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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Inland Rail to drive new era of skills development for regional communities**

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) today launched an Inland Rail Skills Academy aimed at creating opportunities for communities along the alignment across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

The ground-breaking initiative will form partnerships between organisations to create education, training, skills development and employment opportunities.

Inland Rail Chief Executive Officer Richard Wankmuller said Inland Rail is set to not only change the way Australia moves freight between all mainland states; but will act as a catalyst for positive change in many regional communities along the alignment.

“The Inland Rail Skills Academy will focus on building the skills needed for the next generation of rail workers, many of which will be based in regional communities ensuring the operation and maintenance of our new networks as they come online,” he said.

The Academy will partner with other expert organisations to deliver:

- Twenty undergraduate scholarships, made available through the University of Southern Queensland, Charles Sturt University and La Trobe University to support local students to study in industries contributing to their region’s prosperity and social cohesion;
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Education, through primary and secondary schools allowing students to participate in a series of hands-on workshops which aim to inspire learning in STEM and interest in careers;
- Developing Rail Employee Capability, focussing on enabling ARTC employees to upgrade their skills and qualifications to deliver Inland Rail.

ARTC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Australasian Railway Association at the 2019 Inland Rail Conference in Toowoomba today committing to combine their expertise to address skilled labour shortages in rail construction, maintenance and operations of freight rail as well as build the capacity of freight supply chains.

The ARA is the peak body for the rail sector, with over 150 member companies, covering rail freight and passenger operations, track owners and managers, contractors (those that build track infrastructure), train manufacturers and suppliers, consultants and other companies that work in rail.

A key objective of the MOU will be to develop programs that offer apprenticeships and traineeships in rail related disciplines in regions along the alignment.

A second objective will be to build the capacity of small to medium enterprises in regional communities to participate in the Inland Rail supply chain.

Australasian Railway Association Chief Executive Danny Broad said: “ARA welcomes ARTC’s commitment to create education, training, skills development and employment opportunities to support the Inland Rail project and we look forward to working to ensure the Academy is developing real training opportunities for skilled labour in rail construction, operations and maintenance.”

In late 2018 ARA launched a report that projects rail skilled labour shortages of up to 70,000 workers in construction and 23,000 in operation and maintenance.

“We are seeing a renaissance in new rail in Australia, with an estimated \$150 billion invested by governments in new freight and passenger projects all around Australia,” he said.

Mr Broad said last week’s Infrastructure Australia 2019 Audit showed that freight grew by 50% in the 10 years to 2016; and is expected to grow by another 26% by 2026.

“Rail provides efficient, environmentally friendly, safe, cost effective land freight transport. Inland Rail will transform the medium to long distance freight supply chain by utilising integrated multi-modal outlets between our state capitals,”

With the right investment by industry and government, it can offer significant regional employment opportunities too.

More information on the Inland Rail Skills Academy can be found online at <https://inlandrail.artc.com.au>

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