

Media Release

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Essential work of the rail industry continues under stage four restrictions

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has supported provisions to allow for construction and manufacturing to support essential rail services under Victoria's stage four restrictions confirmed this week.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the rail industry would operate under COVIDsafe plans to ensure essential passenger and freight services continued during Victoria's toughest of days.

"The rail industry has been working hard to keep essential services safely operating throughout 2020," Ms Wilkie said.

"We welcome the Victorian Government's recognition of the industry's essential role in supporting the community and the businesses that will need to continue to operate over the coming weeks."

Ms Wilkie said rail workers had moved quickly to introduce COVIDsafe plans when the pandemic began and were continuing to adjust their operations to meet new challenges in Victoria.

"From the train drivers on passenger and freight services to those working in stations, workshops and in the office, rail workers have made sure essential services are there for people who need them no matter what," she said.

"We are enormously grateful for every rail worker that is increasing their cleaning schedules, providing services to support physical distancing, keeping their passengers informed and making sure our rail network stays COVIDsafe for all of us."

The new provisions confirmed by the Victorian Government struck the right balance between keeping business and industry operating and the need for additional public health measures to address the spread of COVID-19.

Ms Wilkie said manufacturing facilities would continue to support the industry within the limits of the new restrictions to make sure the reliability of the network was maintained.

"Now more than ever we need the rail network to be as reliable and efficient as possible and these businesses are crucial to that effort," she said.

She said the continued operation of rail manufacturing facilities would also be crucial to support the swift return to increased production that would be needed to help the economy rebound once restrictions ease.

Ms Wilkie also commended Victorians – as well as those in New South Wales – who were supporting Australia’s rail workers by wearing masks on public transport.

“Wearing a mask helps save lives and keeps our rail workers safe as well,” she said.

“We welcome the public support for those on the front line as they keep working to support the rest of us.”

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