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Media Release

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Australian Paralympian Vanessa Low announced as Rail Safety Week Ambassador

Gold medal Paralympian and world-record holder, Vanessa Low has today been announced as the National Rail Safety Ambassador. The announcement marks the launch of Rail Safety Week, an annual community awareness activity running 10-16 August across Australia and New Zealand.

Having experienced significant injuries, including the loss of her left leg above the knee and right leg through the knee after accidentally stumbling from an overcrowded platform and into the path of an oncoming train, Vanessa Low is a passionate advocate for rail safety.

Speaking of her new role Vanessa highlighted the range of behaviours people are doing to stay safe around the rail network.

“Always stand behind the line when waiting on a platform, never trespass in rail corridors, expect trains at level crossings even when they’re not timetabled and be sure to remove headphones when you’re anywhere near tracks – these are just some of the safety messages I am keen to promote as part of my role as Rail Safety Ambassador” Ms Low explained.

Now in its 15th consecutive year Rail Safety Week is an initiative of the TrackSAFE Foundation with over 90 rail, police and government organisations from across Australia and New Zealand participating in 2020.

In 2018-19 there were 100 fatalities, 123 serious injuries and thousands of near misses on the Australian rail network.

As part of Rail Safety Week 2020, TrackSAFE is asking the community to help reduce these numbers by making a #RailSAFE pledge and to share this pledge with their family and friends.

“Being rail SAFE means Staying off the tracks, Avoiding distractions, Following safety instructions and Encouraging others to be SAFE” said Heather Neil, Executive Director of TrackSAFE.

“If each one of us is RailSAFE we will also ensure train drivers and rail staff don’t have to face traumatic events involving fatalities, injuries and near misses.

Australasian Railway Association (ARA) Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the ARA was a strong supporter of Rail Safety Week.

She said it was more important than ever to be vigilant on and around the rail network.

“This has been a year like no other and that makes it even more important that we remember to stay safe around the rail network, particularly when our routines are disrupted,” she said.

“The rail industry has introduced new layers of safety this year to keep our rail services operating safely during the pandemic and the public has an essential role to support that effort.

“Rail safety is no longer just about staying off the tracks and keeping free of distractions – it is also about wearing masks in states where it is recommended and supporting the rail workers that support us by keeping COVIDsafe.

“We should all be talking about how we can be RailSAFE this week and take a moment to thank the rail workers for their efforts in this difficult year.”

Ms Low said the messages of Rail Safety Week should be front of mind all year round.

“While Rail Safety Week is celebrated in August each year, rail safety is a year-round, unquestioned commitment” she said.

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To make a #RailSAFE pledge visit: <https://tracksafefoundation.com.au/railsafe-pledge>

To read more about Vanessa Low visit: <https://tracksafefoundation.com.au/ambassador>

For more information on Rail Safety Week please visit: <https://tracksafefoundation.com.au/about>

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