

TEN POINT PLAN TO MAXIMISE PASSENGER RAIL EFFICIENCIES



1. Optimisation of current rail infrastructure

Government investment required to optimise existing infrastructure to enhance productivity and passenger efficiency and to alleviate road congestion within our major cities.

Financial assistance for Passenger Operators should extend to trialling new and innovative technologies that improve the customer service and increase capacity using existing infrastructure.

2. Long term planning and funding

An agreed national rail project pipeline should outline transport and infrastructure blue prints to provide assurance around the timing and scope of projects to enable planning and investment for faster and less costly project delivery. The ARA also supports a dedicated Integrated Infrastructure Fund to reduce administrative costs, improve transparency and provide clarity in funding for infrastructure.

3. Skills & training

The Commonwealth to undertake a central coordination role to provide a national, holistic and accurate assessment of the current skills gaps and training needs of the Australian rail workforce.

With current skills shortages and an aging rail workforce, attraction and retention of a diverse workforce is critical to avoid a wage cost blowout.

Mobility of the workforce, especially those with STEM skills should be encouraged by government to ensure capabilities are maintained to sustain investing in the Australian rail industry for the long term. Agreed national competencies and standards will facilitate employee mobility and aid employers in the recognition and transferability of employee skills.

4. Demand management

There should be an equitable and comparable regulatory environment and/or competitive neutrality between competing modes of transport. Passenger rail should operate on a level footing with other transport modes. To this end government should consider introducing demand management, with revenue hypothecated back into public transport improvements.

The taxation system should incorporate public transport passes into the salary sacrifice offering, providing employers with the ability to offer salary packaged public transport passes as a lever to shift Australians out of their cars and onto public transport.

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5. Segregation of freight and passenger rail

Governments should facilitate the separation of freight and passenger lines to assist rail operators meet increasing customer requirements based on service, reliability, quality and price.

6. Corridor preservation

The Commonwealth should lead the preservation of the corridor to future-proof 'High Speed Rail' to avoid spiralling costs, such as tunnelling, in the longer term.

Australian governments should collaborate to adopt Infrastructure Australia's corridor protection recommendations and prepare agreed robust plans, feasibility studies, and establish joint funding and governance arrangements to protect and capture the corridor value.

7. National Ticketing System

The Commonwealth should lead the development of a nationally integrated smart ticketing system to provide national economies of scale and cost benefits to government and provide customers, local and overseas travellers with ease of use and benefits as offered in other countries.

8. Accessibility

The Commonwealth should recognise and support the commitment of public transport to provide mobility for people of all levels of ability or inability, and to collaborate with the rail industry to modernise the Disability Transport Standards.

9. Improved tendering and procurement, including harmonisation of standards

Governments should adopt a national, harmonised approach in procuring rollingstock, a measure that could save an estimated \$6 billion and would provide greater certainty to the Australian rail supply chain.

A detailed post completion review of the investment decision-making process will assist in identifying ongoing improvement opportunities that streamline costs, resources and time required with the applied cost benefit analysis process.

Modern technologies and integrated systems are critical in maximising the service offering on existing rail networks. Legislation, design specifications and standards should not be too prescriptive to inadvertently restrict innovation and the most optimal operational outcomes.

10. Sustainability and social externalities

The ARA recommends consideration is given to adopting the key principles of the Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia (ISCA) through the IS rating scheme – 'an industry-compiled voluntary sustainability performance rating scheme to evaluate the sustainability (including environmental, social, economic and governance aspects) of infrastructure projects and assets .

Governments need to assess 'externalities' in decision-making processes, including environmental costs (emissions, noise and land use), safety costs (due to fatalities, injuries and property damage) and congestion and its associated costs.

Footnotes:

i www.isca.org.au/is-rating-scheme/is-overview/is-rating-tool

www.ara.net.au

