



The finalists for the Australian Heavy Haul Rail Awards 2026

EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

Recognising outstanding early and mid-career professionals who demonstrate exceptional leadership qualities, technical excellence, and innovative thinking in addressing complex heavy haul rail challenges. This award celebrates individuals whose trajectory clearly indicates their potential to become tomorrow's influential industry leaders in Australia's heavy haul sector.

Chloe Keep, HSEQ Superintendent, Speno Rail Maintenance Australia Pty Ltd

Chloe Keep exemplifies what it means to be a finalist in the Emerging Leader category. Through professionalism, resilience, and a deep commitment to excellence, she consistently elevates operational standards while positively influencing those around her. Working in the demanding environment of Australia's heavy haul rail sector, Chloe pairs strong technical capability with sound, timely decision-making and an unwavering focus on safety and quality. She leads by example, holding herself to high standards and encouraging colleagues to do the same.

Her approach is solutions-focused and collaborative, ensuring challenges are addressed proactively and efficiently, with outcomes that are practical and durable.

Beyond her operational contribution, Chloe's greatest impact is her leadership presence. She actively supports and mentors team members, with a particular emphasis on encouraging women who are entering or advancing within the industry. By sharing knowledge and experience, she helps build confidence and capability across the workforce. Her willingness to step up, take ownership, and contribute beyond her immediate responsibilities reflects a genuine commitment to both the business and the broader rail community. Chloe represents the next generation of leaders in heavy haul rail - driven, capable, and grounded in strong values. She balances operational performance with a people-first mindset, reinforcing the importance of teamwork, accountability, and continuous improvement. Her contribution strengthens Speno's operations while advancing a more inclusive and progressive industry. For her leadership, dedication, and positive influence, Chloe Keep is a highly deserving finalist for the Emerging Leader award.

George Massih, Reliability Engineer, Swietelsky Rail Australia

George Massih exemplifies emerging leadership in heavy haul as a Reliability Engineer at Swietelsky Rail Australia, delivering measurable improvements in asset performance, maintenance strategy, and project outcomes across SRA's mechanised maintenance fleet. Since relocating to Australia in 2024, George has pursued professional growth, becoming one of the first cohort to complete the Australasian Railway Association's Professional Certificate in Rail. Recognising the limits of traditional fault reporting and reactive maintenance, he partnered with his leader, Ben Senior, to implement structured fault data capture and analysis via the web-based SWIEDRASS system. This introduced a consistent, reliable method to collect and analyse fault and component performance data, strengthening asset management maturity and enabling evidence-based decisions.

Building on this foundation, George developed an enhanced operational reporting system empowering machine operators to record critical performance and fault data during shifts. Collaborating across operations and maintenance, he influenced beyond his role, improving data quality, enabling proactive maintenance, earlier issue identification, and more effective planning of interventions. His leadership is most evident in complex

AHHR

AUSTRALIAN HEAVY HAUL RAIL AWARDS

overhaul projects. He scoped and led planning for an overhaul of SRA's RM95 ballast cleaner and MFS wagons - specialised machines imported from Europe that had been idle for more than ten years. Within a compressed timeframe, he completed technical assessments against OEM requirements, identified compliance gaps, and delivered a cost-effective overhaul strategy aligned to operational demand and lifecycle costs. After commissioning onto the ARTC network in 2025, the RM95 and MFS achieved 1,370 meters of ballast cleaning at 93% reliability over a 51.5-hour possession.

Dr Siva Naidoo, Team Leader Instrumentation & Systems, Monash Institute of Railway Technology

Dr Siva Naidoo exemplifies exceptional leadership and a steadfast commitment to technical excellence and innovation as leader of the Monash Institute of Railway Technology's Instrumentation and Systems team. Over the past five years, he has delivered more than \$20M in projects on schedule. He and his team develop safety-critical systems for heavy haul operators across Australia and overseas, most notably the Instrumented Ore Car (IOC), which enables continuous monitoring of track and rollingstock using revenue vehicles, reducing costly downtime. Dr Naidoo sets clear expectations for quality, responsiveness, and delivery, implements robust processes, and personally models high standards that inspire his team to achieve stretching targets. He collaborates widely across Monash IRT to deliver cross-functional projects, influencing colleagues beyond his direct line through strong interpersonal and communication skills. He has built a high-performing team, coaches for peak performance, and celebrates achievement.

