

Chairman's Message

Recently the RTSA successfully completed an *Eminent Speaker Program*. As part of the program, Mr Ed Zsombor from the Rail Projects Saskatchewan Highway & Transport Agency travelled to five States in Australia and presented his successful experience with Shortline Railway Operations in Canada. During these visits Mr Zsombor also met with several local, State and Federal government representatives and policy makers, who expressed much interest in the successful transformation of Shortline Railway Operations in Canada.

Mr Paul Neville MP who participated in a symposium organised by the RTSA on *Future Frameworks for Regional Rail*, another successful event held in February 2007 in Wagga Wagga New South Wales, invited Mr Zsombor (who was also the keynote speaker at the symposium) and RTSA Government Relations Chairman, Mr Andrew Honan, to appear at a special public hearing of the parliamentary inquiry *Integration of Regional Rail and Roads and their Interface to Ports*. The RTSA recommended to the inquiry that consideration be given to the Canadian model, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the model for adaptation to Australian regions. It was heartening to note that Mr Neville, the inquiry chairman, publicly acknowledged that the inquiry report previously lacked in regional rail related issues and was grateful for the RTSA's symposium on Future Frameworks for Regional Rail and the presentation at the symposium by Mr Zsombor.

RTSA's next major events will be a series of *Symposiums on Professional Development*. The main purpose of these symposiums will be to identify strengths and weaknesses of various Professional Development Programs offered within the railway industry. It is expected that these forums, apart from being a knowledge sharing platform, will also facilitate mechanisms to improve current Professional Development Programs offered by various organizations to the industry. These symposiums will initially be held in Melbourne and Sydney and are aimed at complementing and enhancing events in existing graduate training programs which are offered within the railway industry.

Industry wide improvements in the Professional Development Programs are expected to differentiate the rail industry as a progressive industry. It will also improve the standing of those professionals who are participating in these programs.

In the long term, a structured framework to support the development of professionals will address some of the skills shortage issues faced by the railway industry through talent attraction, retention and identification. It is important that professional development activities, while assisting young members to gain competencies that match those of mature professionals, also aid experienced professionals to attain recognition for competencies gained. External benchmarking for professional formation and recognition should be a critical element of the Professional Development Programs. The benefits of a common independent assessment of the competencies gained during the professional development activities will also be explored, as part of the symposium.

In addition, RTSA Chapters have arranged several technical meetings and field visits in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia (refer to page 13). Participation in these events presents valuable Continuing Professional Development opportunities to maintain technical skills, expertise and knowledge.

Ravi Ravitharan

**National Chairman
Railway Technical Society of Australasia**



Ed Zsombor, Director of Rail Projects, Saskatchewan Highway and Transport Agency, Canada at the successful RTSA Future Frameworks for Regional Rail symposium at Wagga Wagga. (See articles on pages 3 and 5.)

Rail Horizons

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Point of View

Max Michell

One of life's little surprises turned up during February. No, not one of those surprises, but rather Information Paper 57 from the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (BTRE) – "Filling a gap in rail data: an investigation of the Gheringhap Loop train sightings".

Back in June 2006 I wrote about the alarming lack of rail activity data now available following the, in some respects, ideologically accelerated privatisation of most of the rail freight business in this country. In the general haste to implement 'competition policy' the previous government owners concentrated on the sale of the physical assets and paid little or no attention to the longer term information, advice and policy implications attached to them. So now, while rail freight activity can readily be observed track-side, nowhere is there any adequate global data on what is going on.

How can governments create policy when there is no data? Can AusLink seriously be expected to provide a balanced view of land transport when a large chunk

is a data free industry? Can the ACCC really be expected to understand and manage competition issues involving rail when there is no data to back up their deliberations? As the BTRE paper observes "The lack of detailed and timely rail freight data is a significant issue for BTRE in its role of providing information and advice to government."

America may be the centre of many undesirable attributes but a common sense approach to rail freight reporting and regulation are not among these. Maybe, having been the driving force behind 'capitalism' since the year dot, they have a commercial maturity that we can only dream about. Maybe they are less tolerant of the mealy-mouthed 'commercial in confidence' excuses for ducking reasonable reporting requirements. Maybe they are just more pragmatic about commercial life. Maybe their governments have a greater desire for knowledge of the underlying facts to support their governance.

In the not too distant past it was possible to 'see' something of the rail freight activity in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia from the reporting of their American owners. The difficulty was that the data was provided in America but not Australia. Reporting was by wagon loads (well, actually car loads in their vernacular) and was across a reasonable commodity break-up. Now that the American Regionals have largely departed this country the sun has set on any semblance of useful and timely data that is not circumscribed with confidentiality restrictions.

For a long time the more visionary among our lot have argued that the data vacuum and its attached cute 'commercial in confidence' justification is a nonsense – anyone can observe the passing parade of freight trains from beside the track any day and interpret a good deal of what is going on. Now the BTRE have highlighted this as a practical issue in the absence of any regulatory or legislated requirement for the rail operators to do so.

Graham Elliott lives beside the track at Gheringhap, a few kilometres west of Geelong in Victoria. For his own interest he has video recorded the passage of trains, both standard gauge (on the Melbourne – Adelaide route) and broad gauge (on the Geelong – Ballarat – Mildura route) for several years now and has collated his observations into spreadsheet tabulations. These have been the basis for local reporting in various enthusiast and rail magazines for some years. Their worth as a substitute for properly generated industry data has now been validated by no less than the BTRE. The only difficulty is that this approach has a number of limitations (for instance in deriving net and/or gross tonnes of trains), and

involves another layer of collection complexity that should not be necessary.

