Infrastructure projects in Australia will start receiving independent analysis with the SMART group at the University of Wollongong appointing its inaugural professor of infrastructure governance.

Geoff Cohen, a former project manager with public and private experience, will head a research group that plans to study the long-term value of infrastructure developments.

The group will gather data, mostly from the public sector, on projects and release reports aiming to create more transparency on how projects are put together, plus their community impact.

This will include analysing how banks and contractors price risk and looking at patterns of tendering behaviour.

Professor Cohen hopes to start releasing indicative reports within 12 months to stimulate dialogue on projects and outline key focus areas.

He will also liaise with overseas research groups such as Oxford University’s infrastructure transition research consortium, which develops models to help plan national projects.

Australia can learn from Canada, which was “arguably more effective” in developing PPPs, Professor Cohen said. The group has already contacted large Canadian pension funds which have been acquiring Australian infrastructure assets.

“They’ve had positive and not so positive experiences here in Australia,” he said, adding that, while funds would like to get more involved in our market, they had not been able to do so as effectively as they would like.