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IA research confirms urgent action on skills needed now

New data released today has confirmed urgent action is needed to meet an infrastructure skills crisis that is set to worsen over the next three years.

Australasian Railway Association (ARA) Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the Infrastructure Australia (IA) infrastructure market capacity and workforce and skills supply reports were welcome recognition of this critical issue.

Ms Wilkie said while looming skills shortages were complex to solve, an immediate focus on education and training to meet short and medium term needs would be an essential part of the solution.

“In 2023, skills demand will be 48 per cent higher than supply, with the transport infrastructure sector set to be in the eye of the storm,” Ms Wilkie said.

“This is the clearest indication yet that we must act now to ensure we are ready to meet the unprecedented investment and growth that is to come.

“We have seen this looming crisis building for some time, with our 2018 Rail Skills Capability Study predicting significant shortages in key rail roles.

“An increased focus on skills development will be vital to harness the huge opportunity that this once in a generation investment pipeline presents.”

The reports confirmed a wide range of roles critical to the rail industry would face shortages, including significant shortages in signalling and systems engineers.

Ms Wilkie welcomed the skills report’s acknowledgment that the establishment of national skills matrices and improved collaboration as part of the National Rail Action Plan would have a positive impact.

“These are crucial initiatives to support a strong skills base over the long term,” Ms Wilkie said.

“While these measures are making good progress, more will be needed in the short term to help meet immediate needs.”

More than \$155 billion in rail investment is planned over the next 15 years as a new wave of investment gets underway.

IA estimates four out of five infrastructure dollars over the next five years would be allocated to transport.

“The ARA strongly supports the development of training and education courses that can meet short and medium term needs,” Ms Wilkie said.

“Continued collaboration between government and industry will be essential to address areas of shortage and target training to where it is needed most.”

The recommendation to remove unnecessary barriers such as aged caps to skilled migration to meet immediate demand was welcomed, and should be delivered alongside sustained investment in the local skills base.

The ARA is already pursuing a range of skills initiatives, including its development of national competencies as part of the Rail Industry Worker program.

The ARA is also progressing a proposal for the development of a WA Rail Skills Academy in partnership with government and industry to address critical shortages in the state.

Work is also underway on a new careers website to promote rail careers, with a focus on in-demand areas of specialisation.

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Further information

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