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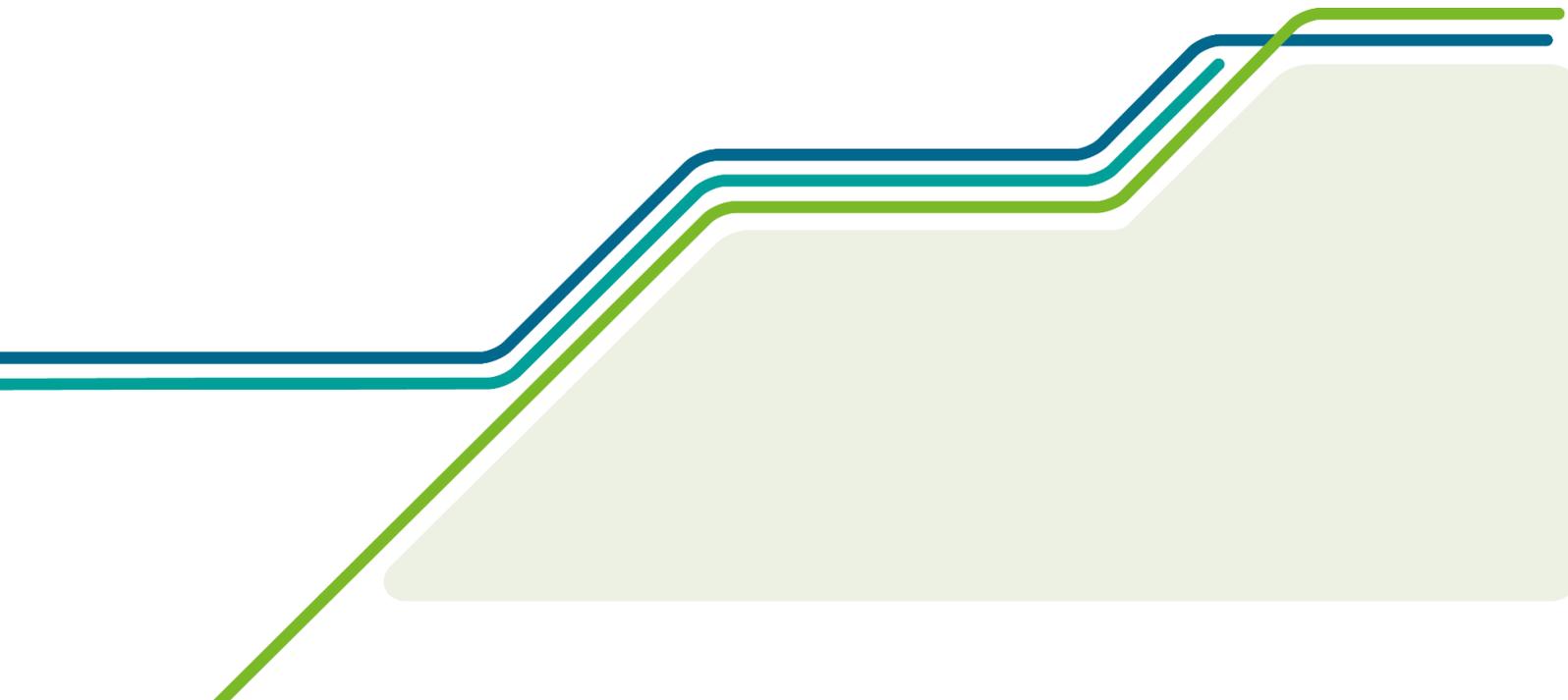
# WOMEN IN RAIL

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## STRATEGY

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## INTRODUCTION

Rail is entering an exciting period as a result of unprecedented investment and expansion. With increased levels of recruitment and an aging workforce, skills shortages are anticipated. This transformation provides rail with the unique opportunity to embrace change and improve the gender diversity of our workforce.

Rail companies are at differing stages of the gender diversity journey. As a whole, the industry has an ageing and male-dominated workforce but shares a strong desire to actively improve the gender balance throughout rail. The significant growth facing the industry provides the perfect opportunity to address long-standing gender diversity issues within the industry.

