



# SAFE RAILWAYS FOR AUSTRALIA

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# Chief Executive's Message



**Striking the right balance between addressing the issues of the day and casting an eye to the future is a rudimentary feature of any good strategy. Taking care of business as usual will guarantee a certain amount of success but as the last few years have taught us, flexibility and adaptability are essential ingredients for any genuinely productive enterprise.**

As we embark on our latest strategic planning cycle, one that will take us to the halfway point of an already unforgettable decade, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) does so with renewed confidence in our ability to meet challenges and capitalise on opportunities, wherever and whenever they come.

The ONRSR Corporate Plan 2022–2025 documents a belief within our national team that will see us continue to deliver and develop a more sophisticated and data driven risk-based approach to our core business of rail safety regulation. A national work program generated by the right mix of analysis and intelligence will ensure many safety issues aren't just addressed as they happen but in more and more cases are identified and flagged before they do.

Over the next three years this approach will also underpin ONRSR's continued engagement with the burgeoning program of major projects underway right across the country. Similarly, it will drive our ongoing focus on the necessary reforms to the business of rail safety regulation, including a commitment to delivering on generational change in the areas of cost recovery and data reporting, collection and analysis.

Just as it will guide these fundamental functions, the plan is also designed to have ONRSR primed to capitalise on achievements and respond to new and emerging rail safety issues as they arise. Quality stakeholder engagement will reinforce the benefits offered by a co-regulatory model, with the ongoing development of the National Level Crossing Portal, and our work with operators, governments, other regulators and the general public to improve level crossing safety - just some of the initiatives to pursue.

And while working with the industry will always be an important part of our approach, in the event of incidents the work of our rail safety officers and investigators will again be integral to independence and excellence in the administration of Australia's *Rail Safety National Law*.

As ever the programs, processes and protections required to support our people, in offices across the country, will be the engine room for our strategic direction, and this plan purposefully encourages and invests in their capability, development, health and wellbeing.

Once more our outlook for the next three years is positive and progressive. The pages that follow reveal there is a lot to do - some now, some soon and some later, but in presenting this plan I know that we are ready for what lies ahead and that we have the balance right.

**Sue McCarrey**  
**Chief Executive / National Rail Safety Regulator**  
May 2022



**ONRSR's Corporate Plan 2022–2025 outlines our corporate goals and strategies and how we will measure our performance over the next three years. It provides the framework for ONRSR's Business Plan and individual performance agreements.**

**ONRSR strives to be visible in the rail industry, respected for conducting value adding interactions that are informed by a strategic combination of industry intelligence, knowledge of operations and use of rail safety data to make risk-based decisions.**





## 1.1 Our Vision

# SAFE RAILWAYS FOR AUSTRALIA

## 1.2 Our Values

### Integrity

We have moral courage and are honest and straightforward in our approach.

### Respect

We have respect for each other and our stakeholders.

### Independence

Our decision making is responsive and free from bias and influence.

### Diligence

We persevere and apply ourselves in a conscientious manner.

### Excellence

We are professional, high performing and strive for continuous improvement.



1.3 Our Governance Structure

The National Rail Safety Regulator and Chief Executive of ONRSR is Sue McCarrey. The Chief Executive is supported by two Non-Executive Members – Trish White AM and Julie-Anne Schafer.

The National Rail Safety Regulator and the two Non-Executive Members make up “The ONRSR” under Section 16 of the *Rail Safety National Law* (RSNL).

The Chief Executive is also supported by an Executive team comprising the Chief Operating Officer, Executive Directors and the Senior Manager - Risk and Analysis.



Sue McCarrey



Trish White AM



Julie-Anne Schafer

1.4 Our Relationships & Stakeholders

ONRSR works on behalf of Australian Governments to promote and improve national rail safety and ensure the safety of the community by encouraging and enforcing safe railway operations. In doing so we continue to develop our relationships with these governments and their agencies and the wider rail industry – operators, unions, owners, contractors, maintainers, rail safety associations and practitioners.

Additionally, we regularly communicate and consult with jurisdictional governments, the National Transport Commission, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB), the Australasian Railway Association, the Association of Tourist and Heritage Railways Australia and industry safety managers.

We report bi-annually to federal and state transport ministers from whom budgetary and legislative authority and support is provided.

