

Enhancing Rail Network Performance and Governance

Improving the efficiency, transparency and reliability of rail networks through better maintenance oversight and operational protocols



LOCATION

Queensland

CLIENTS

Rail Infrastructure Group (RIG)
Cross River Rail Delivery Authority

REGULATORY ECONOMICS

PUBLIC POLICY

Background

Rail network performance is critical to the efficiency of Australia's freight supply chains, particularly in high-volume corridors such as the Central Queensland Coal Network and metropolitan passenger networks impacted by major infrastructure projects. Across both contexts, stakeholders face challenges in balancing operational reliability, cost efficiency and access for multiple users.

On the Central Queensland Coal Network, rail users required greater transparency and assurance that significant annual maintenance and renewals investments by the below-rail operator were efficient, effective and aligned with industry needs. Similarly, in South East Queensland, the delivery of the Cross River Rail (CRR) project introduced extended network possessions, creating disruptions for freight operators and highlighting limitations in existing planning and communication protocols.

To address these challenges, industry and government agencies sought independent, evidence-based advice to improve decision-making, strengthen governance frameworks and minimise operational impacts on freight and supply chains.

Our role

NineSquared was engaged across both contexts to provide independent economic and operational expertise to improve rail network performance and decision-making.

As expert advisor to the Rail Infrastructure Group (RIG), NineSquared reviews Aurizon's annual maintenance and renewals programs—valued at over \$400 million per year—and provides advice to rail users on whether proposed strategies should be approved. The role involved detailed analysis of network performance data, including temporary speed restrictions, closures and capacity constraints, to assess whether investment programs were efficient and aligned with network needs.

To help achieve these aims the engagement has focused on improving the quality and transparency of information provided to industry. This has included driving enhancements in reporting frameworks, performance metrics, procurement approaches and internal business case development, enabling more informed decision-making and stronger accountability across the network.

Complementing this work, NineSquared supported the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority to assess the impacts of extended network possessions on freight operators. This involved analysing both direct and indirect impacts, undertaking a jurisdictional review of how other Rail Infrastructure Managers plan and manage possessions, and identifying opportunities to improve protocols.

Through targeted engagement with freight operators, regulators and infrastructure managers, NineSquared developed practical, evidence-based recommendations to improve possession planning, coordination and communication. These recommendations led to the implementation of enhanced protocols that better balance the needs of major infrastructure delivery with ongoing freight operations, with positive feedback from industry stakeholders.

Across both engagements, NineSquared delivered a consistent focus on understanding the requirements of the rail industry, strengthening governance, improving transparency and aligning operational decisions with the needs of end users—supporting more reliable and efficient rail networks.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, find one of our experts at ninesquared.com.au/people