A recognised subject matter expert, he engages industry partners to define operational requirements, then translates them into practical processes and deliverables. In a safety-critical heavy haul environment with arduous duty cycles, he balances innovation with stringent reliability and compliance, resulting in systems that operate 24/7 in extreme heat, dust, and vibration with minimal maintenance. To lift performance further, he led a two-year improvement program to deliver a "Next Generation IOC" with step-change advances in hardware capability, power options, maintenance intervals, and reliability. Siva led from the front directing detailed design, specifications, and factory and site acceptance testing, while delegating key responsibilities, monitoring progress, and making timely interventions to ensure successful delivery outcomes.

RAIL IMPACT EXCELLENCE AWARD: SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Honouring excellence in initiatives that leverage heavy haul rail's capabilities to address critical environmental and social challenges. Whether through innovative sustainability solutions that advance environmental goals or groundbreaking programs that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion within Australia's heavy haul industry, this award recognises that leadership in either area represents a significant contribution to our sector's future.

Roger Buckley, Director and Chief Engineer, Taglio Pty Ltd

Roger Buckley is a highly deserving nominee for the Rail Impact Excellence Award, with more than fifteen years of leadership advancing Australia's heavy haul rail industry. His contribution stands out not only for technical excellence, but for the way he connects engineering, sustainability, and people to deliver lasting outcomes for the sector. As Chief Engineer at Aurizon, Roger helped shape national rolling stock strategies, engineering standards, and assurance frameworks that strengthened safety, reliability, and long-term asset sustainability across large freight operations. His work reflects a systems-thinking approach that balances operational performance, engineering integrity, and whole-of-life economics to deliver practical and durable improvements. Roger is also a strong advocate for realistic decarbonisation in heavy haul rail. He champions evidence-based

AHHR

AUSTRALIAN HEAVY HAUL RAIL AWARDS

pathways that reduce emissions while protecting the reliability and haulage capacity on which the national freight task depends. By aligning technology readiness, operational constraints, and commercial realities, he helps the industry progress toward lower-emissions operations without compromising productivity or cost competitiveness.

Beyond formal roles, Roger is a trusted voice across the rail community. He promotes collaboration between operators, OEMs, regulators, and suppliers, sharing delivery-tested insights through conferences, industry forums, and technical publications to strengthen capability across the sector. A committed mentor and advocate for Chartered Professional Engineer status and continuous professional development, Roger has supported many engineers in building their careers and leadership capability. Through credible advocacy, disciplined delivery, and people-focused leadership, Roger continues to help shape a safer, more reliable, and lower-emissions future for Australia's heavy haul rail industry.

Grant Mete, Managing Director, GM-Rail

Grant Mete is a respected rail professional and Chartered Civil Engineer with over twenty years across rail infrastructure, heavy haul, and multidisciplinary delivery. He holds a Master of Engineering in Rail Infrastructure and degrees in Civil Engineering and Commerce. Grant champions sustainable, responsible heavy haul development, treating sustainability as an integrated element of asset design, operational performance, and lifecycle cost optimization. Under his leadership, GM Rail was recognized by Avetta as a 2025 ESG Innovator, reflecting a genuine commitment to accountable, forward-looking operations. He embeds ESG in daily decisions, risk management and safety leadership, project delivery, and client and community engagement. Environmental stewardship, sound governance, and workforce wellbeing are integrated into every phase. Safety is foundational. Grant promotes proactive hazard identification, disciplined engineering assurance, and practical risk mitigation, reinforcing that sustainable performance is inseparable from safe performance in heavy haul environments.

Over the past few years, Grant has contributed to academic lecturing and industry engagement sessions at Edith Cowan University, University of WA, and the University of Tasmania, supporting engineering students with practical insights into rail infrastructure, safety, and sustainability. GM Rail also actively supports community wellbeing initiatives across Australia, including sponsorship of Fremantle Women's soccer teams in WA and Conscious Combat Club in Victoria, which provides trauma-informed martial arts for women. These partnerships reflect a commitment to social responsibility, health, and community development. Grant's leadership maximises heavy haul rail's role in reducing transport emissions and supporting national productivity through resilient design, material efficiency, and operational optimisation. His curiosity and forward-thinking mindset inspire colleagues to pursue innovation.

