



Scoping rail specific leadership and management development

World-class leadership and management capability is critical to the future success of Australia's rail industry – and central to this theme is how managers and leaders are trained or developed. Factors such as the relentless impact of globalisation, the information age, and radical socio-economic developments, expose the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation's management simultaneously. As the rail industry faces these and other substantial challenges to both its strategies and operations on human resource management, this scoping report is the first step of what will undoubtedly become a major area of research interest in the rail industry over the coming years. Drawing from global research and a selection of Australian rail organisations, the report seeks to clarify the emerging issues in the area of leadership and management and what needs to be done to ensure the future success of the rail industry.

Drawing focus from the Australasian Rail Association's (ARA 2008) publication, *A Rail Revolution*, this scoping report explores how leaders at all levels are currently being developed in the skills of people management – traditionally viewed as an area of poor reputation and low capability.

Evidence shows that rail organisation leaders recognised the role of management development and were investing continuously in a wide-range of training programs. The area of greatest need and critical mass appeared to be at the front-line level, among work group leaders and team managers, who routinely dealt with operational resource problems as they worked to keep the rail network functioning. Organisations recognised and valued management qualifications, however academic attainment was voluntary and in most cases and not universally applied.

Key findings from this scoping project reveal a number of areas where collaborative research would help the industry. It would be beneficial to identify and map the cluster of generic and specific competencies required of managers in the rail industry and from this develop a rail-based competence framework. This industry framework would provide a comparative benchmark, enabling rail executives to assess both the development and performance of managers in relation to their contemporaries in other transport sectors or the international rail sector.

There is a need to assemble a pool of reliable evaluative information to clarify if the investments in management development are paying off and to help inform strategic choices on future training decisions. Finally, it appears that the rail industry is not making use of international standards of excellence to drive their strategies on organisational development and it would be helpful to evaluate the feasibility of using such models. Given the success of these international frameworks overseas, and the centrality of leadership in the concept models, the rail industry could be overlooking a major opportunity.