Why should we even care if rail freight companies report their activity? Well, for a start there is the basic usefulness of industry wide data – how can we realistically present an industry as part of the economic engine-house of the nation if that industry’s activity is cloaked in anonymity. “We are important to the nation, but you will have to believe us because we haven’t any facts to back us up”. John Anderson, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, once observed “we need the rail industry to give us the data to help us to help you”. It would seem by our actions that we aren’t all that enthusiastic about helping ourselves.

There are two avenues to better rail freight data. The first is for governments to legislate or regulate to get the required data. As anyone who has had to put up with eight regulatory regimes will attest the bureaucratic mess that would be likely to come from this could be a nightmare of significant proportions. The second is for the industry to agree among itself (presumably through its industry body, the ARA) to provide a level of data that will satisfy the basic data needs of various users while retaining a level of commercial sensitivity, coupled with efficiency in data collection and delivery. The latter would be by far the best outcome, but given a level of quite dysfunctional behavior on the part of some major players in the industry, it is hard to imagine that this will happen. In fact it would not be unfair to suggest that it would NOT be in the interests of some of our large compatriots to assist in anyway in the provision of industry data, lest it should weaken their ability to run things the way they want to. So realistically provision of rail freight data will probably have to be through some sort of government level coercion if it is to happen at all, and this may in itself be a hard ask unless the states are willing to cede responsibility to the Commonwealth for this, or the Commonwealth can find some other constitutional power to back its authority. None of the states seem to have the interest, or in fact the competence, to carry this issue on their own.

It seems to me the basic data we need is perhaps a little more advanced than the Americans ‘by the wagon load’ measure – after all computers have been invented and infused into every corner of life in the interim. The great plus for computers is that they can do a lot of hack work in short time (but don’t let them make ‘decisions’, as some banks have found out to their cost) and therefore it is reasonable to look for a simple set of 21st century data that will not breach anyone’s *real* commercial sensitivities.

Such data should include higher level activity measures such as

- Net tonnes by high level commodity break-out
- Gross tonnes
- Net tonne kms and
- Numbers of trains

as a starting point.

It is entirely within the capability of the rail industry to start debating this issue in their higher level industry forums. However given our existing reluctance to reveal anything useful maybe the various policy, regulatory and other governance authorities, all of whom have a vested interest in valid and useful transport data, need to get a lot more vocal on this topic, although if they do so it will almost certainly result in a ‘top down’ imposition for data. As long as we continue with to regard the provision of useful freight activity data as ‘dark territory’ there will continue to be judgemental decisions by government, and to some extent the community, that will do nothing for rail at all. Now that the BTRE have belled the cat it is more important that the rail industry rise from its data torpor and try and direct the addenda to everyone’s benefit.

BTRE Information Paper 57 is available for download from the BTRE web site at www.btre.gov.au

Government Relations Committee

Eminent Speaker Tour

The various RTSA State Chapters were able to secure meetings with Ed Zsombor and government officials early February, to explain in detail the Canadian model for Shortlines.

The meetings and contacts included::

Sydney 29 January 2007

Accompanied by RTSA: Andrew Honan, Bill Laidlaw
John Watsford, Ian Gray

- Morgan Noon, Logistics Manager, Sydney Ports Corporation
- Bruce Farrar, CEO, Rail Infrastructure Corporation
- Tim Hurst, A/Policy Manager, Economic Development Branch, The Cabinet Office

- Kim Garvey, Principal Advisor, Transport Branch, Resources and Budget Directorate, NSW Treasury
- Helen Fitzgerald, A/Director, Rail and Freight Policy, NSW Ministry of Transport
- Paul Gaynor, Principal Policy Officer, Rail Network Policy, NSW Ministry of Transport

Perth Monday 5 February 2007

With RTSA: John Goodall

- Bryant Roberts, Director, Freight and Logistics Transport Industry Policy Division, Department of Planning and Infrastructure
- Paul Hamersley, Freight Logistics Policy Advisor, Transport Industry Policy Division, Department of Planning and Infrastructure
- Roy Johnson, Freight Logistics Policy Advisor, Transport Industry Policy Division, Department of Planning and Infrastructure
- John Georgiades, Freight and Logistics Advisor, Transport Industry Policy Division, Department of Planning and Infrastructure

Adelaide 6 February 2007

With RTSA: Duncan McLeod

- Mark Williams, Manager Rail Policy and Investment, Rex Phillips, Daniel Martucci, Transport Planning Division, Department for Transport Energy and Infrastructure, South Australian Government.

Melbourne 7 February 2007

With RTSA: Martin Baggott

- Russell Smith, Transport Economist, Department of Infrastructure, Freight Logistics & Marine Division

Ed Zsombor and I were also invited to appear at special public hearing of the parliamentary inquiry 'Integration of Regional Rail and Roads and their Interface to Ports' on 14 February 2007.

The RTSA recommended to the inquiry that consideration be given to the Canadian model, recognizing the strengths and weakness of the model for adaptation to Australian regions.

I was particularly encouraged by the public comment Paul Neville made: that he believed their report hitherto lacked regional rail strength and was grateful for the benefit of the symposium and Ed Zsombor.