2 The ONRSR Way

The ONRSR Way clearly articulates how the national regulator works by setting out our high-level approach to regulating rail safety and achieving compliance with the RSNL. It outlines the key principles that underpin our regulatory activities.

The ONRSR Way, originally released in 2018 and updated in 2020, documents this approach in detail. It is supported by our corporate policies, procedures and guidelines and, along with all key documents, is available at [www.onrsr.com.au](http://www.onrsr.com.au)



### 3 Our National Priorities

A national priority is defined as a rail safety area of regulatory focus that applies to multiple jurisdictions and operators and warrants a sustained period of regulatory attention.

Throughout early 2022, ONRSR conducted a comprehensive review of its national priorities. This structured, evidence-based risk assessment has resulted in the identification of some new national priorities and the refining and refocusing of some existing priorities such as track worker safety and level crossing safety.



#### Safety Critical Communications

ONRSR incident investigations have identified poor safety critical communications as a contributing factor to an increasing number of extremely serious occurrences across all sectors of the industry, ranging from authority irregularities to conflicting train movements, runaways and near-hits. Safety critical communications include both verbal and written communication and are essential to ensuring safe railway operations. Of particular concern is the use of casual or informal language - creating confusion and misunderstandings that lead to poor decision making that can have serious consequences.

A new national priority for ONRSR, its importance to the safe operation of all railway operations is reflected in its relevance to the full spectrum of rail safety workers including train drivers, network controllers, protection officers and track workers. ONRSR will work closely with rail transport operators to ensure they have properly designed, tested and executed processes, procedures and protocols in relation to operational communications.



#### Rail Safety Worker Competency

With adherence to procedures and network rules so critical to safety in the industry, the competency of rail safety workers is of paramount importance. Incident analysis reveals that both a lack of worker competency and the poor management of systems designed to record qualifications and knowledge, can lead to an increased risk of hazardous events.

Via this new national priority, ONRSR will devote significant regulatory resources to ensuring that rail transport operators have appropriately skilled, trained and experienced rail safety workers on their staff, and suitable competency management systems that can be applied appropriately and thoroughly when engaging contractors.



#### Altered Working Arrangements

Departures from accepted practices, in particular the reversion to dated, sometimes analogue working arrangements – often due to last minute decisions, external pressures and/or unforeseen events, are becoming widely recognised precursors to a range of incidents. The issue has been raised to national priority status for the first time in a bid to address failures to identify and manage risks associated with degraded conditions and altered working arrangements.

ONRSR will be targeting rail transport operators to assess workers' competency and training in these often ad-hoc processes and to make sure they understand the flow on effects of changes to working arrangements, particularly when this kind of working exposes workers to high demand tasks for extended periods of time.



#### Level Crossing Safety - Regional

Excluding trespass and suicide, accidents at level crossings account for the largest number of railway-related fatalities involving members of the public. Collisions and near misses at level crossings have largely remained unchanged, despite COVID-19 restrictions resulting in reduced (road vehicle and pedestrian) movement at crossings. ONRSR will now focus resources in relation to this priority on the issue of train conspicuity and safety at regional crossings. This follows our commissioning of the Australasian Centre for Rail Innovation's review of research and best practice in this area, and our ongoing oversight of trials by the freight industry of possible train visibility controls.

ONRSR will be engaged with the Federal Government's establishment of the Regional Australia Level Crossing Safety Program and support activities under the National Railway Level Crossing Safety Strategy while also monitoring State Government investigations of tech solutions and the use of big data to identify hotspot locations. ONRSR also continues to support the work being done by both governments and industry to remove level crossings and to commit to a policy of no new level crossings.



#### Contractor Management

The increasing use of contractors in the Australian rail industry, their vulnerability to breaches of the law and tendency to be involved in accidents remains a serious concern for ONRSR. A national priority since 2020, the issue is being addressed via a 4-phase program of works covering information gathering, contractor engagement, operator engagement and overall compliance. Phases 1 and 2 are complete and over the next two years, the remaining phases will be rolled out, culminating in targeted compliance activities, including audits and inspections that will drive improved safety performance in this area.



