

CORPORATE  
PLAN

2021-24



# SAFE RAILWAYS FOR AUSTRALIA

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Key Performance Indicators





After the experiences of 2020, 2021 has started with a much more optimistic outlook. The Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) has adapted and continued to operate nationally through border closures, periods of lock down and by alternating between home and office-based work and by being out on the system whenever necessary.

We are embracing the challenge of ensuring we continue to effectively plan for and execute our key functions in a COVID-Safe manner with a quiet confidence that comes from a strong foundation and the experience of 2020.

We are now more than a year on from formal establishment as Australia's fully national rail safety regulator, during which time we have been publicly recognised for the effectiveness and efficiency with which we delivered the reform. That successful approach was on display through the height of the pandemic last year, where we were integral to the response, regulating the safe operation of transport and supply routes that had never been so critical. Now, we are an equally important part of the social and economic recovery underway in Australia, a fightback that will rely heavily on safe railways – not only those that are operational but also those at various stages of development as a result of investment programs to support the COVID recovery.

The ONRSR Corporate Plan 2021–2024 outlines a national agenda now informed by the clearest picture of the Australian rail safety landscape we have ever had.



It's an outlook that will drive the continued development of our risk-based regulatory approach and deliver the safety benefits where they are needed most while reducing unnecessary administrative processes.

Importantly it documents the capacity and capability we have to complete comprehensive investigations into the tragic accidents at Wallan in February last year and Jumperkine in December 2019 and in time pass on the lessons learned to the broader industry.

Simultaneously, the plan outlines the next phase of regulatory reforms, those strategic changes to the business of national rail safety regulation and the administration of *Rail Safety National Law*, that will ensure it reflects the realities and intricacies of a modern rail transport environment.

Furthermore, through regulatory reform projects like the National Level Crossing Portal and National Rail Safety Data Strategy and via our national work program and comprehensive stakeholder engagement, we will continue to play our part in ensuring the ongoing maturity of the co-regulatory model.

Of course, our national workforce will be at the heart of everything we do, and we will build on the support and investment in every one of our people, their development and wellbeing, and continue to make their health and safety our highest priority.

Ours is a positive outlook, one that will see us continue to embrace and evolve the very important roles and responsibilities we have to keep Australians safe across an ever-expanding national network.

**Sue McCarrey**  
**Chief Executive / National Rail Safety Regulator**  
May 2021

ONRSR's Corporate Plan 2021–2024 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. We have the dual, but complementary, roles of administrator of the *Rail Safety National Law* accreditation regime and the regulator of a duty-based safety management regime.

## 1.1 OUR VISION

# SAFE RAILWAYS FOR AUSTRALIA

## 1.2 OUR VALUES

Our values guide and inform the internal culture and external business conduct of ONRSR.

### > 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 to make up “The ONRSR” under Section 16 of the *Rail Safety National Law*.

Trish White AM has been a Non-Executive Member since 2018. In 2020 Catherine Scott, who served as a Non-Executive Member from ONRSR’s inception in 2013, resigned with her replacement to be appointed in 2021.

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

## 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, 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.





## TRACK WORKER SAFETY

Competency of rail safety workers and communication when performing work on and around the track has been an ONRSR priority since 2016. Once again ONRSR will devote significant regulatory resources to the protection of track workers. The national work program will facilitate an increased number of in-field inspections that will be complemented by more advanced data analysis and a more strategic approach to investigations and audits. ONRSR will also work closely with rail transport operators to ensure they are learning from their own track worker safety experiences and devoting sufficient time and resources to the effective management of identified risks.



## LEVEL CROSSING SAFETY

Excluding trespass and suicide, accidents at level crossings account for the largest number of railway-related fatalities involving members of the public. ONRSR will continue the development of the National Level Crossing Portal on behalf of the National Level Crossing Safety Committee. Implementation of stage one of the project will initially incorporate ONRSR occurrence data and agreed Australian level crossing assessment data. ONRSR also continues to support the work being done by 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 increasing tendency to be involved in accidents is a serious concern for ONRSR. Still a relatively new priority, the focus will continue to be on establishing a clear national picture of the issues and commencing formal engagement and education with rail transport operators and contractors to ensure they are aware of their duties and safety requirements. This will be a forerunner to the start of targeted compliance activities, including audits and inspections that will drive improved safety performance in this area.



## CONTROL ASSURANCE

Recent inspection and investigation findings revealed the inconsistent or inadequate application of safety assurance principles and activities among operators across the industry. A national workgroup will finalise ONRSR's comprehensive, industry-wide picture of rail transport operators' competency in relation to control assurance. The intention is to then benchmark and develop targeted education packages for industry, with the longer-term goal of establishing a standard that operators' safety managements systems must reach to prove adequate control assurance in day to day operations.