The RTSA is particularly pleased that policy makers in mainland capital cities and at the federal level had an opportunity to learn of the Canadian Shortline experience.

The inquiry's report should be out in late March or early April, and we await its release with eager anticipation!

Thanks to State Chapter chairs for arranging meetings between officials and Ed Zsombor.

NSW PPP

Since last report the NSW government announced the \$3.6B PPP rolling stock program.

Some members expressed concern at the low level of local manufacturing (20%) prescribed for this contract, in particular the extent of 'elaborately transformed' manufacturing.

The RTSA wrote to the NSW Government stating "RTSA believes that local content with higher level of intellect would improve Australia's engineering and trades capability." As such the RTSA wanted to see increased technology introduced into local rail manufacturing and a viable rolling stock capability.

There are some important considerations in determining State and Commonwealth influence on manufacturing capability and the role of the PPP contract:

- The PPP contract is of historic value; its general impact on the rail sector and labour markets will be very significant
- The State Government has a responsibility to maximise value to tax payers. Keeping rolling stock units cost down will maximise value to commuters and improve public transport service, delivering welfare to the community. Overall this will be of benefit to rail (but not necessarily rolling stock manufacturing)
- Notwithstanding the importance of industry policy to Australia's future prosperity, macro policies such as tariffs, skills development, innovation, R&D and export facilitation programmes are largely in the domain of the Commonwealth Government. It was felt that there was little capacity for the State Government to influence development of a rolling stock industry other than through targeted programs such as local content.

Overall the RTSA commended the project.

NTC and a One-Stop Shop for Rail Regulation

At a recent Rail Safety Conference (19 Feb 2007) the National Transport Commission Chief Executive questioned the need for a single rail regulator, and believed the NTC was achieving significant benefits by making State laws consistent with each other (using recent rail inter-government agreements).

Although the National Accreditation Package has been on-going for some years, the announcement that the NTC is backing away from a single regulator came as a surprise.

This was in contrast to a strong industry statement by Robert Jeremy of Toll Holdings in 2000 (House of Rep Standing Com. on Communications and Transport), "The

resounding view from industry was that it wanted a single regulatory framework with a single regulator". Similarly, Booz Allen Hamilton's 1999 review of rail safety recommended a single national accreditation authority (p. III-7).

Some recent research from BTRE (R114 Optimising Harmonisation in the Australian Railway Industry) also discusses this topic.

This safety regulation has effectively taken eight years (1999-2007). Further rail reform will have to be more progressive to meet the 'Twice the Task' challenge.

The NTC questions whether it can add value, by promoting a single rail regulator. The RTSA will seek discussions with the ARA; if the rail industry's view has changed on the one-stop shop notion and that inter-jurisdictional barriers related to safety regulations are insignificant - the alternative is for the NTC to develop further capability and understanding of rail.

Given the comments by Ed Zsombor on the Canadian shortline safety framework (use of guidelines), we will also seek ARA's view on regional rail safety and how the NTC framework would be in the interests of a viable regional rail system. The NTC appears not to have identified regional rail in any safety impact statements.

AusLink Mk II

On 7 March 2007 at the ABARE (Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resources Economics) Conference the Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Mark Vaile, announced some arrangements for the next round of AusLink funding - AusLink 2.

Significantly it will involve:

- Greater funding than the original AusLink program (although details of relative funding between rail and road is not available)
- Involvement of DOTARS in generating the costs of the projects,
- Stronger tied contributions of State and Territory funds to projects,
- Caps on Australian Government funding on each project.

The involvement of DOTARS in costing signals a more hands-on approach during project assessment. Obviously there has been criticism that project estimates were not reliable. With stronger measures that tie States into funding and with Australian Government caps, inefficiencies in project execution will increasingly fall on the States.

It is hoped that the DOTARS involvement may also see a stronger leadership role and focus in the planning phases of the AusLink projects.

Ipswich to Springfield

Currently phase 2 of Ipswich to Springfield Public Transport Corridor Study is underway by the Queensland Government. The preferred corridor has been selected and an Environmental Impact Statement is being conducted from now until July 2007. Information on the study is available at <http://www.pb.com.au/isptcs/>.

I urge all those interested, to spend time to reviewing the proposals and support the public transport option. There is some local debate as to the impacts of noise and the benefits of public transport as opposed to private motor vehicle. The RTSA hopes to review the draft EIS within the weeks ahead.

Stop Snivelling....the future is our hands

by Mark Carter

Those of us that were fortunate enough to attend the recent RTSA sponsored Future Frameworks for Regional Rail symposium were entertained by a remarkable individual. A successful one-man campaign has been waged, albeit from within the halls of public office, to ensure that in his home state of Saskatchewan (Canada), a substantial part of the rural rail network has been retained when threatened with closure.

Attendees at the symposium were an eclectic mix. There were the farmers and rural local government representatives still clinging to their agrarian socialist dreams of unlimited government funding for road and rail. There were rural manufacturers who were happy to tell it like it is and why they had switched from road to rail; conveniently omitting to acknowledge the indirect transport subsidy they now receive by reducing rural roads to rubble.

There were also those that wanted their passenger services returned no matter what the cost. There were economic rationalists, assorted dreamers and a few jaded radicals such as myself, who feel we have been banging our heads against a brick wall for far too long...but hey, what's one more brick wall?

