**CATEGORY – Innovative Practice /Service Delivery**

1. **SUMMARY OF PROJECT**

The IDM Group at present represents 32 Councils across Victoria. It has developed a common Infrastructure Design Manual (IDM) for the use by Local Government and stakeholders.

The benefits of the IDM are:

* Sharing financial and human resources to produce a manual which satisfies the requirements of each of the participating municipalities.
* Developing more consistency amongst design requirements for consultants and developers working in the participating municipalities.
* Provides a better point of reference for all parties at the Victorian Civil Appeals Tribunal.
* Sharing of ideas and practices helps the municipalities to adopt the best practice of each.

1. **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ATTAINING EXCELLENCE IN THE NOMINATOR(S) VIEW, INCLUDING THE POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY BEING SERVED.**

**Project Objectives**

The primary objectives of the Manual are:

* To clearly document Council’s requirements for the design and development of Infrastructure that is or will become municipal Infrastructure.
* To standardise development submissions as much as possible and thus to expedite Council’s engineering approvals.
* To ensure that minimum design criteria are met in regard to the design and construction of Infrastructure within the municipalities regardless of whether it is constructed by Council or a Developer.

**Project Outcomes**

The IDM has been adopted by 32 Councils across rural and regional Victoria with a further 12 presently considering its adoption. The adoption of the IDM by these Councils has resulted in the following outcomes:

* More consistent infrastructure standards across the municipalities that have adopted the IDM e.g. in the Gippsland area of the state the number of kerb and channel profiles have been reduced from over 100 to just 11.
* Reduction in application time for developers as they know Council’s requirements due to having access to the IDM through the IDM’s website.
* Common set of standard drawings for infrastructure
* The ability for the IDM Group to represent members Councils on statewide issues e.g. The need to review the Streetworks Code of Practice, submission to Victorian Planning Ministers review of planning.
* Members sharing and adopting the best practice of the various member Councils.
* Ready access to the Groups website which includes links and access to the manual and standard drawings.
* Access to a member’s forum which enables members to ask questions, swap files and access the latest information.
* Production of a newsletter which keeps members up-to-date with what is happening.
* Regular meetings with industry stakeholders through its membership of the Infrastructure Standards Committee set up by the DPCD.
* Sharing of resources to ensure that the manual and standard drawings are reviewed and kept up-to-date at minimal cost to each Council.
* State Government has acknowledged the benefits of a common IDM and has set up the Infrastructure Standards Committee to promote a single IDM across Victoria.

**Innovative Features of the Project**

The most innovative feature of this manual is that it has been developed by the hands on practitioners within Councils who are responsible for the design, checking of designs, construction of and maintenance of infrastructure. It is for this reason that the IDM reflects standards which are practical and cost effective and which take into account such factors as environment, topography, climate, heritage considerations and neighbourhood character.

Councils are given a number of selection tables within the manual which enable them to choose standards which are relevant to their municipality. In addition to this the structure of the manual is such that each section within the manual has its own objectives so that new and innovative approaches can be considered by Councils subject to the objectives being met even if the specific requirements of the manual are not.

**Distinguishing features of the project**

One distinguishing feature of this project is that it has been developed and continues to be maintained by a bottom up approach. The day to day users of the manuals within Councils are the ones that meet together to review the contents of the manual and consider applications from developers and product suppliers to change or improve the manual.

Another distinguishing feature of this project is that design and planning staff members meet together regularly to discuss technical issues that are relevant to their work. There is no other similar forum available for such staff in Victoria. This networking is breaking down the barriers that resulted from the amalgamations of Councils in Victoria in the 1990’s.

**Barriers overcome to achieve success**

The biggest barrier in producing a common infrastructure manual is to overcome the notion in individuals and within Councils that their way was the only way. In coming together engineers and technical officers had to be prepared to justify why they had particular standards within their municipality. This led to lots of soul searching about particular issues but has resulted in a more robust set of standards which can be defended with logic.

Variations in requirements due to factors such as topography and climate have been achieved through the inclusion of selection tables.

Another barrier was obtaining stakeholder and political approval and this was addressed by requiring each member Council going through an extensive consultation process and calling for submissions. Submissions are considered by all members as a group and reasons for accepting, modifying or rejecting submissions are then documented and placed on the website.

**Cost/Benefits associated with the Project**

The cost of each Council developing and maintaining their own Infrastructure Manual is both costly and time consuming. Some Councils have taken up to threee years to develop their own and then they are faced with keeping it up to date and relevant.

By becoming a member of the IDM Group at a cost of $6,000 and an annual maintenance fee of $2,000 per year each Council has an up-to-date manual which reflects their standards and which is easily accessed by developers and Council staff.

They know their standard is consistent with other Councils and this is a strong point in discussing Council’s requirements with developers.

The IDM has reduced the cost of developers in planning time for projects and should reduce the turnaround time of designs if the requirements of the manual are met.

1. **YOUR OPINION AS TO THE SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION MADE BY THE INDIVIDUAL/TEAM YOU HAVE NOMINATED.**

Over many years Councils, Developers, Consultants and Contractors have been plagued with the problems of different standards of infrastructure design and construction. This meant trying to get timely approval for development projects was arduous and time consuming.

By formulating a group of Councils interested in improving the process, a consistent approach has been created providing more confidence to all those involved in the sector.

The dedication of a number of members in the ongoing development of the manual has seen the number of Councils increase from the originating three Councils to over 30 at the present time.

Such is the interest, the Group has recently been contacted by ‘fringe’ metropolitan Councils looking at adopting the IDM.

1. **ANY GENERAL COMMENTS YOU MAY WISH TO ADD**

The IDM has been developed by the design practitioners and users of infrastructure and is therefore practical and relevant to local Councils and does not reflect an imposing of metropolitan standards to regional Victoria.

The IDM has undergone extensive consultation with stakeholders and is regularly reviewed to ensure that it reflects best practice and the needs of Local Government including those who are responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructure.

By engaging with those Councils involved in the Working Group as well as State Government departments, the development industry and peak bodies such as ALDE, CCF, Vic roads. UDIA, GAA etc we ensure the manual continually strives to meet best practice and hence provides improvement in consistent service delivery which reflects the input of all stakeholders.