While the gender diversity process will continue at an organisational level, an industry approach to gender diversity will raise the profile at an industry level, provide a collective (and louder) voice, and facilitate collaboration to maximise the impact of individual efforts. A united approach will assist to raise awareness, improve perceptions, enrich the culture, enhance workplace practices and better attract and retain staff within the industry as a whole.

Everyone has a role to play in the journey but ultimately, management and executive commitment and participation will lead by example. Like many programs, gender diversity will not be achieved overnight and so acceptance that change requires a long-term outlook is the key to sustained success.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Data collected by the ARA in 2014 identified that women represent about 17 per cent of the rail workforce. The highest representation of females, at about 27 per cent, was in customer service roles with the smallest representation, ranging from 2 to 9 per cent, the more technical positions such as signalling, track workers, train drivers and engineers.

Gender diversity is attracting increasing attention globally. At the G20 in 2014, Australia and the other G20 nation leaders set a target to reduce the gender gap in workforce participation by 25 percent by 2025. While this means organisations are more open to change, this also means other industries and competing organisations are also actively pursuing gender diversity targets, thus creating greater competition to attract the 'best' women into rail.

## BENEFITS OF A BALANCED WORKFORCE

**Attracting the full talent pool:** A gender diverse industry will position itself as a preferred employer creating greater access to not only the full talent pool, but also the 'best' within the talent pool and their skills, experience and knowledge.

**Diversity of thought:** Different viewpoints and perspectives question and influence the status quo, providing greater analytical benefits that stimulate innovation and creativity within an organisation, contributing to better business outcomes and procedures.

**A workforce that represents the customer:** Rail moves the community. It is imperative that operators engage, understand, anticipate and meet the needs of their customers. This is most likely to be achieved when the rail workforce reflects and represents the people and communities it transports. This is especially true for government passenger operators. This alignment also helps to ensure important social responsibilities are met.

**Establishment of role models:** Diversity presents for a broader range of champions within a workplace, providing additional opportunities for mentors and role models to lead by example and develop a culture that supports and guides the next generation.

**Workforce retention:** The provision of career opportunities and progression for both men and women equally, creates a diverse workforce which are reported to be more productive, creative, innovative and inspiring, resulting in workforce retention and loyalty.

**Enhanced reputation:** Organisations with modern and gender diverse reputations generate competition and attract and retain high quality staff.

**Improved financial performance:** The link between female representation within management teams and financial performance has been identified through numerous studies. Between 2005 and 2009, Catalyst reviewed the performance of Fortune 500 companies with women on their Boards. Catalyst found that organisations with three or more females on their Board in at least four of the five year review period, outperformed those with less or no female representation on their Boards. Specifically, F500 companies with three or more women on their Boards reported an 84 percent higher return on sales, 60 percent higher on return on invested capital, and 46 percent higher return on equity.

**National productivity and competitiveness:** The Grattan Institute released a report in 2013, *Game-changers: economic reform priorities for Australia*, stating that if providing women with more choice to enter, re-enter or remain in the workforce resulted in a 6 percent increase in female participation, than the size of the Australian economy could be increased "by about \$25 billion a year".

**Minimised legal risks and costs:** Gender diverse workforces are less tolerant of inappropriate workplace behaviour, leading to minimised bullying and harassment claims, providing savings for organisations through avoided or reduced legal costs.

## BARRIERS THAT NEED TO BE OVERCOME

**Industry perceptions:** The rail industry has been historically viewed as 'old', 'male' or 'blokey'. Negative public perceptions of rail may deter some from applying for positions, reducing the available talent pool.

**Lack of awareness of rail career opportunities:** Although rail provides a breadth of career opportunities, there is a general lack of public awareness regarding these careers.

**Efforts perceived as tokenism:** Previous gender diversity programs or targets have at times, resulted in the workplace perception that female appointments have been made on the basis of gender bias rather than merit. This belief can result in internal cultural issues and can result in the females having to 'prove' themselves in the roles or move on.