Swietelsky Rail Australia Team

Sustainability in heavy haul rail is earned through commitment and leadership that delivers environmental and social impact. Swietelsky Rail Australia embeds sustainability and responsibility at its core, formalised through an ESG strategy that turns global principles into accountable local action, supported by ISO certified systems and transparent reporting. Environmentally, SRA uses mechanised maintenance to deliver circular economy outcomes. The Hunter Valley Ballast Cleaning Program has cleaned and stabilised more than 330 kilometres of track, recycling over 430,000 tonnes of ballast. This reduces waste, truck movements, and emissions and lowers

AHHR

AUSTRALIAN HEAVY HAUL RAIL AWARDS

long term maintenance. SRA's capability is recognised by the Early Works Ballast Rehabilitation Project with ARTC under the federally funded Network Investment Program.

Across operations, SRA has recorded no significant environmental non-compliance issues since 2021 and reduces risk through initiatives, including transitioning its fleet to biodegradable Panolin oils to protect soil and waterways while improving machine efficiency and lifecycle performance. Social responsibility is pursued with equal intent. SRA has implemented wellbeing, diversity, and leadership initiatives. Its award-winning wellbeing framework, leadership pathways, and Family Inclusive Workplace certification address challenges in participation and retention. Results are measurable. In 2025 the workforce survey achieved 100 percent participation, with leadership, stability, and communication improving. Satisfaction with Employee Wellbeing Framework exceeds 93 percent. Early career development is growing; between 2025 and 2026 apprentice intake rose 50 percent, and a relaunched school-based trainee program welcomed a new female electrical student, strengthening the pipeline of skilled workers and supporting long term capability and knowledge transfer.

INSPIRATIONAL WOMAN IN HEAVY HAUL RAIL

Celebrating the outstanding achievements and contributions of women who are breaking barriers, driving innovation, and demonstrating exceptional leadership within Australia's heavy haul rail industry. By recognising these trailblazers, we aim to increase visibility of female talent, inspire the next generation of women in heavy haul rail, and accelerate progress toward a more diverse, equitable, and high-performing sector.

Candis Rhodes, Manager Planning, Rio Tinto

In heavy haul rail, real change comes from people who remove barriers, build capability, and bring others with them. Candis does exactly that in practical and brave ways. She strengthens the talent pipeline by championing rail specific engineering units with ECU, giving undergraduates early, meaningful exposure to rail and helping it feel like a real career option, not a niche industry discovered by accident. Inside the business, she makes retention more than a KPI. She reinvigorated the Rio Tinto Women in Rail community, bringing people together bimonthly and creating connection across employees and contractors who can feel isolated on site or in specialist roles. In parallel, she mentors women one to one on career planning and development, not as a tick box but as a two-way relationship that keeps her close to what incoming women need to thrive.

What sets Candis apart is pairing inclusion with technical leadership. She has led rail decarbonisation work focused on moving away from diesel locomotives and driven practical inclusion through a campaign to remove acronyms, making rail language more accessible for newcomers and reducing silent barriers to belonging. Beyond work, she shows up for community: leading a Cancer Council morning tea on site, mentoring through WIMWA and NAWO, and taking on major volunteer leadership including a \$180,000 community facility renovation and securing over two hundred thousand dollars in grants. Candis is the kind of leader who makes heavy haul rail better and makes it easier for the next woman to say I can do this too.

Casey Sloper, Superintendent -Train Control, Rio Tinto

Casey Sloper is reshaping how complex rail systems and procedures are designed, tested, and introduced in heavy haul by embedding frontline operational expertise into delivery. With partners including Hitachi and AutoHaul Operational Readiness, she co-developed structured beta testing that brings controllers, drivers, and maintainers into controlled trials before production. The approach captures task-level feedback, surfaces

AHHR

AUSTRALIAN HEAVY HAUL RAIL AWARDS

human and environmental constraints, and identifies potential risk early, so functionality and procedures are refined before they touch live operations. Inside Train Control, Casey introduced Human and Organisational Performance (HOP), shifting incident response from blame to learning. Coupled with frontline-led testing, this enabled earlier hazard detection and procedural improvement. Between 2024 and 2025, Train Control recorded fewer safety and process-related events, and the model supported adoption of HOP across Rail Operations. Her delivery philosophy reconnects design with the realities of operations and maintenance.

