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Investment needed now for SE Queensland fast rail network to drive post pandemic growth

New research has confirmed the push for fast rail in SE Queensland is backed by its residents as more Brisbane workers consider a move out of the city and tourism operators seek to boost the appeal of their regions.

[A survey of 600 residents across Queensland, Victoria and NSW](#) commissioned by the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) found more Brisbane residents are considering a move after COVID-19 changed their work patterns, while Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast residents want faster rail to support the visitor economy.

The findings were released to accompany the launch of the [ARA's Faster Rail Report](#), which called for immediate investment in the rail network to deliver faster, more reliable and more frequent services.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said SE Queensland was uniquely positioned to leverage the improved connections faster rail would deliver to drive its post pandemic recovery and stimulate urban renewal along key rail corridors.

"Queenslanders have been talking about the value of faster rail for years, but COVID-19 has created a real opportunity to invest now and speed the state's recovery," Ms Wilkie said.

"Brisbane residents are more likely to consider a move to the coast as our work habits change, while the tourism industry will be looking for new ways to welcome people back as border restrictions ease.

"Faster rail investment would help meet increasing demand from commuters as the state's population rises and connect the region like never before."

One in five Brisbane residents surveyed (20 per cent) were likely to consider relocating to the regions after COVID-19, with 40 per cent expecting some of the changes to their work patterns as a result of the pandemic to be permanent.

More Brisbane respondents (43 per cent) said faster rail connections would make them more likely to consider a move out of the city.

Sunshine Coast (87 per cent) and Gold Coast (78 per cent) respondents also backed faster rail as a way to boost the appeal for people to move to their regions.

They would also be more likely to leave their car at home to travel to Brisbane, with 75 per cent of Gold Coast respondents and 68 per cent of Sunshine Coast respondents saying they would choose to use rail if travel times were the same or less than their preferred mode of transport.

The Faster Rail Report, prepared by Arup, found faster rail would deliver 85 minute travel times from the Sunshine Coast to Brisbane, while a trip from the Gold Coast to Brisbane would take just 60 minutes.

The report identified a three step plan to achieve faster rail:

1. Act now to upgrade existing rail lines to deliver faster, more reliable and more frequent services
2. Establish new fast rail lines in the next five to 10 years
3. Prepare for high speed rail in the long term by preserving rail corridors now

“For too long rail investment has lagged behind road funding and the regional rail network is now below global standards,” Ms Wilkie said.

“It is time to bring Australia up to standard and tap into the new demand for regional development resulting from COVID-19.”

All major parties committed to exploring fast rail in SE Queensland during the 2021 state election campaign.

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Further information

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