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Project i-TRACE delivers National Product Catalogue to drive new efficiencies in rail

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) is calling on industry to take advantage of new data management standards and processes that will reduce costs, remove duplication and improve the exchange of information about rail components and parts across the asset lifecycle.

A new dataset specific to the rail industry has been added to the National Product Catalogue (NPC) to enable suppliers and clients to log, manage and share information on their products to improve efficiencies.

The innovation has been delivered by Project i-TRACE, a joint initiative of the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) and GS1 Australia.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the industry's use of the NPC would be a gamechanger for rail organisations, and the ARA Board had endorsed its use in the rail industry.

"This is a fantastic example of innovation driving better ways of working together," Ms Wilkie said.

"Rail organisations can now use the NPC to ensure all parties across the industry have access to accurate product information based on global data standards to support improvements in supply chain and asset management processes.

"This removes hours of work in the sorting and manual processing of components and parts, making the industry more responsive and efficient.

"We encourage rail organisations to make use of the NPC to help streamline operations and better connect the industry."

GS1 Australia Senior Account Manager – Freight, Logistics and Industrial Sectors Michiel Ruighaver said a Project i-TRACE working group had confirmed the required product data attributes specific to the rail industry based on GS1 Global Data Standards.

"This provides a national focus to the management of critical data across the rail supply chain," Mr Ruighaver said.

"Early pilots of the project had great results and we now look forward to more rail organisations getting involved."

A dedicated industry working group led the development of the project over two years to agree the process for electronically sharing data across the industry.

Cold Forge Products Managing Director and Project i-TRACE Material Master Data working group Co-Chair Andrew Carroll said the project would deliver tangible benefits to industry.

“Duplication of data is ‘data death,’” Mr Carroll said.

“A single source of truth that is accessed by the authorities saves time and effort, reducing wastage and hence cost for all involved.”

Sydney Trains Material Data Manager and Project i-TRACE working group chair Bill Steward welcomed the project.

“After 50 years of barcodes being used in the retail sector, most of us take them for granted,” Mr Steward said.

“We forget the advantages barcodes, and the data supporting them, has given to supply chains in terms of faster end-to-end response, data accuracy and traceability.

“More recently, COVID check-in using QR codes has simplified contact tracing. Imagine if rail could harness similar benefits to ensure the right parts are delivered to the right place at the right time?”

In Australia the NPC supports more than 2000 companies and hosts 1.5 million item records spanning multiple sectors. To determine the right option for your NPC journey, visit www.gs1au.org/for-your-industry/rail/national-product-catalogue-in-rail

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Further information

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