

New benchmarks for rail incident investigators to improve rail safety

September 9 2014



CARRS-Q safety expert Professor Bert Biggs.

Rail safety will be improved across Australia as operators move to adopt the first national benchmarks to ensure the competency of rail incident investigators.

Professor Bert Biggs, from QUT's Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q), who led the development of a national curriculum for rail incident investigators, said the industry had been lacking an accepted standard of minimal training to perform rail incident investigations.

"Although several courses are currently available, none offer the baseline breadth of development required for a comprehensive career pathway in incident investigation in Australia, and as such the [competency](#) of investigators varies considerably," Professor Biggs said.

Professor Biggs, with co-authors Dr Tamara Banks and Nathan Dovan, presented the paper, "Training Needs Research Applied to the Development of a Standardised Incident Investigator Training Framework," at the 5th International Conference on Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics in Krakow, Poland recently.

Professor Biggs said the role of a rail investigator differed across operators and states, ranging from minor incidents to major crashes causing death.

"Rail incident investigators are involved in incidents such as misaligned station platform stops, signals passed at danger, through to major incidents including the Granville and Waterfall disasters," he said.

"For too long we have had a varied level of training within the rail industry for rail incident investigators, but this will hopefully change with the introduction of a national curriculum to be delivered through standardised training."

This training will be delivered by specialised training organisations.

Professor Biggs said the introduction of benchmarks for rail incident investigations would ultimately improve rail safety.

"With an Australasian standard, we can now be confident in the knowledge that our rail incident investigators, whether they are servicing our passenger, freight, commercial or leisure networks, all have the same skills and have all been trained to a set of minimum standards," he said.

Professor Biggs said minimum [training](#) standards was also about offering greater mobility for the rail incident investigator workforce.

"There is no longer a concern that crossing the state border means a change in skills required," he said.

He said the national curriculum included 10 essential competencies such as knowledge of the legislation, regulations, policies and procedures relating to gathering and managing evidence.

"It is about making sure the performance of investigators meets an accepted benchmark and that the industry is providing these skills to their staff," Professor Biggs said.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

Citation: New benchmarks for rail incident investigators to improve rail safety (2014, September 9) retrieved 4 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-09-benchmarks-rail-incident-safety.html>

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