

2018 Inclusive Workplace Award

WINNER: Level Crossing Removal Authority

Victorian Government's Training for the Future and the Rail Academy Newport Inclusion Programs

Origins and principles

The Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) has identified that Melbourne's population is forecast to grow to 7.8 million by 2051, with more than half the population growth expected to come from outer urban areas. This will place demand on rail, infrastructure and associated services that will outstrip current supply. As a result, unprecedented investments in major transport and infrastructure projects by the Victorian Government has resulted in substantial human resource and supply chain requirements. Rail and infrastructure industry bodies have also identified that the industry needs to attract, retain and grow talent to address critical workforce and skills shortages including a high proportion of male employees (80% in 2017) and an ageing workforce with 53 per cent of the rail workforce aged over 45 and only 11 per cent of the workforce being under 30.

The Level Crossing Removal Authority has also identified that many marginalised cohorts face barriers to participation in the broader workforce. LXRA's Training for the Future partners have also identified that these barriers extend to the rail infrastructure industry. With the demand for engineers being identified as one of the top nine critical skill shortage occupations by the State Government there are opportunities for retrenched workers from the declining automotive industry to transition to rail through reskilling and upskilling programs.

- Aboriginal people are under-represented in the Victorian workforce with the unemployment rate for Aboriginal Victorians at 16%, almost 3 times higher than the Victorian average (NATSISS, 2014-15). This indicates that building workforce participation opportunities for Aboriginal people is key to inclusive growth.
- Women continue to be underrepresented in rail and construction (Victorian Gender Equality Strategy; Rail Industry Reference Committee's Australia Industry Standards, 2018). A failure to attract and skill women for careers in these industries leads to a loss of productivity gains, and further entrenches occupational segregation, with potential to widen the gender pay gap and reduce economic security for women and their families.
- The participation rate of people with a disability in the economy is also significantly lower than for people without a disability (Absolutely Everyone –State Disability Plan 2017 –2020). People with disability face direct and indirect discrimination and stereotyping, that often leads to misunderstandings about the contribution people with disability can and do make in their workplaces, communities and to the broader economy.
- The economic benefits of cultural diversity in the workforce are substantial, providing an additional \$1 billion a year in economic activity by helping attract business, tourism, and students to Victoria (Victoria's Multicultural Policy Statement). However, only 17% of refugees are in paid work 18 months after arriving in Australia and they are finding jobs with limited prospects (Centre for Policy Development, 2017). Furthermore, whilst about 60% held highly skilled jobs in their home countries, only about 26% find similar-level work in Australia.

Implementation

With this critical workforce challenge, there was an opportunity to create a new, innovative solution to create a sustainable, capable and inclusive future rail industry. Coordinated by the Victorian Government Major Transport Infrastructure Program's Level Crossing Removal Authority, Training for the Future was developed as an innovative government-industry partnership. The first of its kind in Australia's rail history, this new and creative large-scale transformation program is being deployed between 2017 and 2022 through strategic relationships between 8 major government and industry partners from across rail, and private sector infrastructure partners including Level Crossing Removal Authority, Yarra Trams, Metro Trains Melbourne, VLine, VicTrack, Rail Projects Victoria, Public Transport Victoria and Transport for Victoria. The program is supported through an industry executive committee which provides strategic insight into workforce development, vocational education and training needs of the Victorian rail transport industry. Importantly, they act as a conduit to their own employees through their internal communications. In addition, a monthly Joint Coordination Committee of the private industry representatives act as a conduit to their employees.

Benefits and Outcomes

The program has had success across for in a number of the marginalised cohorts identified.

LXRA has developed various initiatives to increase Aboriginal participation in employment and training opportunities in rail. For example, LXRA has developed an Aboriginal Resource Guide and hosted the Building Aboriginal Victoria supplier and buyer event for the rail infrastructure industry to encourage social procurement as an opportunity to engage Aboriginal businesses into the rail infrastructure supply chain, thereby increasing Aboriginal workforce participation in the rail infrastructure supply chain. At the end of April 2018, investments in Aboriginal businesses and employment through LXRA's program of works has resulted in the removal of level crossings with 267,453 Aboriginal employment hours, along with a \$26.4 million investment in Aboriginal businesses and social enterprises.

With the announcement from the automotive manufacturing industry that vehicle production would cease in Australia, Training for the Future has been working with appointed outplacement services to showcase opportunities for retrenched workers in the rail sector. Commencing in 2017 an automotive worker transition program, TRANSIT, has been designed to showcase the breadth of opportunities available across the rail and public transport sector including rolling stock manufacturing, plant and maintenance and operations. During the program, participants receive practical, job ready training that are pre-requisites in being able to work within a construction and railway environment. The training is delivered by MTM's Academy to ensure best practice standards are achieved in-line with current rail operational requirements. This will ensure participants are accredited with two units of competency. TRANSIT has been delivered to 37 retrenched automotive workers as at 2018.