And then there was Ed,

Ed Zsombor is employed as Director of Rail Projects within the Saskatchewan Highway and Transport Agency. The position covers an array of responsibilities; from advice on establishing a new short line railway, through to grant approvals and safety regulation and inspection. A portfolio that would require a small army in Australia, is covered by just Ed and three staff.

One of the more entertaining, or telling, parts of Ed's presentation covered the 'enlightened', though some would say 'cavalier', approach in Saskatchewan to regulation and safety.

In fact shortlines in that province do not operate under regulations, but rather under a set of suggested guidelines

tailored for each individual operation according to circumstances. This contrasts starkly with the 'one size fits all' over regulation the industry has to endure here in Australia that appears to be slowly strangling the life out of a resurgent rail industry.

Zsombor applies the common-sense approach to his trade, whereby each situation is assessed on its merits. This also applies to engineering standards. While visiting some of our branch lines in NSW, he was amazed to find that compared to his shortlines, ours were in much better condition. Where many branches in NSW, and around Australia, are restricted to 19 tonne axle loads or less, 27.5 tonnes is the standard achieved in Saskatchewan on much lesser infrastructure – though obviously at reduced speeds.

The Canadian experience has been helped by a Federally legislated abandonment process for those branch lines still under the control of the major operators, which unlike Australia, clearly provides a process whereby alternative operators and owners can be found for tracks that no longer interest the big players. However, the larger operators still earn revenue from completing the main line haul to the port. Zsombor is quick to admit that his commonsense approach has not been adopted so readily by the other Canadian provinces, which have adopted the Federal regulatory model for their shortlines. For those that might be critical of Zsombor's approach to safety, it is worth nothing that he employs a number of strategies in relation to school education programmes and level crossings safety that are way in front of those practised in Australia

Ed's advice to many of those he has encountered on his trip to Australia has been a jovial, "Stop Snivelling."

He says, "We can ill afford to waste useful assets and getting rid of a railway is an irreversible process. The Saskatchewan shortline programme has taken 1.9 million tonnes per annum of the road system and is estimated to save farmers up to \$10 million a year in transport costs. In addition, around \$300 million has been invested in the shortlines over the last decade with obvious flow on effects to the communities through which they pass.

It's definitely not 'rocket science' as Ed kept reminding us, but even with plenty of vision, it is hard to see where the shift in mindset in Australia is going to come from to bring about a change in the way we view our rural rail assets.

It is only logical to accept that not every branch line can be saved, but there is an urgent need for a greater effort on the part of government at all levels, especially locally, by train operators and by the bulk handling authorities to ensure that alternative strategies are considered for the development and retention of a rural rail network in Australia.

This article was originally published in the February 2007 edition of LLDCN Rail Express

Rail CRC Updates

THE recently approved new Rail CRC (Cooperative Research Centre) has kicked off its new life with the Interim Board meeting to shape the next seven years of cutting edge research.

At an earlier core participants' meeting, held in Canberra in January, current Rail CRC CEO Prof Dudley Roach was appointed as interim CEO.

"The new CRC will work with the participants to develop a suite of research projects that aim to make a real difference to the way that railways do business, exploit technology and manage their operations for least impact on the environment, while improving safety in all areas," Prof Roach said.

The new Rail CRC was one of 14 successful CRCs to bid for the new round of Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centre Programme funding with \$21 million promised to rail. The Australian rail industry will also contribute significantly, to bring the new Centre's seven-year research budget to more than \$105 million.

- Rail CRC research has established the suitability of an innovative technique to transform softwood into timber suitable for railway sleepers. The Rail CRC research project was led by Queensland University of Technology Faculty of Built Environment & Engineering senior lecturer Dr Martin Murray, and has been developed in conjunction with the CRC for Wood Innovations, based at Swinburne University of Technology, near Melbourne.

Rail CRC Project Manager and principal of John Hearsch Consulting, John Hearsch, said the project team had completed a series of tests, which had proved the technical suitability of softwood timber for rail sleepers.

"Using softwood timber for railway sleepers is something that hasn't been applied in Australia previously. The major benefit is the ongoing supply of softwood grown in plantations. The ongoing supply of durable hardwood – generally from old-growth forests – is becoming more and more problematic for the rail industry.

"High volume rail network traffic areas generally now use concrete sleepers, but they are almost double the initial cost of hardwood timber and require a much greater depth of clean ballast under the sleepers. "This makes them simply not viable for use on the extensive, but more lightly used secondary rail network, predominantly used by the grain industry.

"This project has a lot to do with the survival of the secondary rail network across Australia, particularly in grain-growing areas," Mr Hearsch said.

- An innovative aeronautical engineering technique has been adapted to strengthen rail bridges potentially saving the rail industry millions of dollars.

The Cooperative Research Centre for Railway Engineering and Technologies (Rail CRC) project, led by Monash University's Professor Rhys Jones and managed by Australian Rail Track Corporation's (ARTC) Wayne Potter, developed a methodology to strengthen rail bridges using carbon composite reinforcing plates attached with a super high-strength glue, rather than the traditional welding of steel doubler-plates.

Mr Potter said gluing the carbon composite doublers resulted in no down-time for trains.

"You don't have to wait for a large window of track-time to employ this method", Mr Potter said. "It's a lot easier and far quicker just to glue these new plates on.

"As far as we know, it's a world first to use this aerospace technique on steel rail bridges. A similar method has been used in the aeronautical industry for 25 years – there are huge stresses involved in aircraft structures, and the plates and gluing method have not failed to date.

