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Rail industry launches strategy to give young professionals a voice

The Australasian rail industry's peak body has [released a new strategy](#) to ensure young rail professionals have a say in key issues such as addressing workforce gaps, increasing diversity and improving productivity and harmonisation.

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) Young Leaders Advisory Board (Y-LAB) comprises eight members from leading public and private rail organisations in various roles including engineering, operations, governance and HR.

The ARA's CEO Caroline Wilkie said the Y-LAB strategy will enable the views of emerging talent to be reflected in the association's projects and priorities aimed at supporting a thriving rail industry.

"The Y-LAB is the voice of young rail professionals, who are the future of rail, and provides invaluable insights into key industry issues and strategies to support a sustainable, productive and efficient rail industry," Ms Wilkie said.

"The ARA is working with industry on several significant initiatives, including addressing the skills gap and increasing diversity, and the Y-LAB plays an important role in future-proofing the rail industry."

The purpose of the Y-LAB is to formally engage the younger generation of the Australasian rail industry on industry issues and provide a voice for and be a champion of the younger demographic.

The Y-LAB also aims to foster connections for young people in the rail industry and holds several networking events and opportunities each year.

Y-LAB Board Member Samiha Najem said the Y-LAB also supports professional development, with a particular focus on improving diversity and promoting rail to school leavers and university and TAFE students.

"The Y-LAB provides an invaluable opportunity to ensure the ideas and views of the future generation of rail are heard and considered," Ms Najem said.

"Its members are wonderful examples to the future generation of school leavers and university and TAFE students of the many rich and rewarding careers that rail has to offer."

The ARA has several initiatives and projects underway focused on boosting the rail workforce, including its Work in Rail campaign, new tertiary courses and programs to increase participation and its Women in Rail Strategy to attract, retain and promote more women in the industry.

Some of the ARA's current initiatives include:

- New courses at Deakin University for undergraduate, post-graduate and current rail employees
- Partnering with the National Rail Skills Hub (National Transport Commission) to improve the mobility of workers
- Partnerships with the education sector on training/learning solutions to support careers and the transition to new technologies
- **Work in Rail** campaign and website focused on career opportunities in the rail industry.
- Women in Rail Strategy, including mentoring and scholarships for female rail employees
- Partnership with Engineers Australia to deliver a rail-specific graduate education program with a national focus.
- Building non-accredited courses where there is an urgent industry need, including the ARA's Understanding Rail Course and Introduction to Rail Signalling Course.

The rail industry contributes some \$30 billion to the Australian economy, according to the ARA's 2020 Value of Rail report.

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