# Social Licence for Infrastructure: Concepts, Frameworks, and Applications

This project introduces and develops the concept of the Social Licence for Infrastructure (SLI)—the informal but essential societal acceptance of infrastructure projects. It builds a sector-specific understanding of SLI, develops a conceptual framework grounded in social contract and stakeholder theories, and explores practical methods for assessing and managing public trust and legitimacy across the lifecycle of infrastructure projects. The study also investigates the use of digital media data to analyse public sentiment, providing a real-time, complementary layer of insight alongside established stakeholder engagement and monitoring practices.

## What we are doing:

- Adopting an interpretivist philosophy to explore how societal acceptance of infrastructure projects is shaped by stakeholder perceptions

- Using an abductive research approach that combines theory development with empirical exploration and stakeholder validation

- Applying a mixed methods design, integrating conceptual development, digital sentiment analysis, and qualitative validation'

- Employing a multi-strategy methodology, including: literature review to build a theory-informed conceptual framework of SLI; case studies of two Sydney transport projects; digital media analysis to capture public discourse in real time; a practitioner workshop to validate and improve the framework based on industry perspectives

- Operating within a cross-sectional time horizon with retrospective elements from longitudinal sentiment data

## Why the study is relevant:

- Introduces Social Licence for Infrastructure (SLI) as a distinct concept tailored to the infrastructure sector

- Responds to growing public resistance, delays, and reputational risks in infrastructure delivery

- Addresses the need for project legitimacy and community trust beyond regulatory compliance

- Supports government and industry in embedding social expectations into infrastructure

## What we aim to achieve:

- Deliver a validated framework to guide how infrastructure projects understand, monitor, and manage their social licence

- Provide practical tools and insights for industry and government to strengthen stakeholder trust and project legitimacy

- Contribute to theory by establishing Social Licence for Infrastructure (SLI) as a distinct and actionable concept

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