**Low representation of females in STEM subjects:** Females are significantly under-represented in engineering, science and maths subjects at school. This is often a reflection of subjects chosen at school where parents, teachers or careers advisors may direct females away from 'male' perceived subjects or future professions.

**Inflexible rostering:** Shift work rosters within the industry have historically been eight hour shifts restricting those with family or other commitments. Some operators are implementing changes that will see split shifts introduced to appeal to individuals with other commitments, facilitating the gender diversity process.

**Legacy cultures:** Negative perceptions towards modern practices such as flexible working arrangements can create strains and resistance in the workforce. Managers must be educated on how to effectively embrace and incorporate the concept of work-life balance and flexible working to ensure women are retained.

**HR rather than business issue:** Gender diversity must be viewed as a business priority that has the capacity to influence productivity, innovation and the bottom line.

**Timing of current networking events:** Industry networking events are typically held after hours, presenting working parents, often the mother with an inability to attend. Adjusting networking events to be held during normal business hours may lead to improved 'gender balanced' participation and attendance.

**Lack of female role model visibility in the industry:** There are a significant number of key roles within the rail industry held by successful career women, however there is limited visibility and knowledge of these appointments.

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

### ARA Board

ARA's vision is for the sector to become 'a world class rail industry that contributes to a liveable and sustainable society that benefits all'. Therefore from a gender diversity perspective the ARA Board seeks to support the rail industry in:

- employing a sustainable workforce that represents our customers; and the community,
- creating an empowered workforce that is creative, innovative and agile,
- recognising that every employee has a role to play on the industry's diversity journey, and
- embracing the change that gender diversity will bring.

The Board will be briefed on progress of the WiR strategy and projects and will be consulted on large scale proposals.

### Passenger Transport Group

The Passenger Transport Group (PTG) brings together Executives of Australasian passenger rail operators to identify key areas of interest where industry can collaborate for improved operational and productivity outcomes, share information and ultimately, promote passenger rail.

Following discussions at an ARA Passenger Transport Group meeting in 2016 where there was agreement to address gender diversity in the Australian rail industry, the ARA Women in Rail Advisory Committee (WiRAC) was established.

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) convened a one-day workshop, bringing together passenger rail representatives and ARA-member consultants as the Women in Rail Advisory Committee (the committee). During this workshop the committee detailed existing diversity and inclusion programs, brainstormed options for a national approach to improving rail's gender imbalance, and developed the WiR Strategy.

The Women in Rail agenda forms part of the PTG's master plan.

### Women in Rail Advisory Committee

WiRAC was established by the Passenger Transport Group to develop a national strategy and accompanying action plan that passenger operators can implement to improve gender diversity in the Australasian rail industry.

The purpose of the WiRAC is to:

- share information regarding existing diversity and inclusion programs with a focus on gender diversity;
- develop and oversee the implementation of a 'Women in Rail' strategy and action plan that:
  - outlines a range of activities that when implemented, will improve gender diversity in the Australasian rail industry;
  - provides a holistic, national approach to improve gender diversity in rail, and;

- o establishes best practice to improve gender diversity in the Australasian rail industry.

The WiRAC will:

1. share information and collaborate to develop a 'Women in Rail' program for implementation by passenger operators initially (with the potential to expand across the industry in future);
2. monitor overall progress of its work programs and projects;
3. ensure resources are available for its work program and projects; and
4. report to the PTG through the WiRAC and PTG Secretariat at PTG meetings.

## Rail Workforce Development Committee

The ARA industry group, initially known as the Rail Skills Career Council and currently known as the Rail Workforce Development Committee (RWDC) has existed across industry since 2004. The RWDC leads an industry program that explores multiple areas of workforce development for the rail industry. The group has previously been responsible for participation in career expos to promote rail careers. Currently, relevant programs that align to the Women in Rail priorities, are the annual Rail Careers Week, which is held in September each year with varied focus areas and the 'Meet a Rail Engineer' which runs at AusRAIL PLUS every second year and offers the ability for local Engineering University students to meet a rail engineer and tour the exhibition hall to learn more about rail. Prior to this, the RWDC also oversaw two projects by the Rail Co-operative Centre for Research CRC) that have relevance to this program. Namely these Rail CRC projects are:

