

STATEMENT
8 October 2021

Industry commitment to level crossing safety

Freight on Rail Group (FORG) members work closely with the wider rail transport industry to identify and address safety performance, and to continuously improve the safety of our operations and workplaces.

One of the highest priorities of the rail freight industry is to continue to improve level crossing safety throughout Australia. The work on addressing and improving level crossing safety is conducted by rail infrastructure providers, rail freight operators and by road infrastructure providers who are primarily State and Local Governments.

The Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model provides the Australian and New Zealand Standard for assessing each level crossing and prioritising level crossings where action needs to be taken to improve safety. The assessment model takes into account a range of different factors including road geometry, traffic volumes and speeds, visibility and existing protection measures.

The assessments prepared for all level crossings in Australia inform the actions that are taken at each level crossing. There is a range of actions that can be taken, some of which include the installation of boom gates, flashing lights and bells, or making changes in the way the road intersects with the rail line and signage. The specific action that may be taken is dependent on the assessment outcome for each level crossing.

The work of level crossing safety groups extends to working with government departments responsible for road management to identify and address issues that may be identified in relation to road infrastructure, including identifying any potential road improvement works or issues relating to signage.

A large proportion of freight services are provided in regional areas, and FORG members recognise the importance of the visibility of trains on rail networks in regional areas where the crossing infrastructure does not have gates or crossing lights and sound signals.

The rail freight industry also contribute to the development of safety standards. Industry worked with the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) to develop and implement standard AS7531, which is concerned with the visibility of freight train services.

The standard requires that all locomotives have both active lighting (headlights and visibility lights), areas of high visibility colours on the front and sides and reflective delineators (or panels) to provide visibility at night and when there is little natural light. The standard has detailed requirements for the active lighting that each locomotive must have installed. It specifies that lighting must be activated when there is insufficient daylight and that the lighting needs to meet minimum luminosity levels.

The standard also requires that freight wagons have reflective delineators on their sides. This is a requirement for every wagon that is part of a freight train service. Reflective delineators provide effective illumination if car headlights are shone on them.

Within our industry, we are currently looking to further upgrade locomotive lighting by installing light emitting diode (LED) lights. LED lights have greater brightness, improved visibility and are more reliable. RISSB is also in the process of updating its lighting and visibility standard to incorporate

available LED technology, and to include maximum luminosity values, with requirements as to how the luminosity values should be set up in the lighting on locomotives.

We also recognise the importance of raising awareness about level crossing safety in the communities in which we operate through public information and education campaigns.

This includes supporting the TrackSAFE Foundation in its efforts to increase the knowledge and awareness of communities about safety near railways and at level crossings.

FORG member companies provide support for rail safety education campaigns, particularly campaigns that aim to improve knowledge about level crossing safety. Rail freight companies also conduct their own information and education efforts through communications and advertising.

In addition to these ongoing priorities, FORG has also committed to work with, the Australasian Centre for Rail Innovation (ACRI) and other industry bodies to review the latest research on train visibility in relation to level crossings.