksites.

How is the City of Adelaide changing and developing, and how are you meeting its current and future transport and infrastructure needs?

We've been through a period of significant investment in infrastructure for our state with unprecedented levels over the past four to five years. We've called it the period of the big build, and we're seeing the culmination of some of those projects. I think a few of them are coming together with a sense of vibrancy around the city, like getting Adelaide Oval ready for a test match, getting a footbridge ready for people to walk over, and putting other events around it.

I think there's a real sense of a renewed appreciation that we are a great place to live. We have good things happening and it's good to be a part of it. I think our agency is very much at the forefront of delivering projects and delivering them well. South Australians have been embracing the changes that have been made in the city. >



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I have talked a lot about us being an agent for change for South Australia and helping the state position itself for where it needs to be in the next 10, 20, and 30 years. Those changes are taking shape, projects are being delivered, and I think there is a good sense in the community that we are a good place to be and good things are happening.

What are some of the recent notable projects you have delivered?

We have been through a process of completely rebuilding our rail network from the ground up. We have been doing that for a few years, so we've largely finished that. We have new electric trains operating early in 2014 on the southern side of the city, and we'll hopefully roll those out to the northern side as well. We have progressively rebuilt the rail tracks, so they're all done.

We're in the process of redeveloping Adelaide Oval, and we had that ready for the Ashes test match in late 2013. Our plan was also to have it ready for the AFL football in the city in March. We've got a new footbridge that's giving the public access between the train station and the oval. We've got upgrade works being undertaken on the convention centre.

We have a new South Australia Health and Medical and Research Institute Building that was opened in 2013. We've got the South Australian Superway, an elevated roadway through industrial suburbs, which will be opened early in 2014 as well. We've got the duplication of the Southern Express underway at the moment, which will be ready by mid 2014. We have a new hospital being built, which is scheduled for completion in 2016.

There's also a lot of capital works underway, some being built, some nearing completion, some being opened, and some still under negotiation.



With those projects, how do you work with suppliers and subcontractors to deliver them on time and on budget?

I think we have a good relationship with industry. We primarily outsource using the private sector, and we have some very good builders, contractors, subcontractors, and steel fabricators in town that we work closely with. We're small enough to know each other, and we run strict procurement processes. We have to meet public-sector probity requirements. I am subject to audit, as any public sector agency is, but I think we run good, transparent procurement processes. We then work closely with the successful builders, and they understand what's important to us. I think we are a good, informed client. We often get told by our contractors and suppliers that they like working with us. We like working together to deliver good outcomes for South Australians.

As a leader, what is your vision for the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure South Australia?

My vision is for us to be an agency that works together to

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- Rod Hook

transform South Australia and to realise the potential of its people, businesses, and resources. To do that, we engage with every South Australian in real time with our public transport and information that we put out there. We want to ensure that safety is a key tenet of our business.

We have got the planning system so world-class place-making is on our agenda. It is about delivering integrated public transport services that people choose to use, and delivering a physically active South Australia with elite sport pathways, because recreational sport is part of my agency. We want to connect people to places, and businesses to markets, because transport is an integral part of our agency. We want to be able to leverage our assets and we want to create the best place for our staff to work. That's the vision that I set for our agency and what we're all working together towards. •

"McConnell Dowell has worked with Rod Hook and his team at DPTI to deliver many iconic South Australian projects, developing a highly collaborative relationship which has been instrumental to delivering mutually successful outcomes" - Jim Miller, South Australian Operations Manager, McConnell Dowell