Mr Potter said the carbon composite plate reinforcement technique was used to increase the load carrying capacity of the bridge, and also to allow trains to operate at higher speeds. "The technique rejuvenates bridges that would otherwise be condemned and have to be replaced," Mr Potter said.

- Rail CRC research has developed improved wheel-steel that could significantly reduce maintenance costs for rolling stock owners and operators.

Queensland Rail Mechanical Engineer Structural and Rail CRC Project Manager Tim Constable said that the improved material potentially offered several major benefits for the Australian rail industry.

Mr Constable said the project research team, based at Monash University and led by Dr Bernard Chen and researcher Hung Nien Kha, had recently developed an alternate manufacturing process to allow compressive residual stresses in wheel rims to be achieved using new alloy steels.

The compressive residual stresses improve the wheels' ability to resist surface defects, and are considered an important safety feature.

These compressive residual stresses are currently achieved using the existing steels, but because of differences in the metallurgy of the new steels, compressive residual stresses were previously unachievable with existing manufacturing procedures.

"We believe we have overcome this and other major barriers, making the process potentially suitable for commercialisation," Mr Constable said. "We have found

a solution to issues that to my knowledge haven't been solved before in the rail industry.

Mr Constable said the next step for the project involved full-size experimental testing to validate the results of the Monash modelling work, and to trial the proposed new manufacturing process to determine whether the full scale wheels would behave as the model predicted. The team will work with industry partners towards commercialisation of the technology.

Enough is Enough: Level Crossing Fatalities Must Stop

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has said that the unnecessary tragic loss of lives could be preventable if road users obeyed the road rules while using level crossings.

The comments were made following another level crossing incident on Saturday 10 March when a truck carting hay was involved in a collision with an empty Pacific National grain train near Forbes in NSW.

The driver of the truck was killed in the incident and the loco crew suffered minor injuries. The three train locomotives are likely to be written off as a result of damage from fire following the collision.

The ARA says this is the fourth major accident in the last twelve months involving a heavy vehicle.

Even though railway level crossing accidents are of low frequency when compared to road accidents, they have the potential to cause catastrophic damage.

Furthermore, the derailment of locomotives and train carriages causes significant network delays and damages in excess of tens of millions of dollars every time.

"Do we have to wait until there is a collision between a heavy vehicle and a passenger train causing multiple fatalities before we get road authorities to take the matter seriously?" asked Mr Bryan Nye, Chief Executive Officer of the Australasian Railway Association (ARA).

"It is now time for Governments and those responsible for level crossing safety, such as enforcement agencies and road safety authorities to consider this problem as one of their priorities and take positive steps to solve it," continued Mr Nye.

"Police and road traffic authorities around the country need to stop showing a blatant disregard for the issue of railway level crossing safety. These people need to step up and show they care by taking action." Mr Nye said. It is also time for the trucking industry to start educating their drivers of the danger of illegal driving behaviour at level crossings.

"The rail industry is taking active steps in reducing the risk, decreasing the number of accidents and promoting safety at railway level crossings," said Mr Nye. "Our goal

is to have zero accidents at crossings, and we are working diligently to achieve this goal.”

Trains cannot stop quickly and cannot get out of the way to avoid vehicles. It is the time this message is made perfectly clear by the Road Safety Authorities to all drivers before we face a calamity.

ARTC North South Works Gain Momentum

North Coast Crossing Loops

Work commenced in February this year on the extension of the crossing loop at Braunstone, south of Grafton and the building of a new crossing loop at Namoon, just north of Casino. The existing 894 metre crossing loop at Braunstone will be extended to 1500 metres while at Namoon the construction of a new 1500m loop will involve the existing Main line being used as the loop with a new section of Main line to be constructed on the western side of the rail corridor. Both projects are scheduled for completion in July and are part of larger programme over the next three years which will see 4 new 1500m crossing loops built, extension of 10 existing crossing loops to 1500m and upgrading of 18 existing 1500 metre loops to allow for higher entry and exit speeds.

Muswellbrook Capacity Improvement

A \$10.5 million project has been approved for capacity improvements in the Muswellbrook area yard to enable the Hunter Valley rail network to handle projected increases in coal haulage. The works will include improvements to the junction between the Ulan and Main North lines, extension of the existing crossing loop to 1800m and new signalling infrastructure, new track work and improvements to the existing goods siding. Approximately 15 million tonnes of coal presently passes through Muswellbrook a year and significant growth is expected as new mines on the Ulan line and in the Gunnedah basin commence production.

Junee to Melbourne Passing Lanes

Between Wagga Wagga and Albury, the Southern Improvement Alliance (SIA) has commenced earthworks, service and drainage works on four of the seven-kilometre long passing lanes on the Sydney to Melbourne rail line. The four sites are located at Gerogery, Culcairn, Yerong Creek and Uranquinty. Over the next 2 years the SIA will construct a total of 17 new passing lanes between Junee and Melbourne.

Train Control Consolidation

As part of its lease of the New South Wales interstate and Hunter Valley networks, ARTC committed to a significant three year program of Train Control Consolidation (TCC) throughout New South Wales with the aim of maximising the efficiency and safety of the rail network.

The TCC project comprises an integrated program of change, incorporating physical infrastructure improvements, introduction of new train control systems and changes in the way in which train control is structured.

