The challenges
Governments around the globe are investing in integrated multi-modal public transport systems to solve the challenges of cities and regional centres.

Australian cities face the following challenges:

- **a growing and urbanised population**: Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world. 35 per cent of Australia's population resides in Melbourne and Sydney and Australia's larger capital cities are growing at triple the rate of regional areas.

- **expanding and geographically spreading cities**: 74 per cent of Australia's population is expected to live in a capital city by 2061.

- **congested roads, airports and flight paths**: By 2020, road congestion is forecast to cost Australia $20.4 billion annually through lost productivity as a result of time wasted in traffic.

- **increasing greenhouse gas emissions**: per capita, Australia is one of the highest carbon emitters globally.

Public transport is a proven solution to these challenges.

Ensuring the future of our cities: all party plans
As Australia's population continues to grow, pressure on rail networks will heighten, increasing the importance of Government.

Infrastructure Australia was established in 2008 to prioritise road and public transport infrastructure investment and remove it from political cycles. After introducing Capital City Strategy Planning Reforms in 2009, the Council of Australian Governments agreed in 2012 that further cities planning would sit with the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure.

The ARA believes the next step is medium to long term city plans that all parties agree to. All party city plans will remove public transport and infrastructure investment from political cycles. Elected governments would still have power to invest in projects aligned to their policies but the plans would minimise opposition from other parties, allow faster implementation and provide certainty.

The role of Government
To ensure the future of our cities, all levels of Government have a vital role to play in:

- **Funding**: In 2013-14, the Federal Government allocated $1.648 million to rail. By 2017-18, this is forecast to decrease 80 per cent to $319 million for rail freight and no investment for passenger rail. This position contrasts with governments around the globe. State Governments do not have the budgets to fill this gap; funding from Federal and State Governments is vital.

- **Planning**: Cities should be viewed as a network. Planning must be holistic, provide certainty and introduce transport connections in the planning and construction phase, not post-construction.
• **Regulatory reform:** Reduced rules and regulatory burdens on industry will heighten transport efficiency. Reform can also position public transport as a solution over the car.

• **Coordination:** Ensuring state and commonwealth departments work collaboratively with Infrastructure Australia and transport operators will see continued network efficiency and improvements.

### What is needed?

Cities are our powerhouses. Efficient public transport systems are vital to the productivity of and success of our cities and urban centres.

The following actions will assist in securing rail's ability to connect cities and suburbs; transform the way people live, work and travel; and efficiently move our growing population.

#### Government reform

- **Sustained investment by all levels of government:** Federal and State Government must invest collaboratively and consistently in rail.
- **Taxation reform:** provision for employers to offer salary packaged public transport passes will encourage commuters onto public transport and reduce taxation system bias.
- **Fare cost recovery:** on average only 30 per cent of the service cost is captured by Australian rail fares, increasing the need for government subsidies. A rational rail fares policy that provides annual fare increases will start to ensure rail is more self-sufficient whilst setting expectations that fares must increase to meet rising costs and improve service delivery.
- **Single regulatory framework:** A national regulatory framework for safety, environment and economic regulations will reduce industry costs and improve efficiencies.
- **Alternate fuels or energy options:** Operators continue to improve fuel usage and energy efficiency to decrease costs and improve environmental performance. Continued Government support of these programs will ensure sustained improvement.

### Capacity improvements

- **Upgraded control systems:** to maximise the existing network, modern automated train control allow trains to run closer together, increasing safety and capacity.
- **High capacity rolling stock:** single-deck carriages with less seating and more doors allows faster loading and unloading of passengers, increasing capacity and reliability for on-time services.

### Infrastructure improvements

- **Upgrades to existing infrastructure:** continued investment and improvement to existing infrastructure is vital to maintaining Australia's rail networks.
- **Harmonisation of standards:** jurisdictions order rolling stock with unique specifications, driving costs up and creating interoperability issues. Better coordination between States is required.
- **Network expansions to outer suburbs:** new suburbs must have public transport links included in planning and construction. Without combined urban and public transport planning, outer city suburbs will continue to be forced to drive.
- **Untangling freight, urban and intercity passenger networks:** shared tracks reduce capacity. Separating the tracks for these services will improve capacity, reliability and service provision for urban and intercity passenger as well as freight operations.
- **Removal of road conflict points:** level crossings delay road users and provide potential collision locations. The removal or upgrade of level crossings will improve road and pedestrian traffic flows and reduce the safety risk to rail and road users, pedestrians and cyclists.

### Improved customer experience

- **Disability access assistance:** some stations and vehicles are not accessible for people with a disability. Operators are implementing upgrade programs but Additional investment would speed up provide fully accessible networks sooner.
- **Integrating all modes of transport:** transport modes must work collaboratively to maximise service. Positioning buses as feeder services into rail with linked timetables will help provide seamless transport options.
- **Smart ticketing:** jurisdictions have adopted smart ticketing but there is scope to move towards a national integrated smartcard ticketing system that provides micropayments. This could broaden the rail operator revenue base for reinvestment in the system.