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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Inland Rail succeeds with skills development in regional communities**

The Australian Rail Track Corporation's (ARTC) Inland Rail Skills Academy has gone from strength to strength since launching in 2019, with nearly 2000 participants taking part in a variety of programs along the project's alignment across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

The Skills Academy has established a range of partnerships that offer education, training and skills development in regional communities in all three states of Inland Rail's alignment.

Since signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) nearly two years ago, the Academy has been able to draw on the expertise of ARA members to achieve the best outcomes.

Inland Rail Director of Planning, Communications and Stakeholder Relations Rebecca Pickering said the success of the program has been of great benefit to both the project itself and the communities along its alignment.

"Since the Inland Rail Skills Academy program commenced, 20 scholarships have been awarded for students from areas along the alignment studying at University of Southern Qld, Charles Sturt University and La Trobe University," Mrs Pickering said.

"Over 1500 students and teachers in regional communities have participated in STEM activities and teacher professional development workshops, and our new virtual work experience program is gaining traction with regional students and will bring awareness of 21<sup>st</sup> century careers on offer.

"The Business Capability workshops have been very successful. In Queensland we had more than 100 businesses attend in eight different locations and in NSW 140 businesses attended, some of which have since won work with Inland Rail - so we are upskilling people not only for the Inland Rail project, but for the future more broadly.

"We're proud to be leaving a legacy in these areas beyond the construction period for Inland Rail."

The Australasian Railway Association Chief Executive Caroline Wilkie said the ARA applauds the ongoing success of ARTC's Skills Academy program which has created multiple education, training, skills development that support the Inland Rail project.

"Our 2018 skills capability report identified significant shortages in skilled labour in the areas of rail construction, operations and maintenance," she said.

The ARTC's Skills Academy is starting to contribute to redressing this through the development of real training opportunities. "The recent injection of funding by governments into rail infrastructure will take us into the future with new freight and passenger projects all around Australia.

“Rail offers a safe, sustainable and efficient form of land freight transport and will be crucial to meeting future demand. Inland Rail will transform Australia’s long-distance freight supply chain through the use of integrated multi-modal outlets between our state capitals”

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Federal Member for Riverina Michael McCormack said the Skills Academy program was helping regional students further their education and kick-start their careers to the benefit of regional Australia.

“We are proud to see the investment in the next generation of Australian engineers, scientists and planning professionals who will build on the investments we make today and further grow the region.”

More information on the Inland Rail Skills Academy can be found online at <https://inlandrail.artc.com.au>

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### **SKILLS ACADEMY FAST FACTS:**

#### **STEM – science, technology, engineering, maths support:**

STEM on Track program delivered in conjunction with the University of Newcastle:

- Program was launched November 2020 in Wagga with the Deputy Prime Minister in attendance via a virtual link
- Since the launch, events have been held in Wagga, Brisbane and Dubbo with 1597 students, a 50/50 gender split, 13% Indigenous students’ participation and 120 teachers participating in professional development

Grand Opportunities virtual work experience:

- Program launched in February 2021
- Four workshops are now live, with two more to come
- Nearly 60 students are enrolled in the four workshops

#### **Training support:**

- Facilitated training in Moree, Gwydir, Narrabri, Toomelah, Boggabilla and Goondiwindi for local residents interested in working on Inland Rail projects
- Skills in civil construction such as plant operations, rail competencies (required to enter the rail corridor) and white card were provided
- Over 100 people have completed training, with approx. 40 % Indigenous participants
- A list of participants was shared with Trans4M to allow for work or further training opportunities
- Anecdotally we know that 50% of participants picked up work elsewhere after the training completed
- Trans4M have employed two Moree Indigenous young men from the participants list

#### **Business capacity building:**

- Workshops were held in N2NS communities in mid-2020 and along the Queensland alignment in late 2020
- 140 businesses in N2NS region attended – 51 of which are Indigenous (36% of businesses)
- 100 businesses in Queensland attended – 19 of which are Indigenous (19% of all business)
- Workshops were also held specifically for Indigenous businesses
- Workshops focussed on ‘capability statements’, registering on the right tender portals (ICN), increasing awareness of what it means to supply to a major project