The first four ARTC Network Control Boards in NSW, covering the corridor between Newcastle and Werris Creek, were established in late 2006, with all signalling functions over this section now controlled from the newly established Broadmeadow Network Control Centre.

In January this year, ARTC commissioned the first stage of its Main South TCC project with the automation of the signalling systems at Picton and Tahmoor and their operations moved to the Network Control Centre South (NCCS) at Junee. Subsequently, manual signal boxes at Exeter, Bundanoon and Wingello have been incorporated into the NCCS and major works in late March/ early April over Easter will see the consolidation of manual signalling at Cootamundra, Junee, Wallendbeen, Harden and Stockinbingal to the NCCS.



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19 March 2007.

Railway Technical Society of Australasia

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Dear RTSA Member,

Recently, some of you will have received a survey questionnaire sent by Mr Grahame Ginn of Engineers Australia (EA). The principal objective of the survey was to ascertain the structure of RTSA membership and to gain a perspective from practising professional engineers who are members of RTSA (but not members of EA) regarding their responses to a suggestion that practising engineers in all technical societies should become members of EA.

Accordingly, the distribution of the questionnaire was selective in-so-much-as it was not dispatched to RTSA members who currently hold EA membership, RTSA members whose EA membership has lapsed, RTSA members who are over 65 and/or are not resident in Australia and RTSA members whose email address is invalid or who have no email address.

For your feedback, the results were:

From a total RTSA membership of 925, 623 members of the RTSA are already members of Engineers Australia and given the above distribution methodology the questionnaire was thus distributed to 130 members, of which 83 have returned a response, 38 being Professional Engineers and 45 who are not in that category.

Of the 38 Professional Engineers, two advised that they may join EA if the requirement for EA membership is introduced. All of the others have confirmed that they would not join EA in the event of the introduction of the requirement. 72 of the respondents indicated that they would consider leaving the RTSA if they had to become members of EA also.

In the context of the survey, EA is engaging in discussions with RTSA regarding the position associated with new members of the RTSA. EA has been requested therefore to submit its proposal formally and, thereafter, the topic will be given appropriate consideration by the RTSA Executives.

Please be re-assured that RTSA Executives will seek to promote the best interests of RTSA members when making its deliberations. You will be kept advised of developments.

If you have any queries please direct them initially to the RTSA Executive Secretary, Mr. John Dring, whose postal address is; 19 Bartlett Drive, Novar Gardens, South Australia 5040, or email dring@bigpond.net.au.

Yours sincerely,

Ravi Ravitharan
Executive Chairman.

RTSA Chapter Reports

Victoria and Tasmania

After a hectic 2006 our Victorian Chapter has got off to a flying start with the very entertaining and controversial Ed Zombor as the Eminent Speaker. Our Victorian reaction was somewhat guarded, with concerns about the level of safety, and in our case with open access where multiple operators would use the infrastructure. But nevertheless he brought a new business model which incorporated much greater local involvement and commitment. This has been lacking in our model, which has been dominated by centralised rule making and a monopoly operator with its own commercial imperatives. There is room for more local involvement.

On Thursday 23rd March Harry Roberts from Maunsell gave a presentation on "Investing in Rail Infrastructure" which was very well attended and set out the framework for investment, projects that will be emerging and some of the imperatives to keep the infrastructure up to date. Thanks Harry.

We have a full program continuing in April where we will have a joint meeting with the Young Engineers Group. We are looking forward to matching our agenda's and being familiar with YEA needs and aspirations. With any luck some YEAs will find rail engineering attractive. We need all the help we can get at the moment with such a drastic shortage of engineers!!

In May our Annual Dinner will feature the CEO of VLine Passenger, Rob Barnett, who will speak about the expanding VLine service and the success of the Regional Fast Rail initiative.

Later on in the year we will enjoy presentations on the Dandenong Rail Corridor, Public Transport Safety and a site visit to a rail maintenance facility. We will also be trying the Innovations Seminar format, so successfully held last year.

By the time you read this I hope it is reported that Victoria has finally taken back the regional tracks and that ARTC is converting the NE Broad Gauge Line to standard gauge, a common sense solution that has been so long in the making that it puts the Great Wall of China into obscurity.

Martin Baggott, Chapter Chair



Western Australia

The 2007 program of technical presentations and other activities for the WA Chapter has been developed and this provides for eight technical meetings and one site visit although this may change as the scheduled events are planned in more detail.

Together with the other chapters the WA Chapter was host for the 2007 Eminent Speaker, Mr Ed Zsombor from Canada. This took place on Monday 5 February several days after his presentation at the Symposium addressing Future Frameworks for Regional Rail in Wagga Wagga. Mr Zsombor provided a view on the operation of short haul railways in Canada and left over 40 attendees at the Perth presentation with alternative options for these minor railways.

During his visit to Perth Mr Zsombor was able to have a brief look at the progress of the Southern Suburbs Railway project linking Perth and Mandurah and the Cooperative Bulk Handling installation at Kwinana.

The Southern Suburbs Railway is now nearing completion with driver training planned to commence in March and opening for service in July 2007.

A presentation titled "Australasian Rail; Can We Cope?" is planned for 8 March. This meeting will be delivered by Mr David Ratcliffe, Industry Director of Rail, Maunsell and promises to provide far reaching thoughts into the future of the rail industry by focussing on major developments currently being considered.