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)

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)

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 2021–2024 was agreed by state and federal transport ministers in June 2021 and is available at [www.onrsr.com.au](http://www.onrsr.com.au)

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.

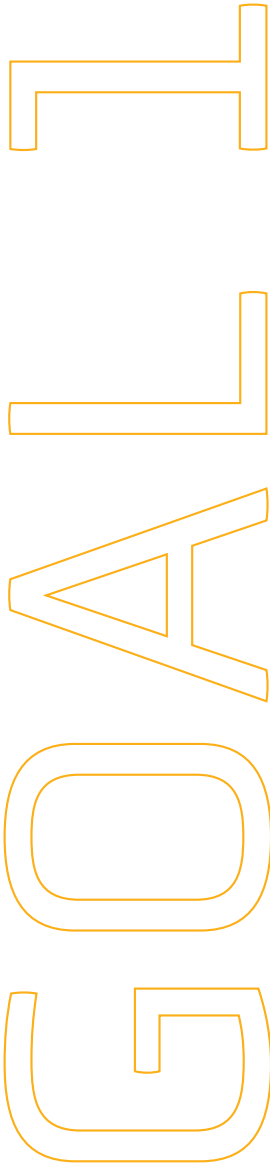


Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, ONRSR recorded a range of achievements during the 2019–2020 financial year that have further strengthened the strategic direction. Most notably, the transition of regulatory responsibility from Transport Safety Victoria saw ONRSR achieve status as Australia's fully-fledged national rail safety regulator in December 2019. At an operational level, ONRSR undertook a wide range of regulatory activities and actions including initiating ongoing investigations into serious occurrences, including fatal accidents at Wallan, Victoria and Jumperkine, Western Australia. ONRSR also developed digital recreations of incidents for use as educational materials for operators and released dedicated safety management resources to the tourist and heritage sector. Elsewhere, ONRSR continued development of the National Rail Safety Data Strategy and the National Level Crossing Portal and participated in the Productivity Commission's report into national transport regulatory reform which found that the regulatory model is most advanced in rail.

In 2019–2020 ONRSR also recorded unqualified financials.

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 2020–2021.

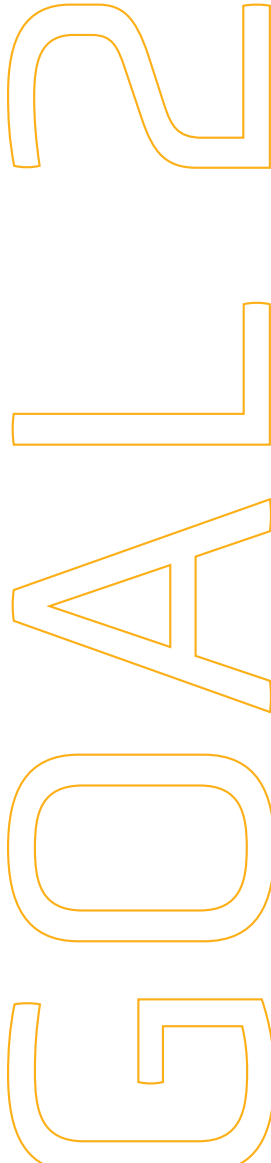
The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic represented the largest upheaval to work at ONRSR in our relatively short history and the sternest test to date of our Business Continuity Plan. Our response spanned both operational and corporate functions with the focus at all times on the health and safety of our national workforce. While some in-field activities were scaled back or postponed, rail safety officers were in the field with the necessary precautions in place and, as an essential service, the business of rail safety regulation continued to the high standards ONRSR has always set. After periods working from home, in adhering to all local health and safety advice and protocols, ONRSR staged its return to office environments around the country. Our focus is now on ensuring we operate in a COVID-Safe manner and play our part in the social and economic recovery through the performance of our key functions and by maintaining healthy and safe workplaces.



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 in-field intelligence and maturing data collection and analysis. Our investigations will be fair, unbiased and systematic processes that establish the facts of an incident or occurrence. By using the right combination of discussion, liaison, education and enforcement powers that range from improvement notices to suspension of accreditation – and include the ability to close down unsafe operations and to prosecute – we will appropriately focus our regulatory actions to minimise the likelihood of major incidents.

