

10 March 2022

## **ARA Gender Diversity Report confirms greater female participation in the rail industry, but challenges remain**

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) released its 2020-21 Gender Diversity Report today, finding more women are advancing their careers in rail but action is needed to support stronger female participation in the industry.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the report confirmed a two per cent rise in female participation compared to 2018-19, with women now making up 24 per cent of the rail workforce.

"While it is good to see continued progress in the industry, further change is needed to achieve greater gender diversity in rail," Ms Wilkie said.

"We are pleased to see a strong industry commitment to leading this change across both management and operational roles and look forward to seeing more women build their careers in rail in future years."

Ms Wilkie said there had been a stronger focus on gender diversity within the rail industry to support its long term success.

The survey found 89 per cent of participating organisations have formal policies or strategies to support gender diversity and 80 per cent have recruitment policies or strategies to improve gender equity in their organisations.

"Pleasingly, we have seen a nine per cent rise in the proportion of women being promoted and a four per cent increase in the proportion of women appointed as managers," Ms Wilkie said.

"This is a good reflection of the industry's increasing commitment to gender diversity and we look forward to seeing this trend continue."

The freight and intermodal sector saw the biggest rise in female participation, with a 12 per cent increase in the last two years.

There was also a 16 per cent increase in female representation within rail industry governing bodies, with 27 per cent of governing body chairs being women.

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic was also evident, with 79 per cent of respondents having formal policies or strategies for flexible working arrangements, a five per cent

increase in the last two years and above the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) national average.

Attracting females into rail apprenticeships or rail training and attracting skilled or qualified female candidates were key challenges reported by participating organisations.

Ms Wilkie said with the huge pipeline of rail projects ahead, attracting, retaining and promoting more women will be a crucial part of growing our workforce.

"Improving gender diversity in the Australian rail workforce remains a key focus for the ARA and the rail industry," Ms Wilkie said.

"Our Women in Rail Strategy is supporting our members as they build gender diversity across their businesses, and the survey results will help inform this important work over the coming year.

"There are so many opportunities for women to build rich and rewarding careers in rail as the industry grows."

The ARA's Women in Rail Strategy includes six key focus areas: attraction, retention, networking, industry development, recognition; and benchmarking.

A total of 44 ARA member organisations participated in the survey informing the report, representing: passenger, freight and intermodal operators, manufacturers, rail suppliers, contractors and consultants.

[View the ARA's report on Gender Diversity here.](#)

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## Further information

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