Australasian Railway Association

MEDIA RELEASE

ARA WELCOMES LANDMARK DECISION TO DRIVE RAIL PRODUCTIVITY

Tuesday 12 August 2025

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has welcomed this week's historic decision to deliver nationally consistent digital train control and signalling systems, which will improve productivity and efficiency across the national rail network.

The Infrastructure and Transport Minister's Meeting (ITMM) made a number of decisions to support rail harmonisation and interoperability on Monday, including an agreement to adopt European Train Control System (ETCS) technology on Australia's National Network for Interoperability (NNI).

It will mean any digital train control and signalling system introduced on the NNI must comply with ETCS mandatory standards.

ARA Chief Executive Caroline Wilkie said this decision would end historic incompatibility across the national network and deliver significant benefits for the rail industry and rail customers.

"The ARA has long advocated for greater harmonisation and interoperability in the rail industry and it is pleasing to see meaningful progress being made to deliver a more productive and safer national rail network," Ms Wilkie said.

"This week's decision ends decades of inconsistency on the national network, which has made it harder for rail operators to move across the country.

"Nationally consistent train control and signalling systems will create seamless connectivity across the network and boost the industry's productivity and efficiency.

"This is a powerful step forward to improve rail's competitiveness and ensure it is the transport mode of choice for both passengers and freight customers."

The ARA also welcomed the endorsement of a national approach to procuring passenger rollingstock to support the growth of manufacturing capability and strengthen supply chain resilience.

The endorsement supports a key plank of the National Rail Procurement and Management Strategy, which aims to simplify procurement and harmonise standards to develop a more globally competitive manufacturing sector in Australia.

"The ARA is pleased to see ITMM's support for the National Rail Procurement and Management Strategy to build a more productive and efficient rail supply chain," Ms Wilkie said.

"A nationally consistent approach to procurement will deliver substantial cost savings to both rail suppliers and governments, supporting a sustainable rail manufacturing sector for the future."

ITMM also agreed to the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) taking a leading role in the future National Rail Standards Framework.

“It is critical for the rail industry to have a strong, capable and appropriately resourced national standards setting body and the ARA welcomes the decision to strengthen RISSB in the framework,” Ms Wilkie said.

Ms Wilkie said the ARA looked forward to engaging with its members, the National Transport Commission, RISSB, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator and other stakeholders in ongoing discussions and consultations on the framework, including the development and implementation of mandatory standards.

She said the ARA also looked forward to ITMM considering future reform options, including nationally harmonised standards for manufacturing rollingstock, at future meetings.

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