## 4 ONRSR Rail Safety Report

ONRSR's Rail Safety Report is our annual record and statistical analysis of safety performance across the Australian rail industry. The Rail Safety Report and updated information on Australia's rail safety environment is available at [www.onrsr.com.au](http://www.onrsr.com.au)



## 5 Statement of Intent

Our Statement of Intent outlines our priorities and describes our key functions. These priorities provide the framework for the strategic and operational goals set out in this plan. Our Statement of Intent 2022–2025 was agreed by ITMM members and is available at [www.onrsr.com.au](http://www.onrsr.com.au)

## 6 Last Year's Performance

Despite the continued challenges associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ONRSR once again recorded a range of achievements through 2020–2021 that reflect conscientious and effective delivery against strategic objectives.

The period saw the successful delivery of a number of critical projects, most notably the development and launch of the National Level Crossing Portal (NLXP) on behalf of the National Level Crossing Safety Committee. Initial feedback was extremely positive from all rail safety stakeholders and further development of the portal is planned. ONRSR also delivered its long-awaited revised cost recovery model and engaged with operators across the country in relation to its implementation. A new Fatigue Risk Management Guideline was also delivered to provide practical guidance to operators while important progress was made on the development of the new National Rail Safety Data Strategy.

At an operational level, ONRSR undertook a wide range of regulatory activities and actions including finalising comprehensive investigations into the accidents at Wallan, Victoria (February 2020) and Jumperkine, Western Australia (December 2019). Elsewhere ONRSR developed a brand-new website with a focus on an enhanced user-experience for accredited rail transport operators and refreshed its branding to reflect its standing as a fully national rail safety regulator.

In 2020–2021 ONRSR also recorded an unqualified audit.

As with any organisation, emerging challenges and changing priorities impacted on the delivery of some milestones. Detailed achievements against the plan will be contained in our Annual Report 2021–2022.

## 7 Integrated Risk, Planning and Reporting

ONRSR recognises that good governance requires a focus on risk management and strategic planning and reporting to ensure it achieves its objectives. Our Risk Management Policy and framework reflect regulatory and enterprise risks and the principles and processes outlined in the international risk management standard AS/NZS ISO 31000.

Regulatory risks are those associated with rail safety and are assessed and addressed under a comprehensive risk-based assessment process based on rail safety industry performance data and ONRSR regulatory intelligence. Oversight of ONRSR's regulatory risk management is provided through our internal National Operations Committee.

Enterprise risks are those which may impact ONRSR's ability to achieve our legislative and strategic objectives. These are also assessed to determine where ONRSR focuses its resources to achieve its objectives. Oversight of ONRSR's enterprise risk management is provided by the ONRSR Audit and Risk Committee. This includes review of ONRSR's enterprise risk register and its financial position and risks.

In addition, the Audit and Risk Committee reviews and recommends approval of the annual financial statements to the ONRSR (which includes Non-Executive Members) and reviews the detailed business risk register. The ONRSR Executive undertakes regular reviews of our financial position and risks to ensure we prioritise and mitigate risks in accordance with our operational environment.





Corporate Goals

# 1

## Enhance our risk-based approach to rail safety regulation

ONRSR will deliver an annual national work program, with a key focus on undertaking regulatory activities associated with national safety priorities and work with proponents of major rail projects to ensure safety issues are addressed. This risk-based approach will be underpinned by regulatory intelligence and maturing data collection and analysis. Our investigations will be fair, unbiased and systematic in establishing the facts of an incident or occurrence. By using the right combination of discussion, liaison, education and enforcement powers – we will appropriately focus our regulatory actions to minimise the likelihood of major incidents.

ACTIVITIES	WHEN
Implement the National Rail Safety Data Strategy Action Plan	2022 – 2025
Implement a national cost recovery model based on regulatory effort and risk subject to Infrastructure and Transport Ministers' approval	July 2023
Integrate the findings from an expanded set of analysis activities and products into the regulatory planning and monitoring cycle	Dec 2023
Develop our regulatory intelligence framework to enhance decision making	June 2023
Deliver an intelligence led national drug and alcohol testing program with annual review	June 2023



# 2

## Deliver efficient and effective safety regulation

ONRSR has an ongoing commitment to maximising the effectiveness and consistency of *Rail Safety National Law* and applying it in a manner appropriate to the scope and nature of railway operations. This involves our work to undertake maintenance reviews of the RSNL and, deliver reforms made possible by national regulation. ONRSR proactively looks for opportunities to improve the efficiency and productivity of both our regulatory interactions and industry operations. These strategies and this goal are pursued while always maintaining an unwavering focus on rail safety.

