07 June 2006

At Last a National Strategy for Level Crossings

“Railway level crossing crashes are one of the most serious safety issues faced by the rail industry in Australia. According to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), every year an average of 37 road users, 13 vehicle occupants and 24 pedestrians die as a result of collisions with trains at the crossings” said Mr Bryan Nye, Chief Executive Officer of the Australasian Railway Association (ARA).

The recent decision of the Australian Transport Council (ATC) to endorse the Australian Railway Level Crossing Behavioural Strategy is great news for the general public, road and rail industry. “This decision represents a major step forward in managing safety with industry and government working in partnership to address road user safety at level crossings. In addition, industry will work closely with Police to optimise enforcement without burdening existing resources unnecessarily.” said Mr Nye, CEO of the ARA.

The objective of the National Level Crossing Behavioural Strategy is to reduce the number, cost and trauma of crashes between road users and trains through nationally developed and coordinated behavioural programs. The ongoing need for behavioural programs to supplement engineering solutions is evidenced from findings of an ATSB study into 87 fatal railway level crossing crashes between 1988 and 1998. The study indicates that 51% of the fatal vehicle crashes at railway level crossings occur at crossings with boom gates and/or other active controls. Hence, behavioural programs targeted at educating road users about the features of active and passive crossings and rail transport would significantly improve the safety at all railway level crossings.

The National Behavioural Strategy entails three levels of programs. These are Macro Level, which focuses on mass media campaign; Micro Level, which focuses on educating targeted groups; and Enforcement, which aims at changing public perception concerning law enforcement at level crossings.

From July 2006, a governing body called the Railway Level Crossing Behavioural Coordination Group will gather to oversee and direct the implementation of the National Behavioural Strategy. In the first year of The Strategy, major activities of the Behavioural Coordination Group will include convening a workshop to develop specific programs, publishing an inventory of existing programs, conducting a national survey to assess community attitudes and beliefs towards railway level crossing safety, developing proposals for funding and developing and delivering an exemplar small scale project.
Creating and measuring behavioural change is a long-term process. The national behavioural programs will have an initial life span of five years, from 1 July 2006 through to 30 June 2011.

###

**Media Enquiries**
Dora A Ugalde
Communications Officer
Ph (02) 6270 4506
Email dugalde@ara.net.au