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ARA welcomes report on regional infrastructure gaps

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has welcomed the release of Infrastructure Australia's *Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps* report, which confirms the importance of infrastructure investment in the regions.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the report provides a critical evidence base for future investment and highlighted the need for more public transport in regional Australia.

"This report confirms the importance of addressing existing gaps across the country to drive better outcomes for regional Australians," Ms Wilkie said

"Improving the capacity, connectivity and quality of public transport in the regions will be an essential part of supporting regional development."

"Faster, more frequent and more reliable rail services are needed to better connect Australia's regional centres and realise significant economic and social benefits for communities.

The ARA's Faster Rail Report confirmed Australian regional rail networks currently lag behind the rest of the world, with today's report providing further evidence that targeted investment is needed to support better transport options in the regions.

Ms Wilkie said greater use of rail freight would also deliver significant benefits, providing a safe and sustainable alternative to road freight.

Continued investment in rail freight infrastructure, supported by policy reform to support rail freight productivity, is required to help achieve greater modal shift.

The ARA also recognised the report's finding that 40 per cent of regions experienced further education and skills training gaps.

"The skills challenge facing the rail sector is well known and this report further highlights the need for more training opportunities and pathways to ensure Australia is able to deliver and maintain critical transport infrastructure," Ms Wilkie said.

More positively, the report found well over a quarter of regions identified manufacturing as a key regional growth industry.

“Rail manufacturing has significant potential for growth and already has substantial facilities and operations in many regions all over Australia,” Ms Wilkie said.

“Improved standardised procurement processes and national local content policies would help make the most of this opportunity to support the \$155 billion in rail construction planned over the next 15 years.”

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Further information

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