

ARA announces industry first research on First Nations participation and engagement

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The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has released new research examining the participation and engagement of First Nations people in the rail industry, highlighting both the progress already underway and the opportunity for the sector to take more deliberate, long-term action.

The report was commissioned by the ARA to better understand current experiences, barriers and opportunities, as well as workplace culture, reconciliation and procurement.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the report provides an important evidence base to help guide the industry's focus on strengthening engagement with First Nations people and businesses.

"Rail operates across Country and connects communities right across Australia," Ms Wilkie said.

"That gives our industry a clear opportunity, and a clear responsibility, to deepen our engagement with First Nations peoples and contribute to reconciliation in a practical and lasting way.

"The recommendations provide a practical roadmap for action to ensure culturally safe workplaces, stronger leadership, better employment pathways and more meaningful partnerships with First Nations businesses and communities."

The research found that while many organisations are already employing First Nations people and engaging First Nations businesses, there are still significant gaps in representation, career progression, cultural safety and supplier diversity.

The report sets out a range of recommendations for the ARA and industry, grouped around four priority areas:

- Fostering safe and inclusive work environments
- Strengthening reconciliation and leadership
- Supporting long-term and sustainable employment
- Building capacity through partnerships and Indigenous procurement.

"The ARA is committed to advancing this work with our members and partners," Ms Wilkie said

"Real progress will require sustained effort, accountability and a willingness to listen, learn and act."

The ARA has established a First Nations Consultation Group to guide its implementation of the report's recommendations, and has commenced the development of its first Reconciliation Action Plan.

The ARA will also offer scholarships for First Nations people working in the rail industry to attend AusRAIL 2026, and will host a marketplace for Indigenous businesses as part of the AusRAIL 2026 exhibition.

The development of the report was supported by project partners ARTC, Metro Trains Melbourne, Arc Infrastructure, Australian Rail Technology, Queensland Rail and Siemens.

[View the report here.](#)

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Media contact:

Joeley Pettit
Head of Communications
Australasian Railway Association
+61 407 061 421