- **Career pathways:** multiple careers in the rail industry have been mapped, providing an A-Z of rail jobs, career pathways and training structures within the rail industry. This resource is available at [www.railcareerpathways.net.au](http://www.railcareerpathways.net.au)
- **Best Practice Attraction and Image Strategies:** research was conducted to provide 'best practice' strategies for industry to adopt and better position itself for prospective employees. This resources is available at: [www.railbranding.net.au](http://www.railbranding.net.au)

Specifically, the ARA Board has tasked RWDC at its March 2017 meeting to develop a proposal for a Women in Rail qualitative and quantitative industry survey to be carried out in 2017.

## Australasian Rail Industry

Everyone has a role to play in supporting women into rail, but ultimately management and Executives have the responsibility to implement policies and initiatives and lead by example in improving the representation of women in rail.

# WOMEN IN RAIL STRATEGY

## Vision

*"Achieve a diverse, sustainable and empowered workforce that represents and services the community we carry."*

## Focus areas

### 1. Attraction: Branding and promotion of rail

To attract the best from the talent pool, rail must promote itself as an industry to break through negative public perceptions and increase awareness of the breadth and scope of rail career opportunities in rail.

Develop a national marketing campaign designed to positively promote the variety and scope of roles and career opportunities available. It must be creative and innovative so as to achieve cut-through while positioning rail as a progressive, modern industry with a strong future, which would make it a highly desirable career option for women of all generations.

Info-graphics, social media, participation in education expos and school and university career events to be explored as methods to positively brand and promote the industry.

The target audience for such a campaign would be broad, including school students, parents, careers advisors, teachers, recruiters, university students, lecturers and the general public more broadly. Tailored communication collateral and strategies may be required to target the different audiences to break stereotypes and position rail as a viable female career opportunity.

## **2. Retention: Cross-Industry Mentoring and Leadership**

A cross-company industry mentoring program would provide an opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas and senior female managers throughout industry, benefiting rail as a whole through information sharing and staff development while providing career development opportunities.

For selected participants, it would provide career development opportunities and knowledge growth that would help retain high achievers by providing valuable career development opportunities and support networks.

In addition, ensuring rail employees feel that they have the support and career progression opportunities and can see a career path within the industry, not just a single organisation may also assist in retaining people in the industry.

## **3. Improved networks**

A revised approach to events will assist in increasing female participation in existing events while new events can be added to the mix to assist with industry networking and profiling of key women in rail.

Feedback has identified that evening dinners and events often limit female attendance. Rather, networking events during normal working hours would be preferred and is more likely to increase the ability of females to attend.

Need to ensure that ARA and its member's conferences and panel events have more female representation.

As well as networking, industry communication should be enhanced to better communicate and celebrate successes by featuring profiles of influential women in rail and or case studies on successful change programs.

## **4. Develop a national framework**

The success of any gender diversity framework is reliant on engagement and the achievement of milestones. Developing a 'best practice model' will provide an overarching national framework or guide for industry.

Data is essential to determine a snapshot of where the industry is at and establish benchmarks and data monitoring processes to track the industry's progress, and also compare rail's performance to other similar industries.

# IDENTIFIED ACTIVITIES

A variety of supporting activities have been identified through feedback gathered at the Women in Rail Strategy Workshop in August 2016, the Women in Rail panel session at AusRail in November 2016, and the International Women's Day lunch in March 2017, to address the four focus areas of the Women in Rail Strategy.

## **Attraction: Branding and promotion of rail**

### *Improving perceptions*

- A perceptions study to better understand target audience and most appropriate communication
- Increase visibility and recognition of females within the industry through presentations and case studies and profiling
- Community education and engagement through social media campaigns to improve perceptions
- Celebrate organisational successes and share lessons learnt
- Industry ambassadors and campaigns
- Women in Rail Award category at Industry Awards
- Establish a local chapter of WTS International) an organisation that supports the advancement of women in transport).