The 2007 Women in Engineering topic will take place on 12 April when the 2006 RTSA Young Engineer co winner Rebecca Taylor will deliver a relevant technical topic to the WA Chapter.

The RTSA National Council will conduct the mid year meeting in Perth this year and this will coincide with a normal Chapter meeting on Thursday 17 May which will take the form of a Dinner with a key speaker. This will be a first for the WA group and will be supported by sponsorship from within the railway industry including Maunsell, John Holland Rail, Longrun Transport Developments, Beyond Rail Solutions, Parsons Brinckerhoff and WestNet Rail. Members are urged to place this date in their diaries and give the function full support.

Planning for CORE 2008 is progressing with the Conference Organiser selected and the Technical Committee now busy in developing the technical sessions and designing the management of the papers.

John Syers
WA Chapter Chairman

New South Wales

The Sydney Chapter has held member meetings each month including an AGM and a special meeting to endorse the changes to the RTSA Constitution. The Executive normally meets prior to member meetings except when the meeting is a joint venture with another kindred organisation such as the PWI and IRSA.

Following the success of the STORE study tour to the grain lines of the Western and Riverina areas of NSW in March 2006, a one day symposium was organised for 1 February this year using Wagga Wagga as the venue. See the separate article by Andrew Honan, Chairman of the Government Relations Committee reporting on this highly successful venture.

In conjunction with the Symposium a joint NSW/Victorian Chapter meeting was held, including a fully catered dinner on the same evening. Two speakers provided an entertaining and enlightening overview of developments in the area – Piers Brogan spoke about the Austrak Sleeper Plant being constructed at Bomen, and Kerry Christy gave an overview of some of the Southern Alliance activities

CORE2008 and the Future Frameworks for Regional Rail Symposium brochures were made available at the AusRail 2006 conference which was held in Brisbane late last year. Four young engineers from each of the participating organisations at AusRail were extended complimentary attendance at the conference sessions as part of a project to get more involvement from up and coming professionals in the rail industry.

The following is an extract of the events for the first quarter of 2007 and the tentative program for the remainder of the year. More detail of past meetings can be found in Chapter Newsletters which are posted on the RTSA Website.

The committee is aware of around half a dozen new members (including in states other than NSW) who have joined RTSA after reading the NSW Newsletter.

29 January 2007

Special meeting with Ed Zsombor, the Regional Rail Eminent Speaker: a CBD location was chosen to facilitate attendance by RailCorp members who work nearby, a total of 47 members being there on the night to hear Ed outline the changes which have occurred over recent years in the Canadian Province of Saskatchewan. We were pleased to have Dale Coleman of Worley Parsons, sponsor of the pre dinner refreshments, attend and address the meeting.

1 February 2007

A joint meeting with the Victorian Chapter was held in Wagga Wagga following the Symposium, in the format of a dinner meeting with two speakers. 75 attended, including partners, to hear Piers Brogan of Austrak outline

the relocation of the Tennant Creek sleeper manufacturing plant to Wagga Wagga and Kerry Christy, SIA Project Manager gave details of the upgrading of the Wagga Wagga bridge over the Christmas shutdown and other upgrades on the Main Southern Line.

1 March 2007

Committee member, Malcolm Cluett presented a paper on the history and recent advances in steam technology with examples of overseas research and trials.

Bill Laidlaw
NSW Chapter Chair

South Australia

2006 finished on a high note for the South Australian Chapter, with 2007 also getting off to a good start.

Our traditional AGM dinner on 28 November 2006 featured a non-traditional presentation. Yachtsman Mike Marshman gave a very detailed and colourful description of his experiences in the 1998 Sydney to Hobart race. This was the year when the flotilla was struck by very high winds and rough seas, causing a number of boats to sink and three lives to be lost. Mike's yacht capsized and later sank; he was injured and eventually rescued under very difficult conditions by a helicopter rescue crew.

Special thanks are due to the AGM dinner sponsors for their support: OneSteel, Connell Wagner, John Holland Rail, Davison Earthmovers, and Skilled Rail.

The first meeting for 2007, on 6 February, featured RTSA Eminent Speaker Ed Zsombor. Held as a joint meeting with Permanent Way Institution, this was one of the best attended gatherings for some time. Ed's theme is very topical in South Australia.

The meeting on 1 March was addressed by Chris Hall, Chairman and Managing Director of Adelaide-based Bluebird Rail, and formerly General Manager of passenger services at Australian National. Chris spoke on "Long Distance Passenger Rail – the Transition from Government to Private Operation", which covered his experiences leading up to the privatisation of AN's passenger operations (Ghan, Indian Pacific and Overland), complete with many amusing anecdotes. Chris also described the formation of Bluebird Rail and its progressive development, including becoming a rolling stock manufacturer.

The next meeting (12 April) will feature a presentation by RTSA member Roger Wyatt on some of the difficulties associated with development of an innovative new switch design for the Adelaide to Glenelg tram line.

Meetings later in the year are planned to cover the Lismore level crossing accident in Victoria, ARTC's East Coast upgrade, the Adelaide tram line extension, and new rolling stock developments. Meetings are normally held on the

first Thursday of each month. Venues vary – see the Chapter newsletter, available on the RTSA website.

The Chapter continues to work closely with PWI and IRSE, with regular joint meetings incorporated in the programme.

Duncan McLeod
SA Chapter Chair

Queensland

Chairman's Comments

The start of another year and we are almost a quarter of the way into it. The Queensland Chapter have held two presentations during the quarter – one with an international guest speaker.

