



2022/25

Strategic Plan

**Australasian
Railway
Association**





Contents

Message from the Chair	2
Strategic Environment.....	3
ARA Strategic Plan.....	5
ARA Strategic Objectives	7

A message from the Chair

The ARA's vision will guide our work from 2022-2025 to advance the issues that matter to our members and the wider rail industry.

As the peak body for the rail sector in Australia and New Zealand, the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) represents more than 200 member organisations across the industry.

Our members are from all sectors of the rail industry, including the passenger and freight operators that keep essential rail services moving; the track owners, managers and contractors that deliver a safe and efficient rail infrastructure network, and the suppliers, and the manufacturers and consultants that drive innovation, productivity and efficiency in the rail industry.

It is therefore of critical importance that the ARA has a guiding strategy that reflects the key focus areas that matter most to the rail industry and the challenges we are collectively facing.

The ARA's vision is for a thriving rail industry enabling economic growth and driving sustainability.

Our strategic plan provides the structure to achieve that vision and to guide the ARA's activities over the next three years.

Our new mission focuses the ARA's activities on driving change and debate on three key and topical areas for the rail industry: industry harmonisation; workforce development and industry capability; and sustainability.

This mission will see the ARA work to support a more nationally consistent, standardised approach across the rail supply chain continue in the years ahead.

It will also help us work with government and industry to address the converging challenges of skills development and sustainability across our industry.

We look forward to working with governments, industry and key stakeholders to drive the change required for the future.



Danny Broad

Chair,
Australasian Railway Association (ARA)

Strategic environment

Much has changed since the development of the ARA's previous strategy in 2019, not least of which are the impacts of COVID-19.

The experience of the last three years has highlighted the rail industry's essential role in our economy and community and emphasised the importance of strong supply chains and a sustainable workforce to support a thriving industry.

We have also seen a rapidly increasing focus on sustainability and resilience, with the confirmation of a national 2050 net-zero target and a renewed sense of urgency on this critical issue.

An unprecedented infrastructure pipeline

With record levels of rail infrastructure investment occurring across Australia and New Zealand, our region is embarking on a period of development that will transform its rail network for generations to come.

Rail construction activity associated with the current pipeline of work is expected to peak in the next three years, creating significant opportunities for rail businesses and their people.

For our passenger networks, new city shaping projects will redefine the passenger experience for public transport users and bring rail to more people in the community. They will help stimulate urban growth and development, provide a more responsive service for customers and ensure our region can meet future demand for sustainable public transport services.

In the freight sector, there is a strong focus on moving more freight on rail in Australia and New Zealand, with governments across the region seeking to increase rail's mode share.

As a result, we are seeing unprecedented investment in new freight infrastructure, including the Inland Rail project, which will transform Australia's national freight network.

This next phase of infrastructure growth provides new opportunities to partner on landmark projects, and drive innovation to ensure greater productivity and efficiencies for the rail industry.

Addressing the skills gap

While our region delivers a significant range of projects, it is also experiencing significant skills gaps. While skills shortages are not new in rail, the current convergence of challenges and threats to workforce capability means this will be a critical issue for the industry over the next three years.

The ARA's 2022 Building Australian Rail Skills for the Future report confirmed expected workforce gaps of up to 70,000 skilled workers by 2023, foreshadowed in 2018, were likely to be even more acute due to the impact of COVID-19 and associated border closures. Infrastructure Australia's 2021 Infrastructure Market Capacity report found that skills demand will be 48 per cent higher than supply by 2023, with the transport infrastructure sector set to be one of the hardest hit.

Skills gaps are also growing, largely because of increasing digitalisation, with emerging technologies that require new skills in areas including rail signalling, autonomous and remotely operated rail vehicles and operating or driving rail vehicles.

Skills availability is also inconsistent across the country, with regional areas experiencing deeper, long-term skills shortages, particularly for trade, technical and engineering-related roles that are common to a range of industries.

This means the industry will need to attract a new and different workforce, competing with other industries seeking similar talent. Improved rail training and associated courses as well as enhanced promotion of careers available in rail, and of the industry itself, will be key to achieving this goal. This also provides the industry with an unprecedented opportunity to attract, train and retain a younger, more diverse workforce that better reflects the composition of Australian society.

Building a sustainable future

Rail has long played a key role in our sustainable development. Passenger rail travel generates five times less emissions than car transport, highlighting the importance of encouraging people to leave the car at home and choose public transport.

The need for greater use of public transport and to move more freight on rail is an urgent one. One full commuter train takes 578 cars off the road, reducing emissions. On our freight network, rail freight generates 16 times less carbon pollution than road freight, as well as delivering wider safety and sustainability benefits.