She convenes operators, engineers, and project stakeholders to validate requirements against real work, equipment interfaces, and regulatory obligations—producing systems and procedures that are usable, safe, and supportable in the field. By ensuring operational expertise influences technical decisions, she improves commissioning outcomes and readiness while reducing rework and unintended consequences. Beyond her own organisation, Casey has shared this approach with Queensland Rail, the Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, and heavy haul operators in North America, encouraging frontline-led testing and risk identification prior to implementation. Her work delivers safer, more reliable introductions of new technology and elevates the visibility of women providing practical technical leadership across Australia's heavy haul rail sector.

Catherine Steele, Senior Business Optimisation Manager, Tasmanian Railway Pty Ltd

Catherine has strengthened governance, safety, and risk management across TasRail's vertically integrated heavy haul environment. She conceived and led a bespoke Management of Change (MoC) framework that scales from minor procedural updates to high-risk infrastructure works, integrating safety assurance, systems engineering, project management, and operational readiness into a cohesive workflow. The result is consistent, proportionate risk management, clearer accountability, and improved organisational risk awareness. As the subject matter expert in business transformation and systems engineering, Catherine has embedded MoC into everyday practice, shifting mindsets from compliance to capability. The framework now underpins delivery of TasRail's programs, including the Rail Infrastructure Revitalisation Program, a new mineral ore ship loader, legacy locomotive overhaul and modernisation, safe working system upgrades, and high-risk operational changes. This maturity gives regulators, funders, and government confidence, enabling TasRail to commit to and deliver funded outcomes in compressed timeframes.

Catherine also leads replacement of TasRail's legacy Road-Rail Vehicle maintenance fleet. Through iterative, closed-loop engagement with crews and stakeholders, she has balanced human factors, regulatory requirements, engineering constraints, and real-world operating needs to produce a best-in-class platform with access, monitoring, safety, and maintainability. The program is tracking under budget, freeing funds for reinvestment. Beyond systems and projects, Catherine has matured long-term capital and asset planning, establishing structured forums that align technical, operational, delivery priorities, reduce rework, and improve transparency over a ten-year horizon. Her evidence-based leadership normalises robust change governance as an enabler, strengthens TasRail's resilience, and increases the visibility of women in complex technical roles across heavy haul rail in Australia.

AHHR

AUSTRALIAN HEAVY HAUL RAIL AWARDS

UNsung HERO

Recognising the extraordinary individuals whose vital contributions often go unrecognised, yet whose commitment, expertise, and behind-the-scenes efforts form the essential foundation that enables Australia's heavy haul rail sector's success and continued innovation.

Gary Doherty, Engineering Technician, Vossloh Switch Systems Australia

Gary Doherty is an Unsung Hero of Australia's heavy haul rail sector. With 20 years of specialised experience in railway turnout design, his expertise quietly underpins the reliability and advancement of networks across the country. Often unseen, he embodies the dedication, deep technical knowledge, and behind-the-scenes excellence that keep operations moving safely and efficiently. Gary provides end-to-end technical support to heavy haul clients, translating complex turnout challenges into practical, engineering-grounded solutions. Known for blending innovation with real-world constraints, he has delivered design improvements that improve performance, resilience, and asset life. These outcomes support network sustainability and long-term maintainability. He collaborates with asset owners, OEMs, and maintenance contractors, using field data and root-cause analysis to refine standards and installation practices. His work balances safety, maintainability, and whole-of-life value for high-availability operations.