Training for the Future's talent creation programs such as GROW (Gain Real Opportunities in the Workforce) and GEN44 and GEN8 (our industry-wide internship programs) commenced in 2017-18 and have already achieved an average female participation rate of 24% across the programs, with GEN44 and GEN8 internship programs achieving 30% female participation rates to date. A considerably high participation rate given that rail and construction industries across Australia have female participation rates of 20% and 12% respectively. Women in Transport Leadership Development Scholarships are also being delivered for leadership development courses at Masters, Post-Graduate and executive level in a transport and infrastructure related area. Two aspiring female leaders from the Level Crossing Removal Authority and Melbourne Metro Rail Authority were successful in gaining scholarships for the 2017-18 round. In addition, LXRA's Women in Transport Mentoring Program has had 62 women participate in the program from across 19 different government and industry organisations to date.

GROW is designed to showcase the breadth of opportunities available across the rail and public transport sector including rolling stock manufacturing, plant maintenance and operations. As at May 2018, 105 people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds, including those from refugee and asylum backgrounds (33.1%), Aboriginal backgrounds (5.6%) and people with disability (2.8%) had completed the GROW program, with 23 securing employment outcomes as a result. Since commencing in October 2017, the program has also achieved a 22.5% female participation rate overall, with the most recent GROW achieving 50% female participation.

LXRA has already been working with the Australian Network on Disability to place 4 young people with disability in employment through the GEN44 industry-wide internship program. LXRA has also worked with peak body in the social procurement space, Social Traders, to engage rail and infrastructure industry partners to drive economic participation and pathways to employment for people with disability through the social procurement program. This resulted in LXRA partnering with Knoxbrooke Enterprises' Yarra View Nursery, a social enterprise wholesale nursery providing the Bayswater and Heatherdale level crossing removal projects with plants and landscaping services. Knoxbrooke directly employs people with disability as part of delivering this service to LXRA's project. This has enabled Knoxbrooke to gain new contracts in the rail infrastructure projects thereby helping to increase employment of people with disability. LXRA has also been partnering with social enterprise Nadrasca, that employs people with disability to deliver positive change at a local level by providing printing services to LXRA's projects.

15 mid-career refugee/asylum seeker background people and 47 university students are participating in GEN8 and GEN44 respectively to date with the following representation across diverse cohorts including 23% with an Aboriginal background, 11% people with disability, 62% people from refugee/asylum seeker backgrounds and 4% from other disadvantaged backgrounds.

Industry endorsement and accolades is leading to major transformation. Following the success of the pilot programs in 2016, Transport for Victoria and VicTrack showed their endorsement by becoming financial contributors in 2017. All program partners have endorsed the success of the program by committing to fund the program to 2022. Endorsement is further reflected by the Department of Education's decision to invest \$4.3 million in the program to develop further rail skills for industry. The program has already received one of the highest accolades from our industry peak body, the Australasian Railway Association, by winning the Australasian Rail Industry Awards Committee's 2018 Workforce Diversity Award (top place). The Program also won Platinum (top place) for Best Diversity/Inclusion project in the LearnXAsia Pacific Impact Awards, regarded as the most prestigious accolade and recognition that a corporate or government organisation can receive in e-learning and training.

The Roads Industry are now considering the adoption of the Training for the Future program. The Chairman of the Australia Railways Association, Bob Herbert, has also stated during the National Rail Workforce Development Committee that the Training for the Future program needs to be uplifted at a national level due to the value it brings to our industry. The NSW government has invited LXRA to share their learnings to address similar challenges in NSW.

The program includes the Rail Academy Newport that oversees the standards of training in rail for Victoria. The Rail Academy will live beyond the Training for the Future program and is designing and developing quality training products and resources to strengthen rail capability, address specific labour skill shortages and ensure training is sustainable and cost-effective.

Summary

Melbourne's population growth of 7.8 million by 2051 has resulted in unprecedented investments in major transport infrastructure projects. However, industry has identified challenges to delivering this pipeline of work being an ageing male workforce with critical skills shortages. Training for the Future, the Victorian Government's skills and industry capability development program for rail and infrastructure, has therefore been designed to create a sustainable, capable and inclusive talent pipeline and supply chain, that is reflective of the communities and customers served, to deliver on this significant investment.

Coordinated by the Major Transport Infrastructure Program's Level Crossing Removal Authority, Training for the Future demonstrates the benefits of a collaborative, action-orientated government-industry partnership that has, within the first 18 months of its five-year program, created new capabilities, skills and diverse talent for Victoria's booming rail infrastructure industry.