

3 September 2021

ARA welcomes release of 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has welcomed today's release of the Australian Infrastructure Plan.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the Plan supported a single national vision to guide critical transport infrastructure over multiple generations.

"We know the infrastructure sector will be central to Australia's economic recovery as the current wave of investment is delivered," Ms Wilkie said.

"The effective coordination of the planning, funding and delivery of infrastructure projects is critical to make the most of this opportunity and support the industry's long term success.

"We are pleased to see the Plan's recognition of the importance of sustainable development, innovation and collaboration to deliver infrastructure that meets our evolving needs over time."

With walking and biking booming during the pandemic, there was a real opportunity now to maximise the use of mass transit solutions such as rail as part of sustainable transport planning.

The ARA welcomed the Plan's confirmation that faster rail would be essential to improve connectivity with regional centres, and highlighted the importance of investing in both existing infrastructure assets and new builds.

"The ARA's faster rail report confirmed we must start investing now to improve the speed, reliability and frequency of services on the regional rail network, while also progressing faster rail projects," Ms Wilkie said.

"The Plan recognises the need to invest in faster rail connections to create 90-minute journeys between capital cities and smaller cities or regional centres to support our sustainable population growth.

"We are pleased to see the Plan highlight the importance of considering the long term benefits faster rail projects will deliver to the economy and the communities they serve as part of investment decisions."

Ms Wilkie said the ARA supported the Plan's recommendations to enhance the use of transformative digital technologies.

“Technology and innovation will be key to delivering the sustainable transport infrastructure we need to support a changing world,” Ms Wilkie said.

“A nationally consistent approach to research and development in the sector is vital to attract investment in new solutions and drive improvements that will have a real and positive impact.

“Reducing differences in procurement practices across jurisdictions will also ensure the rail industry can better embed new technologies and sustainable practices as part of new projects.”

The ARA also supported the identification of an infrastructure skills plan as a high priority.

“The rail industry is already facing skills shortages in key roles,” Ms Wilkie said.

“As new projects get underway, ensuring we have the right talent and appropriate pathways to meet demand will be a priority for the industry.

“We look forward to Infrastructure Australia’s report on the capacity and capability of the market to support planning for future resourcing and skills needs.”

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Further information

Joeley Pettit
Director Corporate Services and Corporate Affairs
0407 061 421, jpettit@ara.net.au