Beyond design, Gary delivers hands-on maintenance training to track crews and supervisors. He demystifies turnout behaviour, links failure modes to preventive actions, and equips teams with skills and diagnostics to maintain systems to the highest standard. Whether refining inspections, improving handovers, or troubleshooting issues, he builds capability - not dependency - empowering the people who keep the industry running. He fosters a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. Gary's career exemplifies quiet excellence. His contributions may not be widely visible, but they are indispensable to safe, reliable, and efficient heavy haul operations. For sustained impact, humility, and reliability over two decades, Gary Doherty is a highly deserving nominee for the Unsung Hero award-recognising essential work that happens out of the spotlight.

Anthony Ferguson, Workshop Supervisor, UGL Transport

Anthony (Tony) Ferguson, Workshop Supervisor - Rivervale (WA) at UGL Transport – Rail & Technology Systems, brings more than 45 years of rail signalling and communications experience across Australia, the United Kingdom, and South Africa. He pairs globally informed expertise with a deep, long-standing commitment to Western Australia's heavy haul rail sector, particularly the Pilbara's remote, demanding environments that anchor Australia's export supply chains. For much of the past two decades, Tony has supported safety-critical rail systems in the Pilbara. First joining UGL's Port Hedland team in 2009, after several years he joined a major iron ore producer, playing a key role through organisational and operational reform while maintaining the reliability of a network central to the iron ore supply chain. In 2023, he returned to UGL's Rail & Technology Systems division as Workshop Supervisor, bringing international best practice and deep local insight.

He rejoined at a pivotal moment. The workshop faced significant challenges with a key customer due to historical technical and commercial issues, placing a critical contract at risk. Appointed in a technical supervisory capacity, Tony stepped beyond his remit to stabilise the relationship, implementing structured communication, addressing long-standing performance issues, and engaging constructively on commercial matters to reset expectations, rebuild trust, and restore confidence in delivery. Tony's influence extends well

AHHR

AUSTRALIAN HEAVY HAUL RAIL AWARDS

beyond immediate delivery. Widely respected across heavy haul rail, he is frequently sought by colleagues and industry peers for guidance. Through mentoring and knowledge transfer, he strengthens capability within UGL and across the sector. Though he never seeks the spotlight, he embodies the backbone of the industry: experienced, steady, solutions-focused, and quietly decisive. For sustained leadership, reliability, and sector-wide impact, Anthony (Tony) Ferguson is a highly deserving Unsung Hero.

Joanne Gordon, Project Controller, Wabtec Corporation

For many years now, Joanne Gordon has demonstrated exceptional commitment, professionalism, and heart; making a significant impact across customer engagement, industry presence, employee wellbeing and internal culture, all while excelling in her demanding core role as Project Controller. Her contributions extend far beyond her formal responsibilities and have been instrumental in strengthening Wabtec's reputation, relationships and organisational cohesion across the ANZ and SEA region. Jo has been the driving force behind Wabtec's participation in every major trade show and industry event throughout the year. Behind the scenes, Joanne manages the countless details most never see. Her work is often time-sensitive, complex and thankless, yet she approaches every challenge with positivity, calm determination and a simple philosophy: get the job done. Her ability to bring structure to ambiguity and align all stakeholders, has led to smoother planning, fewer last-minute crises and consistently elevated customer and team experiences.

Beyond external engagement, Jo is an active and influential member of Women of Wabtec. Her contributions have strengthened inclusion, connection and wellbeing across the organisation. She has supported International Women's Day celebrations, championed the Mother's Day Classic and led the 10,000 Step Challenge, an initiative that has now grown into a global Wabtec activity, connecting colleagues across regions. Across every initiative, Jo consistently demonstrates professionalism, collaboration and an unwavering commitment to Wabtec's success, often in her own time. While she works quietly behind the scenes, the success of many regional activities can be directly linked to her dedication, organisation and meticulous attention to detail. For her steadfast reliability, quiet excellence and meaningful impact that ensures Wabtec consistently shows up at its best, Joanne Gordon is a truly deserving Unsung Hero.

Scott Ohl, Service Manager - West, Plasser Australia

In heavy haul rail, where uptime is unforgiving and errors are costly, a few people quietly hold operations together. Scott Ohl, Service Manager for Western Australia at Plasser Australia, is one of them. He supports Rio Tinto, BHP, and Fortescue - clients who count on him when it matters most. Scott leads the WA field service team maintaining critical track maintenance equipment across the Pilbara and beyond. He pairs technical mastery with disciplined planning and rapid incident response, returning high-availability machines to service safely and efficiently, with clear communication and durable, root-cause fixes.

