

16 February 2021

Research confirms faster rail key to post pandemic growth

New research has confirmed immediate investment is needed to speed our rail networks as more people consider a move to the regions after COVID-19.

[A survey of 600 regional and metropolitan residents](#) across New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland commissioned by the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) found faster rail connections would make people more likely to consider a move to the regions after COVID-19 as work patterns changed.

With three quarters (77 per cent) of respondents expecting at least some of the changes to their work as a result of COVID-19 to be permanent, a quarter of city residents surveyed (26 per cent) were likely to consider a move to the regions, and faster rail would increase their likelihood of making the move.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the survey findings were released to coincide with the launch of the [ARA Faster Rail Report](#), prepared by Arup.

“With an additional 10 million people expected to move to Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane by 2060, faster rail will be essential to support urban renewal in key regional centres,” Ms Wilkie said.

“Highways in and out of Sydney are already reaching capacity, which means we must invest now in faster rail to support the east coast’s sustainable development.

“Immediate investment in existing networks would improve the speed, reliability and frequency of regional rail services into the city as we plan for fast rail connections over the next decade.”

The survey found regional residents would also be 71 per cent more likely to take the train if faster rail connections were available, while 84 per cent of regional respondents believed faster rail connections would make their region more attractive for people considering relocating.

The Faster Rail Report identified a three step plan to achieve faster rail:

1. Act now to upgrade existing rail lines to deliver faster, more reliable and more frequent services
2. Establish new fast rail lines in the next five to 10 years

3. Prepare for high speed rail in the long term by preserving rail corridors now

“For too long rail investment has lagged behind road funding and the regional rail network is now below global standards,” Ms Wilkie said.

“It is time to bring Australia up to standard and tap into the new demand for regional development resulting from COVID-19.”

ENDS

Further information

Joeley Pettit

General Manager Corporate Affairs, Sustainability and Member Engagement

0407 061 421, jpettit@ara.net.au