

ARA report confirms rail construction peak nears, but strong investment pipeline remains

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A new Australasian Railway Association (ARA) report released today has confirmed rail industry construction and maintenance activity has tripled in the last decade to support rising populations and economic growth.

The National Rail Procurement Pipeline Annual Report found activity is expected to peak in the 2025-26 financial year, but a strong pipeline remains as the industry continues to deliver improved outcomes for the economy and community.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the report confirmed the significant work underway in the rail industry, with \$132 billion in construction and maintenance work recorded since 2014-15.

“Rail has delivered a huge program of work over the last decade to help address years of historic underinvestment in the rail industry,” Ms Wilkie said.

“The economy and community are reaping the benefits, with expanded passenger networks and improved freight connections changing how we live, work and move across the country.

“It is essential governments continue to invest in rail to ensure we can meet the country’s growing needs and help address key challenges such as productivity, housing and decarbonisation.”

The report found the rail industry experienced a tripling in activity in real terms over the last decade as new passenger projects were delivered.

Rail construction activity was set to peak at \$17.3 billion in 2025-26, and would remain above current levels until 2027-28, before falling to \$11.3 billion in 2031-32.

Publicly funded rail construction across NSW, Victoria and Queensland would account for 94 per cent of project work over the next five years, with Queensland having the strongest growth profile as a result of its substantial program of both passenger and freight investment.

Maintenance was forecast to be a long-term driver of growth as network expansion, ageing infrastructure and climate events drove increased activity.

Ms Wilkie said key challenges would remain beyond the construction peak, with skills shortages continuing to persist.

“Australia has developed an outstanding skilled workforce as new projects have been delivered,” Ms Wilkie.

“A clear and certain investment pipeline is essential if we are to keep these skills in Australia and continue to attract the very best people to work in rail.”

The report sets out a 10-year forecast for rail construction and maintenance activity, broken down by state and territory, as well as by public and private funding.

It also provides an overview of public rollingstock procurement and upgrades across the country.

The report builds on the findings of the ARA's 2022 Market Outlook Report and is a key resource to help industry plan for future demand.

[A copy of the report can be found here.](#)

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