His drive to improve sets him apart. He developed an innovative split-wheel design for the measuring trolleys on Plasser tampers - a practical, field-born improvement now on trial with Rio Tinto and attracting international attention, with units headed to our parent company in Austria for evaluation. A Pilbara idea now tested globally speaks to his ingenuity. He also led resolution of a complex issue: repairing lower beams on satellite frames of 09-3X tamping machines. Working with colleagues in Austria and Sydney, he delivered a dedicated repair solution - with jigs and documented procedures, enabling safe, repeatable field execution and reducing

AHHR

AUSTRALIAN HEAVY HAUL RAIL AWARDS

downtime for Rio Tinto, BHP, and FMG. He mentors his team, performs under pressure, and keeps finding better ways. Scott doesn't seek recognition; he simply delivers. He is the definition of an Unsung Hero.

INDUSTRY CHAMPION

Celebrating an individual who has consistently championed the advancement of Australia's heavy haul rail industry through advocacy, mentorship, and unwavering dedication to sector excellence. This award honours those who have actively promoted industry growth, fostered collaboration, and inspired others to achieve their potential within heavy haul rail.

Daniel Cuddy, Engineering Manager, voestalpine Railway Systems Australia Pty Ltd

For more than two decades, Daniel Cuddy has driven advancement in Australia's heavy haul rail industry. He began at voestalpine Railway Systems Australia in 1998 as a mechanical design draftsman and, since 2018, has served as Engineering Manager. Across the turnout lifecycle -from design and manufacturing to installation and maintenance - he is a recognised authority. Technical mastery and a relentless drive for innovation have made him indispensable to the sector. Daniel is the trusted go-to expert for heavy haul turnouts, bringing unmatched knowledge, precision, and reliability to every project. Complex challenges are solved with confident analysis and creative engineering, delivering performance and durability when stakes are high.

As Engineering Manager, he leads a skilled team focused on customer-driven solutions that set benchmarks for safety, reliability, and efficiency. His leadership fosters collaboration and continuous improvement, converting expertise into results that strengthen Australia's heavy haul networks. Through the global Railway Systems network, he introduces best-in-world technology and proven international practice to Australian operations. A passionate mentor and educator, Daniel shares knowledge through training on turnout function, component identification, diagnostics, and root cause analysis. These sessions equip professionals to make informed decisions and maintain safe, high-performing infrastructure, elevating capability across the heavy haul rail community. Unwavering commitment to innovation, advocacy for best practice, and the ability to elevate those around him exemplify the qualities celebrated by the Industry Champion Award. Daniel's influence has advanced the sector, strengthened its future, and inspired professionals to strive for excellence - setting standards others aspire to reach.

Dean Newburn, Regional Vice President, Services – Asia Pacific, Wabtec Corporation

Dean Newburn has demonstrated unwavering commitment to advancing Australia's heavy haul rail sector through sustained leadership, operational excellence, and industry advocacy. With more than 20 years in rail, including significant roles at Wabtec, Knorr-Bremse, and UGL, his career spans critical heavy haul regions such as the Pilbara, the Hunter Valley, and international freight corridors. Dean's early engineering and supervisory roles in the Hunter Valley built the technical foundation that underpins his leadership today. As a Service Engineer and Field Service Supervisor with UGL, he supported locomotive operations for major freight customers in one of Australia's most vital supply chains, developing grounded insight that later enabled him to help implement Wabtec's first maintenance service agreement in Australia. His regular return visits to regional operations demonstrate sustained advocacy for frontline teams and capability uplift.

