



The Rail Workforce

Rail is a major National Industry, employing more than 110,000 people in a wide range of occupations, disciplines and professions. More than 170 companies comprising private and public operators, passenger and freight operators, track owners and managers, manufacturers and suppliers operate in urban, regional, and rural areas of Australia.

Rail is a modern, technologically advanced industry that has an important and growing role. Demand for Rail services has increased through significant infrastructure investment, increased demand for passenger and freight services, technological advancement, development in the resources sector and increased customer expectations including customer service standards and reliability. Our industry needs skilled and capable staff to continue to grow and meet future demand.

Industry Collaboration

The ARA brings industry together to work as one to find national solutions to common problems. The ARA established the Rail Workforce Development Committee (RWDC) to achieve this goal. The purpose of the RWDC is to:

- Provide a forum for members to improve industry awareness, collaboration and effectiveness.
- Act as industry voice on matters relating to learning and development, human resources and workplace relations.
- Collaborate on the development, co-ordination and delivery of initiatives to mitigate the effects of skills shortages for the Australasian Rail Industry.
- Educate, benchmark and share information.

Current Challenges

Workforce issues are not unique to individual organisations but are shared throughout the rail industry.

The main rail workforce challenges at present are:

- **Increased demand for rail services:** growth in passenger and freight services, significant investment in rail infrastructure, technological developments, ongoing maintenance and repairs and evolving customer expectations create the need for the rail industry to source additional skilled workers which are in short supply.
- **Competition and staff retention:** rail competes with other industries such as Mining, Electricity, Water, Gas and Construction for skilled workers. This adds to the challenge of attracting and retaining skilled employees in rail.
- **An ageing workforce and skills shortages:** the average rail employee age is higher than those in other industries. As a result, a large percentage of staff are approaching retirement and the rail industry faces the challenge of filling positions whilst ensuring knowledge and experience are not lost.
- **Low awareness and poor industry image:** rail is not a top of mind employer as many people simply do not realise how large the industry is or how many career opportunities rail has to offer. Rail is hindered by negative public perceptions that it is still stuck in the steam-age when rail is actually a modern and technologically advanced industry.

The RWDC drives various projects under nine key strategies to combat current and future challenges; namely Workforce Planning, Attraction and Industry Image, Culture Employee Engagement and Retention, Career Pathways, Skills Development, Succession Planning and Knowledge Management, Innovation, Immigration, Communication and Collaboration.

Professional Development

It is vital to continuously improve the skilling and professional development of people across all sectors of the industry, at all levels, on a national basis. The ARA supports Human Resources and Learning and Development professionals through a number of collaborative working groups.

Our ultimate goal is to establish a suite of training solutions, whereby all courses would be compatible and used like building blocks to take the qualification to any desired level; from non accredited introductory workshops through TAFE level Certificate II, III, IV and Diploma and Advanced Diploma up to tertiary and masters qualifications.

Careers in Rail

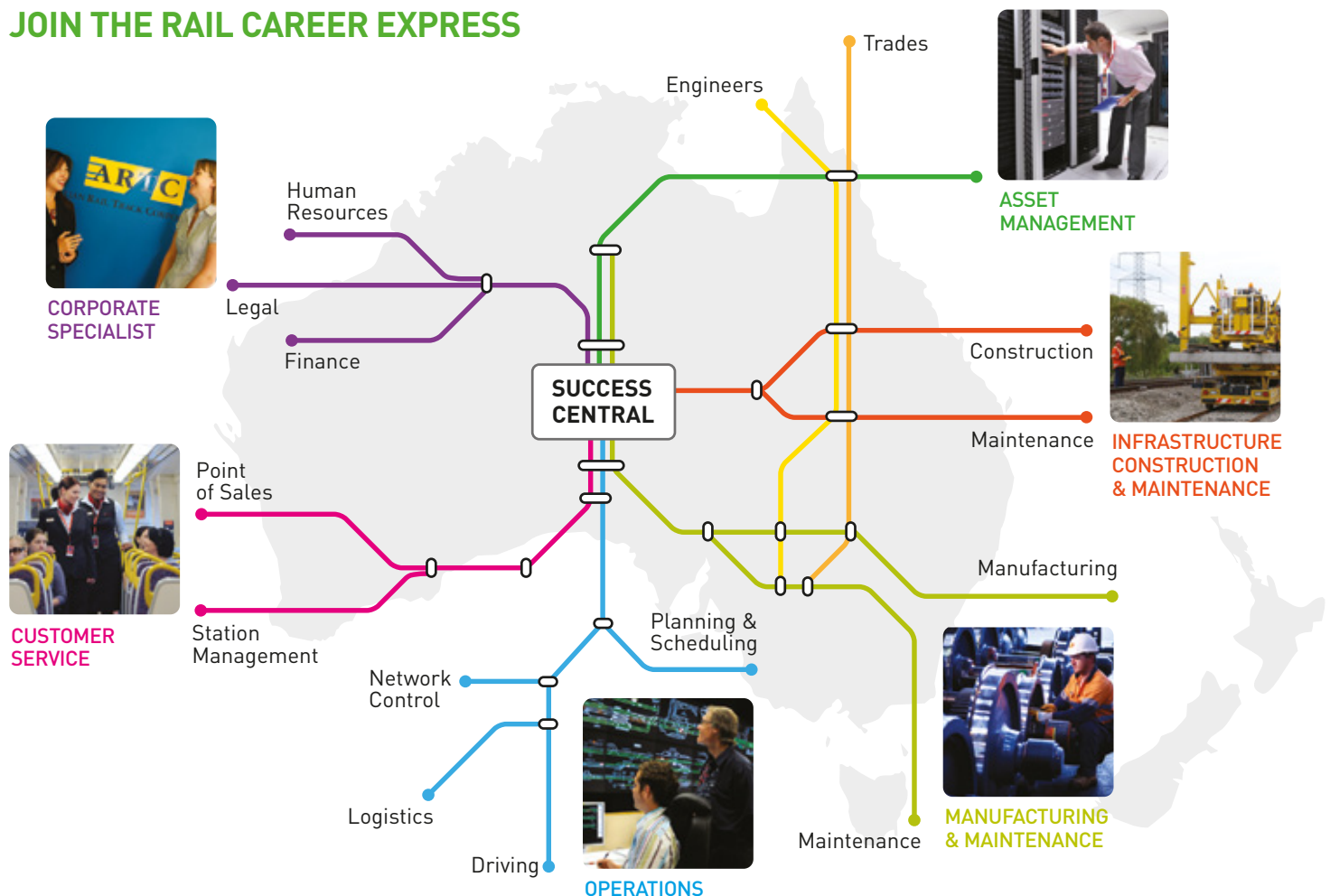
Many people are unaware of the extensive, diverse and interesting careers in rail.

The ARA is proactive in promoting rail careers wherever possible and is committed to raising awareness, attracting talent and improving industry image.

Members have been actively involved in many successful initiatives including the development of a dedicated rail careers website which continues to be a valuable information portal for those entering the industry or existing employees wishing to explore future opportunities.

Visit www.railcareers.net.au.

JOIN THE RAIL CAREER EXPRESS



For more information on workforce development topics, please contact the ARA's Workforce Development Manager on 02 6270 4513.