As a result, we have seen in recent times an industry-wide commitment to supporting the decarbonisation of the transport sector and in particular rail.

The electrification of the networks over many years has supported low emissions transport in the rail industry across Australia and New Zealand.

The potential for further innovation across the network is significant, considering hydrogen fuel cell technology trains have now commenced commercial services in Germany.

From a freight rail perspective, there is also much to be excited about. Recent announcements in the Pilbara heavy haul sector have seen an increasing focus on battery powered rolling stock as the industry plans for the future of the heavy haul sector in Australia.

These initiatives highlight the significant role industry is playing in leading innovation to reduce emissions in the sector. But rail cannot do this alone and the ARA recognised the need for broader engagement with the infrastructure sector to address these challenges when it released its Sustainability Strategy in 2021. At the centre of this focus is a consistent, national approach to creating sustainable cities and communities, powered by infrastructure that supports our way of life.

While there is much to do, there are already exciting signs of what the rail industry can deliver to support a net-zero future.

Our Strategic Plan

The ARA's 2022-2025 strategic plan guides our work to support our members and to advance issues of importance to the rail industry. The ARA Board set and approved the strategic plan in September 2022.

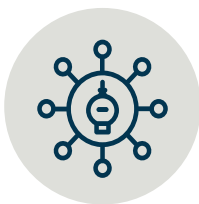
Our Vision

A thriving rail industry enabling economic growth and driving sustainability.

Our Mission

Collaborate with members, industry, and government to build industry capability, harmonisation, workforce development and sustainability.

Strategic Objectives



Leading industry voice



Exceptional Member experience



Thriving, diverse and skilled workforce



Productive, safe and efficient industry



Sustainable and resilient industry that benefits communities

Operational Priorities

Sustainable operations

Strong membership

Engaging communications

Thriving team



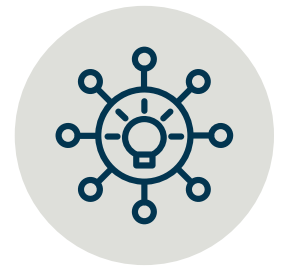
ARA Strategic objectives

This section outlines how the ARA will deliver on our strategic plan and the supporting priorities for each strategic objective.

Leading industry voice

Continue our evidence-based research to lead the debate on the key issues that impact rail and advocate for policy solutions to improve the operating environment for rail.

- Be the trusted voice of the rail industry in Australia and New Zealand
- Lead national debate on key issues that impact rail
- Identify and develop evidence-based research aligned with member priorities
- Advocate for policy solutions on member issues to improve the operating environment for rail
- Develop valuable industry data and insights to inform decision making
- Partner with key industry bodies on shared priorities



Exceptional member experience

Deliver leading services including events, courses and insights to support our members' diverse and evolving needs and support knowledge transfer and industry engagement.

- Provide diverse event offerings for members to network, share knowledge and create valuable relationships across industry
- Provide courses to support education and information transfer within the rail sector
- Provide valuable member engagement with opportunities for member participation
- Deliver informative insights and useful resources for industry



Thriving, diverse and skilled workforce

Showcase the range of rewarding careers in rail and lead the development of national courses and competency management to support a strong and diverse rail workforce for the future.

- Showcase inspiring career pathways to attract and retain a skilled rail workforce
 - Support the development of a national approach to courses, training and competencies
 - Provide professional development and networking opportunities
 - Support members to foster a diverse and inclusive workforce
 - Deliver the Rail Industry Worker Program for workforce competency management, safety assurance and productivity
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Productive, safe and efficient industry

Advocate for national approaches to procurement and the harmonisation of standards and regulations to ensure greater productivity and efficiencies for both the rail industry and the associated supply chain.

- Campaign for more efficient procurement and a national approach to local content, prequalification and type approvals
 - Advocate to harmonise regulation and standards for greater productivity and efficiency
 - Engage in state and commonwealth government processes to support a thriving rail supply chain
 - Facilitate collaboration in industry innovation, research and development
 - Represent industry on national rail safety policy issues
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Sustainable and resilient industry that benefits communities

Lead the regional dialogue to accelerate emissions reduction in the rail industry and the inherent sustainability benefits rail delivers.

- Showcase the inherent sustainability benefits rail delivers
- Lead the national dialogue to accelerate emissions reduction in the rail industry
- Foster a culture of sustainability leadership to embed sustainable practices across the rail supply chain
- Advocate for a resilient rail network that meets the needs of future generations
- Champion diversity and inclusion in the rail industry, and support infrastructure planning that meets diverse community needs







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