As Regional Vice President, Services – Asia Pacific at Wabtec, Dean leads freight service operations across Australia and the broader region, driving reliability improvement, rollingstock modernisation, adoption of

AHHR

AUSTRALIAN HEAVY HAUL RAIL AWARDS

advanced technologies, and long-term fleet transformation. His strategic and operational leadership directly enhances performance and future readiness across heavy haul rail. Dean is a recognised mentor and people-focused leader who champions workforce capability and inclusion through leadership of the Wabtec Diversity Council. He actively promotes rail careers, inspires emerging professionals, and supports initiatives aligned with ARA priorities, including decarbonisation, interoperability, and workforce uplift. Through sustained advocacy, collaborative delivery, and dedication to lifting both operational and social performance, Dean Newburn exemplifies the Industry Champion standard and is a highly deserving nominee.

Ben Senior, Engineering and Operations Manager, Swietelsky Rail Australia

Leadership in sustainability and social responsibility within heavy haul rail means converting operational scale into lasting positive impact. Ben Senior embodies this standard through strengthened plant maintenance capability, restored fleet reliability, and embedded systems and behaviours that deliver more efficient and sustainable operations. With two decades across rail infrastructure, rollingstock and heavy industry, he blends technical expertise with people-focused leadership to lift performance. Since joining Swietelsky Rail Australia (SRA) in 2024, Ben has returned the mechanised maintenance fleet to high performance, achieving greater than 95% reliability through accelerated maintenance, overhaul and upgrade programs. The uplift spans more than 27 machines, with Ben overseeing the overhaul, recommissioning or recovery of 22 assets. In 2024 he led major works on two ballast cleaners, sixteen material handling wagons, two tampers and two regulators, delivered through disciplined maintenance and component change-outs.

Reliability at scale has enabled large-scale ballast cleaning and reuse, cutting landfill, minimising truck movements and lowering emissions from disposal and replacement materials. Lifecycle planning and maintenance optimisation have extended asset life while reducing unplanned downtime, rework and repeat possessions. Ben modernised fleet governance by implementing the SWIEDRASS maintenance management application to plan, execute and document programs, strengthening compliance, visibility and long-term sustainability. Equally, Ben advances social responsibility. He advocates for safety, wellbeing and workforce capability, leads by example through volunteer leave, and mentors emerging leaders. By developing internal talent and supporting women entering heavy haul, he strengthens capability and inclusion across the industry.

Ksenija Stanic-Colic, Engineering Professional, BG&E

Ksenija Stanic Colic is an exceptional industry leader whose influence, innovation, and dedication have shaped Australia's heavy haul rail sector for more than two decades. With senior leadership experience across GM Rail, Roy Hill, BHP, Calibre, Sinosteel Midwest, and the Public Transport Authority, she has consistently delivered technical excellence across civil, track, and mechanical engineering disciplines. Her deep domain expertise, rigorous engineering standards, and sustained contribution make her a truly outstanding Industry Champion. Ksenija has played a pivotal role in defining heavy haul rail engineering standards and elevating performance across major mining rail operations. A proven leader of multidisciplinary teams, she drives technical improvements that translate into practical, measurable outcomes. Her work spans the full asset lifecycle—from design and construction through to maintenance, reliability, and operational optimisation—anchored in disciplined engineering and a steadfast commitment to safety and reliability.



At BHP, where she held roles ranging from Lead Track and Civil Engineer to Superintendent of Engineering, Reliability and Track Maintenance, Ksenija demonstrated long-term, hands-on leadership in some of the world's most complex heavy haul rail environments. She strengthened asset reliability, refined maintenance strategies, and advanced operational practices capable of withstanding demanding axle loads, harsh climate conditions, and stringent availability requirements. Across Western Australia, Ksenija's contributions continue to support safe, efficient, and high-performing rail operations. She fosters a culture of excellence grounded in evidence-based decision-making and disciplined engineering practice. Colleagues and industry partners look to her for clarity, precision, and solutions that deliver lasting value. By consistently setting high standards and delivering sustained improvement, Ksenija exemplifies the qualities celebrated by the Industry Champion Award—driving the sector forward and inspiring others to reach new benchmarks in heavy haul rail engineering.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Honouring the distinguished career of an industry pioneer whose sustained excellence, transformative influence, and enduring impact have helped define and advance Australia's heavy haul rail sector over decades of dedicated service. This award recognises an individual whose legacy continues to shape the industry's future.

The Lifetime Achievement winner will be honoured at the Heavy Haul Rail Conference Dinner dinner—stay tuned!