### *Unbiased gender recruitment*

- Develop a how to guide for unbiased gender recruitment
- Implement gender blind recruitment models
- Better target job advertisements
- Ensure female representation on recruitment panels
- phased 50/50 gender equality on recruitment shortlists.
- Undertake female biased recruitment when appropriate
- phased 50/50 gender recruitment pledge
- Actively change the representation of senior management teams to 50/50 gender balance.
- Flexible work policies to be advertised and encouraged for both male and female employees
- Seek support from recruitment agencies in increasing female participation in the industry

### *Advocacy in educational institutions*

- Engage with high schools - target career advisors and market work experience opportunities
- University development program- including industry engagement on high-tech innovative projects and provide female engineers to coach and mentor undergraduates
- More apprenticeships and other pathways into rail organisations
- Joint government and industry sponsored cadetships supported by business
- Scholarships program to promote females

## **Retention: Cross-Industry Mentoring and Leadership**

### *Mentoring*

- Develop a cross-company industry mentoring program (cross fertilisation of ideas and people across industry)
- Inclusive leadership training
- ARA Rail Future Leaders Program
- Develop an industry Cadet program
- Identify a 'sponsor': Senior male leaders in the business to identify female 'up & comers' and raise their profile; and or females to identify a male influencer and call them for coffee
- Develop organisation specific or industry wide coaching and mentoring program

- Rail companies to commit to Women succession planning for all roles
- Shadowing – develop a shadowing activity where a man (perhaps older) shadows a women (perhaps with kids) so they can observe the unconscious bias the women is experiencing
- Talent mapping / Talent pipeline – identify and support

### *Organisational Culture and Leadership*

- Promote the benefits of a gender balanced workforce
- Male champions of change
- Develop resources and how to guides for companies
- Unconscious bias awareness training / Incorporate 'diversity' training at all level
- Incorporate incentive programs to target females (eg. childcare, to return from maternity leave)
- Support flexible working conditions: including flexible (rostering or office) hours and work from home (utilise technology; remote working; regional connection)
- Develop domestic violence policy and readiness program to better support and respond to victims of domestic violence
- Conduct a company-wide anonymous survey to identify top priorities for organisations to target
- Organisations to become signatories and subscribers to the UN's Women Empowerment Principles
- Develop internal organisational policy documents to support diversity in the workforce

### **Improved networks**

- Women in Rail networking events (during business hours)
- Commitment to increase female representation at all industry conferences/events (in line with diversity targets)

### **Develop a national framework**

- Survey - strategic workforce gender analysis
- Set annual industry and/or organisational KPI improvements
- Industry pledges - representation, recruitment and retention
- Benchmarking annual improvements against KPIs and other sectors

## EXECUTION OF ACTIVITIES

Some initiatives have already commenced such as the ARA promoting the benefits of women in rail; ARA women in rail networking events, a concerted effort to ensure more females are presenters at ARA conferences and event panels; an ARA future leaders program commencing in 2017; a framework for organisations to use as a guide to facilitating an unbiased workplace; and the development of an ARA industry data survey to be carried out in 2017.

A number of activities are company specific and require implementation by individual organisations. These activities are just as critical for the industry as a whole, given they will drive organisational culture, practices and approaches that are necessary for improved retention and career progression for women in rail.

Gender diversity in the Australasian rail sector will take time. Long term commitment and continued industry support is vital to bring about sustained improvements to realise the rail industry's potential.

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## COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION

Clear communication between the responsible industry groups will be critical and maximum benefit of the activities will only be achieved through industry commitment.

A number of rail operators, as well as key rail suppliers have programs and policies currently in place to improve the representation of women in the rail workforce. In addition there are a number of appropriate state government initiatives that support these objectives, and at a federal level, the Australian Government Workplace Gender Quality Agency.

The ARA will work collaboratively with other operators, suppliers, associations and government to align efforts to maximise the impact of the ARA's Women in Rail Strategy.

The ARA will continue to communicate progress via industry group meetings, its newsletter and communiques.