

2 August 2021

Q2 rail patronage lifts, but falls in lockdown states expected in Q3

Rail passenger numbers grew in the second quarter of 2021 as more people returned to the office, but the trend was set to be short lived with lockdowns in NSW, Victoria and SA taking place in July.

National passenger numbers rose by 18.59 million or 15.9 per cent during the quarter, and 138.5 per cent, or 78.53 million passengers above the same time the previous year.

Patronage remained 38.6 per cent – or more than 85.1 million passenger – down on pre-COVID levels.

The urban rail network saw the biggest return of passengers, with a 17.9 per cent rise, or a 17.44 million increase in passengers, during the quarter.

Australasian Railway Association (ARA) Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the quarter's results reflected strong community support for public transport as economies reopened.

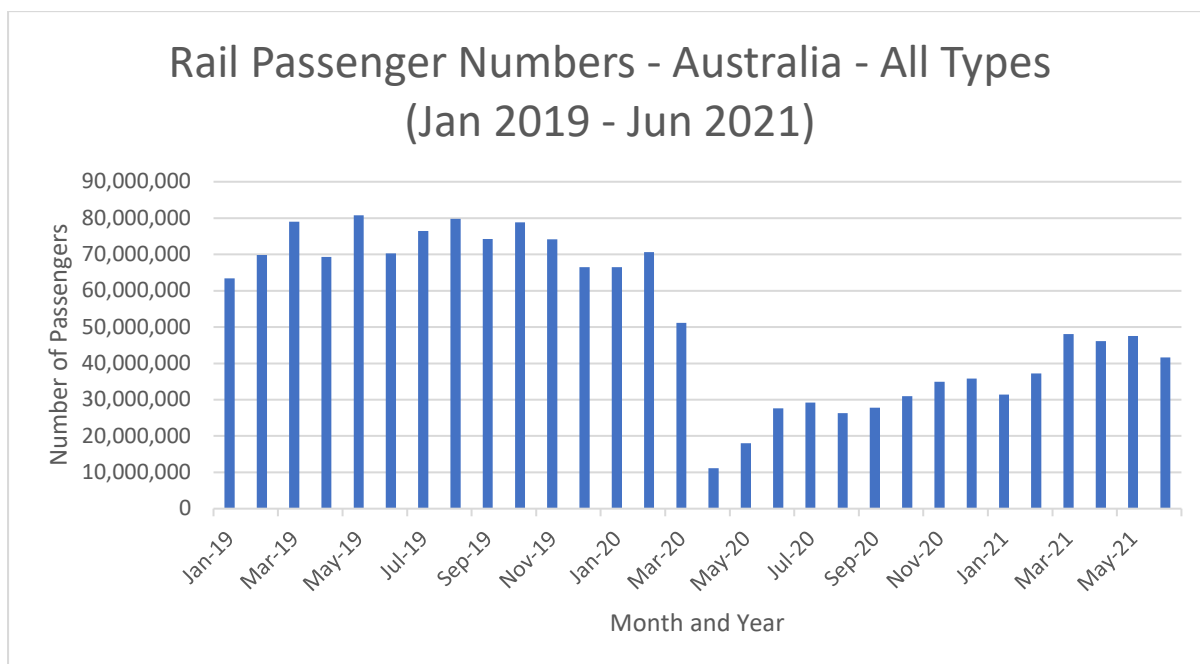
"The rail industry has continued to invest in safety and hygiene measures as they welcomed more people back to the network in quarter two," Ms Wilkie said.

"While it has been fantastic to see more people returning to rail, numbers in some states are expected to fall in the third quarter as a result of lockdowns.

"At the height of past restrictions, passenger numbers have dropped to less than 10 per cent of usual levels in some cases.

"Despite the expected drop in patronage, the industry is continuing to invest in services to ensure safe and sustainable travel remains available for essential reasons."

All Australian states recorded an increase in passenger numbers during the quarter, despite COVID restrictions in some locations leading to falls in passenger numbers during June.



Victoria recorded the biggest rise for the second consecutive quarter, with patronage up 28.1 per cent but still 48 per cent down on pre-COVID levels.

Patronage in New Zealand grew by 34.5 per during the quarter, or 1.69 million. The quarter was 141.1 per cent up from the same time last year and 28.9 per cent below pre-COVID levels.

Ms Wilkie said while the trend of rising patronage was encouraging, the industry remained ready to welcome those who had yet to return to rail when the time was right.

“Bringing more people back to rail is absolutely essential if we are to reduce emissions and congestion,” Ms Wilkie said.

“We look forward to a return to rail as vaccination rates rise, giving the community greater confidence as people go about their daily lives.”

Rising patronage was recorded against all rail modes, with urban rail leading the jump in numbers.

Regional rail passengers increased by 1.19 million or 14.7 per cent for the quarter, while light rail increased 1.99 million or 12.5 per cent.

ENDS

Note to editors: Please see the following table for statistics by country and state.

Australian snapshot – rail passenger numbers

Quarterly passenger numbers			
	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Variance
Passengers	116,658,905	135,246,506	18,587,601 15.9%

Year on year quarterly passenger numbers						
	Q2 2019 (pre-COVID)	Q2 2021	Variance	Q2 2020	Q2 2021	Variance
Passengers	220,352,785	135,246,506	-85,106,279 -38.6%	56,717,381	135,246,506	-78,529,125 -138.5%

State and territory rail passenger trends

Location	Change this quarter	Change year on year	Location	Change this quarter	Change year on year
NSW & ACT	8,273,867 13.4%	37,366,268 114.5%	VIC	8,625,792 28.1%	26,236,082 200.5%
QLD	931,631 9.3%	6,449,631 143.4%	WA	543,210 5.2%	6,137,113 128.0%
SA	213,101 5.6%	2,147,299 113.0%			

New Zealand snapshot – rail passenger numbers

Quarterly passenger numbers			
	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Variance
Passengers	4,893,112	6,582,150	1,689,038 34.5%

Year on year quarterly passenger numbers						
	Q2 2019 (pre-COVID)	Q2 2021	Variance	Q2 2020	Q2 2021	Variance
Passengers	9,258,653	6,582,150	-2,676,503 -28.9%	2,729,521	4,893,112	3,852,629 141.1%

Further information

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