ACTIVITIES	WHEN
Work with governments to remove remaining, and minimise future, derogations to <i>Rail Safety National Law</i>	Jun 2025
Increase the range of regulatory and reporting interactions the ONRSR portal facilitates	Ongoing
Conduct the next ONRSR Stakeholder Survey and develop an implementation plan	Jun 2022

# 3

## Work with stakeholders to address national rail safety issues

Rail safety is a shared responsibility. ONRSR expects industry to take a proactive approach on safety initiatives, performance and harmonisation. ONRSR will continue to work with industry bodies to support this and where required, will develop specific strategies and programs to address systemic rail safety issues. This includes using the information and resources at its disposal to educate accredited parties in relation to the RSNL generally and safety issues specifically.

ACTIVITIES	WHEN
Finalise national priority projects including: > Level crossing safety > Contractor Management > Control Assurance > Track Worker Safety	Jun 2022 Jun 2022 Jun 2022 Jun 2022
Implement In-Cab audio and video recording policy as approved by ITMM	2023
Manage and enhance a National Level Crossing Portal on behalf of the National Level Crossing Safety Committee	Ongoing
Oversee outcomes of the train visibility research trials review to improve level crossing safety	2022
Actively support RISSB to drive production of standards that address safety controls and their assurance	Ongoing
Investigate opportunities to partner with universities to further rail safety research	Ongoing
Develop an ONRSR Education Framework to guide educational activities	Dec 2022
Upgrade regulatory information systems in order to implement framework directions	2023



# 4

## Invest in ONRSR’s national capability, governance and culture

ONRSR recognises its people are its most important asset and that complementary investment in their health and safety, their capabilities, and ONRSR’s governance and culture will drive our strategic intent. A focus on fostering culture and strengthening skill sets remains a priority along with the ongoing enhancement of our business and regulatory information systems. This goal recognises the desire for ONRSR staff to be equipped to work safely and effectively in an efficient, informed, coordinated and consistent manner wherever they are located around Australia.

ACTIVITIES	WHEN
Monitor developments in cyber security defences and continually enhance our response capability	Ongoing
Continue to invest in the learning and development of the national team and the systems that support them	Ongoing
Enhance recruitment strategies and supporting resources to attract and retain the most talented employees	Jun 2023
Deliver a Rail Safety Officer Competency Program	2022





Key Performance Indicators

ONRSR CORPORATE GOAL	ONRSR KPI	KPI MEASURE(S)	TARGET(S)
GOAL 1			
Enhance our risk-based approach to rail safety regulation	• Australia's rail networks are safer	• The national rate of key occurrence category incidents, as reported to ONRSR	• Decrease (3 yr. trend)
		• Number of drug and alcohol tests and % positive (ONRSR)	• 0% positive
		• Number of drug and alcohol tests and % positive (industry)	• 0% positive
	• ONRSR's regulatory effort is risk-based	• % of set minimum interaction levels achieved in previous calendar year	• 100%
GOAL 2			
Reduce the regulatory burden on industry	• ONRSR's regulatory activities are efficient	• % of preliminary audit reports issued within four weeks of an audit	• 90%
		• % of inspection reports issued within four weeks of an inspection	• 90%
		• % of policies and legislative changes consulted on	• 100%
		• % of key activities (occurrences and monthly returns) reported via the ONRSR Portal	• 100%
GOAL 3			
Work with stakeholders to address national rail safety issues	• ONRSR collaborates with industry to deliver projects that improve rail safety	• The national rate of occurrences associated with national priorities, as reported to ONRSR	• Decrease (3 yr. trend)
		• % adoption of ONRSR's major project guidance	• 100%
GOAL 4			
Invest in ONRSR's national capability, governance and culture	• ONRSR has appropriately skilled and experienced staff	• % annual voluntary staff turnover	• 10–15%
		• % of payroll invested in training and development activities	• 1–2%
	• ONRSR staff are safe in the workplace	• Annual lost time injury frequency rate (LTIFR)	• 0

SAFE RAILWAYS FOR AUSTRALIA