ACTIVITIES	WHEN
Progress the National Rail Safety Data Strategy Action Plan	2021 – 2022
Implement a national cost recovery model based on regulatory effort and risk subject to Infrastructure and Transport Ministers’ approval	July 2022
Integrate the findings from an expanded set of analysis activities and products into the regulatory planning and monitoring cycle	Dec 2023
Deliver a national drug and alcohol testing program with annual review	June 2022



DELIVER EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE  
SAFETY REGULATION

ONRSR has an ongoing commitment to maximising the effectiveness 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, deliver reforms made possible by national regulation and to identify (in consultation with industry where appropriate) areas for improving the efficiency and productivity of both our regulatory interactions and their operations. These strategies and this goal are pursued while always maintaining an unwavering focus on rail safety.

ACTIVITIES	WHEN
Implement the Commonwealth’s response to recommendations of the Productivity Commission’s report into national transport regulatory reform	Jun 2022
Develop a policy in relation to less complex operators	Jun 2022
Work with governments to remove remaining, and minimise future, derogations to <i>Rail Safety National Law</i>	Jun 2024
Leverage use of the ONRSR portal to increase the range of regulatory and reporting interactions it facilitates	Ongoing
Enhance distribution channels for stakeholder information	Dec 2021

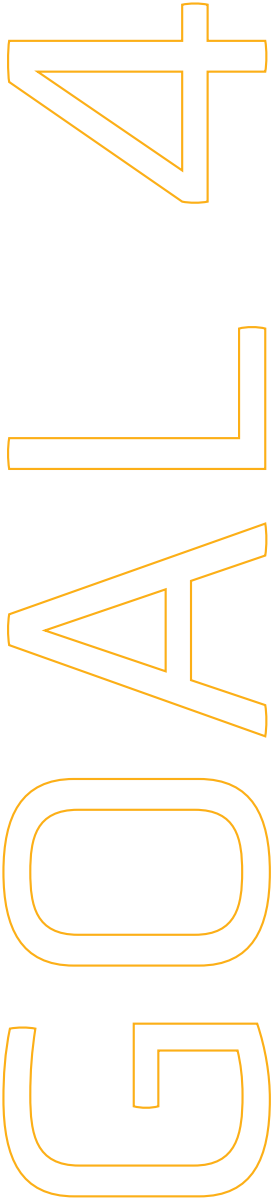




WORK WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO ADDRESS  
NATIONAL RAIL SAFETY ISSUES

Rail safety is a shared responsibility. To complement regulatory activities, ONRSR will, where required, develop specific strategies and programs to address its national priority projects and continue its active contribution to the implementation of industry’s safety strategy. The development of guidance material that provides clarity for operators and supports industry and the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board with the development of selected national standards, guidelines and products will continue. ONRSR expects industry to take a proactive approach on safety initiatives, performance and harmonisation. This goal reflects the important role ONRSR has to use the information and resources at its disposal to educate accredited parties in relation to the RSNL generally and safety issues specifically.

ACTIVITIES	WHEN
Develop and deliver national priority projects including:	
> Level Crossing Safety	Jun 2022
> Contractor Management	Jun 2022
> Control Assurance	Jun 2022
> Track Worker Safety	Jun 2022
Implement a policy for the introduction of In-Cab audio and video recording subject to Infrastructure and Transport Ministers’ approval	2022
Develop and manage a National Level Crossing Portal on behalf of the National Level Crossing Safety Committee	Sep 2021
Facilitate information sharing with industry	Ongoing
Actively support RISSB to drive production of standards that address safety controls and their assurance	Ongoing
Distribute regular safety messages and resources for all rail safety stakeholders	Ongoing



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, capabilities, governance and culture will drive our strategic intent, and help us manage the impact of COVID-19. Building the culture and enhancing the skill set 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 smart in an efficient, informed, coordinated and consistent manner wherever they are located around Australia.

ACTIVITIES	WHEN
Monitor COVID-Safe business continuity planning to ensure agility and responsiveness	Ongoing
Continue to invest in the learning and development of the national team and the systems that support them	Ongoing
Enhance the capability, governance and infrastructure for appropriate information sharing with stakeholders	Dec 2021

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)
	• ONRSR's regulatory effort is risk-based	• Number of drug and alcohol tests and % positive (ONRSR)	• 0% positive
		• Number of drug and alcohol tests and % positive (industry)	• 0% positive
		• % of set minimum interaction levels achieved in previous calendar year	• 100%
GOAL 2			
Deliver efficient and effective safety regulation	• 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 industry 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	• 90%
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





Level 1, 75 Hindmarsh Square  
Adelaide SA 5000  
PO Box 3461, Rundle Mall  
Adelaide SA 5000

Phone 08 8406 1500  
Email [contact@onrsr.com.au](mailto:contact@onrsr.com.au)  
Web [onrsr.com.au](http://onrsr.com.au)  
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