Recent Meetings

Meetings to report on since last report:-

8 February 2007

Ed Zsombor, Director Rail Projects, Saskatchewan Highway and Transport Agency gave a presentation on “Transforming Canada’s Rural Railways”. This followed on from his successful seminar at the Regional Rail Symposium in Wagga Wagga. Ed provided an insight into their approach to revitalising regional rail in Canada and that “one size doesn’t fit all” in terms of regulation between regional rail and main line. (Attendees 26)

28 February 2007

Larry Matters of the ATSB gave his usual enthusiastic and insightful presentation on the investigation undertaken for the “Lismore truck/train collision 25 May 2006”. The incident involved a collision between a laden truck and a 4300 tonne freight train in early morning fog in Lismore, Victoria resulting in the death of the truck driver, material costs of \$13.5 million and closure of the line for six days. (Attendees 54)



Upcoming Events

The Queensland Chapter is organising an exciting program of activities for the remainder of 2007.

This will commence on 28 March with a presentation from Bob Stuart, Director, Major Projects, QR on the Northern Missing Link Project between the Goonyella and Newlands rail systems in Queensland. Another planned presentation includes Dennis Walsh, Project Director, QR on SEQIPP and the Trackstar Alliance and also a repeat of the highly successful AGM/Dinner/Trivia night extravaganza in July.

Mark Wishart, Queensland Chapter Chair



RTSA Diary 2007

April to July

NSW Chapter

12th April 2007	Presentation on Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model (Joint with IRSE)
3rd May 2007	Presentation on Specialized Rail Grinding Techniques
7th June 2007	Presentation to be advised
5th July 2007	AGM and Guest Speaker

Victorian Chapter

22nd Mar 2007	Presentation on Investing in Rail Infrastructure
19th Apr 2007	Joint Meeting with Young Engineers
18th May 2007	Dinner Meeting with Guest Speaker Rob Barnett, CEO, VLine
20th June 2007	Presentation on Railway progress in Victoria
18th July 2007	Site visit to a Melbourne rail vehicle maintenance facility

Queensland Chapter

28th March 2007	Presentations on Northern Missing Link Project
18th April 2007	Presentation on QR National Rollingstock - Measurement of Operation Performance
23rd May 2007	Presentation to be advised
27 June 2007	Presentations on SEQIPP and Trackstar Alliance
25 July 2007	AGM Dinner Trivia Night

South Australian Chapter

12th Apr 2007	Presentation on Upgrade of the Glenelg Tramline Switches (Joint with PWI)
3rd May 2007	Presentation on Lismore Level Crossing Accident in May 2006
7th June 2006	Presentation on ARTC East Coast Upgrade (Joint with PWI)
5th Jul 2007	Presentation on Vlocity Railcar development

Western Australia Chapter

12th Apr 2007	Presentation on 2007 Women in Engineering
17th May 2007	Dinner Meeting with a Guest Speaker and RTSA Executives
28th June 2007	Presentation on Public Transport Authority – Electronic Ticketing System
26th July 2007	Presentation on Mid West Rail Developments

The above program is subject to last minute changes. For additional information on the RTSA and its activities, including the symposiums on Professional Development, please visit the RTSA web site or contact the secretariat on (02) 6270 6548.

www.rtsa.com.au



*The Institution of Railway Signal Engineers
Australasian Section Inc
WA Committee*

ADVANCE NOTICE **Perth IRSE CONVENTION 2007**

Location:	Perth
Dates:	Sunday 29 th , Monday 30 th , Tuesday 31 st of July & Wednesday 1 st August, 2007
Theme:	“Building For Growth”
Venue:	Hyatt Regency, Adelaide Terrace, Perth
Sunday (Optional):	Lunch and rail journey on the “Spirit of the West” into the Avon Valley (Depending on Interest)
Monday:	Technical Presentations
Tuesday:	Technical Visits in Perth area including New PTA Train Control Centre
Wednesday:	Day trip to Port Hedland

Registration documents will be distributed to Members in early May 2007
Note that the program for Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday is provisional and may change
For further details, please contact Brenella D'Sa
Phone: (08) 9414 0364 Fax: (08) 9414 0399 E-mail: bdsa@pta.wa.gov.au

RTSA Corporate Membership

The category of Corporate Membership within the RTSA is now available, providing an opportunity for Corporate Organisations to support the work of the RTSA

Corporate membership entitles companies to significant benefits that include:

- 3 individual nominees for membership
- 3 places at CORE and other RTSA events at membership rates
- corporate logo on the RTSA website and a link to company website
- One half page advertisement in Rail Horizons per annum
- extra copies of Rail Horizons and other RTSA publications.

Cost is \$990 (inc GST) per annum

Enquiries should can be directed to Nina Lenz in the RTSA Secretariat on **02 6270 6548**



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All abstracts will be reviewed by the technical committee. Relevance, timeliness, and quality are the key factors in assessing proposed papers.

Abstracts are due by 13th April 2007.

Abstracts should be forwarded to:

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If you have any queries, please contact Loic Beuzit T: (+61 2) 9080 4309

or fill out the form overleaf and return to Fax (+61 2) 9290 3844

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For full details visit www.ausrail.com/callforpapers

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Deborah Bocock on (+61 2) 9080 4348 or deborah.bocock@informa.com.au**

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