

Training and Career Paths to Retain Employees within the Railway Industry

There is no doubt the Australian railway industry is currently going through a boom period. Apart from the challenge of sustaining this growth, the railway industry is also facing a skills shortage which may undermine its future expansion. Although the expected skills shortage was clearly articulated in 1999 by the Engineers Australia's RTSA report on *Engineering for Rail Sector Growth*, the industry as a whole should accept responsibility for not acting swiftly to overcome the current dilemma. The recent Rail Skill and Career Council report, *The Changing Face of Rail*, which covers the skill shortage issue shows that the age profile within the railway industry is quite peculiar, with the majority of employees being over 40-50 years. It also indicates that a large group of young professionals (under 25 years age group) have entered the workforce in the railway industry and significantly low numbers presently exist in the middle age group (between 25 and 40 years).

To meet its future demands, the rail industry should work together to retain young professionals who, unlike the older generation, are more active in moving from job to job or from industry to industry, especially in the early part of their careers. Obviously attractive remuneration packages will be one form of enticement, albeit a short term one. Job satisfaction, challenging job tasks and clear career paths are more likely to influence them over a long period to continue employment within the rail industry.

In the past, in a railway environment, skills transfer traditionally took place over a long period on the job. However, the opportunities available in the modern labour market will no longer tolerate such a process of long term skill acquisition. The railway industry has to adopt methods of transferring skills in a short time frame through internal or external, as well as informal or formal training programs. Although some organisations have woken up to this requirement, others are still lagging behind the modern employment norms. Training and development opportunities provided by organisations within the railway industry have attracted new graduates because they empower them quickly. Job Satisfaction and challenging job tasks are a progression from this empowered position. Graduate training programs, upstream/downstream job placement programs and mentoring programs are some of

the common structured development activities adopted, while several other focused training opportunities are used to fulfil these needs.

The RTSA through its chapters in five States provides professional development opportunities through a range of technical meetings, forums, seminars and symposiums covering various topics related to the modern railway environment. For example, on 6 September 2006, a half a day forum was arranged in Victoria to discuss how innovation in technology can assist in meeting transport investment challenges. The forum brought together key players in rolling stock manufacturing as well as an assortment of Infrastructure suppliers.

On 1st February 2007 the RTSA in conjunction with the Charles Sturt University, will be holding a one-day symposium on *Future Frameworks for Regional Rail* in Wagga Wagga focusing on some of the regional,

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institutional and market factors that are at play in regional freight transport. It will bring practitioners of small-to-medium rail management together with research on regional governance, factors in industry alliances and evidence from other Australian States as well as some successful overseas experience in order to better understand possible regional solutions.

A lack of career progression opportunities and restructuring in the 1990s were cited as the main reasons why many professionals left the industry in the past and resulted in a void in the 25 to 40 year age group within the industry. It is important to learn from past shortcomings, and to develop career plans which directly address the needs of young professionals who are committed. One such successful initiative is Succession Planning through which future managers are identified, trained and challenged. Challenging assignments provide promising candidates with opportunities to prove their capabilities in a prospective management role.

Ravi Ravitharan

National Chairman
Railway Technical Society of Australasia (RTSA)

Point of View

Max Michell

Most readers would be familiar with the ‘glass half full’ concept. Some may even be aware of the associated definition of an Engineer – “To the optimist, the glass is half full. To the pessimist, the glass is half-empty. To the engineer, the glass is twice as big as it needs to be.” In times gone by something similar, albeit one dimensionally, was expressed by the saying “every cloud has a silver lining”. What you see in something all depends on how you look at it.

There is a long history, dating back at least to my formative years in the rail industry, of consistently seeing and grumbling about how unfair life is to the railways. Trucks circumventing road regulation following Hughes and Vale in 1954, commercial de-regulation of all road freight operators in the 1960’s and 1970’s, profligate highway construction following the Feds taking responsibility for national highways, consistent political weakness in the face of a noisy lobby decrying any attempt to recover full road user costs and so on. Rail has always been on the back-foot in terms of competitive posture, funding, lobbying or whatever, or at least that is the way it seems. But are things as bleak as we sometimes see them, or are we in fact too frequently looking at the glass from the empty end? And is our real problem the competition at all?

It wasn’t until around the second decade of the 20th century that road technology, bus and truck, was seriously able to compete with rail. While the initial capability of road was small the rail systems in their 60 or so years in this country had in many ways been lazy - they had developed along ‘comfortable’ political and treasury driven lines rather than commercially. Many rail services were of the ‘you can have whatever you want as long as it is the one we give you’ variety, which gave road something of a free kick when it came to getting started. Intervention of the 1930’s depression then World War II significantly retarded rail’s ability to break out of its ‘as of right’ mould, so that in the 1950’s road was able to aggressively capture large amounts of traffic, not just that which logically should be road but also significant amounts of what logically should have remained on rail. It is significant that as rail started to act more competitively, particularly on the longer coastal hauls, that coastal shipping rapidly contracted – although road did not.

Wentworth standardisation between capital cities, starting in 1962, initially gave rail some real capability on these routes, but the underlying problems of poor terminals, inadequate alignments and generally low grade infrastructure were not addressed. Parochial state attitudes, in many cases little more than personal posturing by

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officials who should have been more mature, was a significant factor (and to a limited degree still is).

In the mean time roads were rapidly being improved and technology of road vehicles was similarly moving ahead at a rapid pace. We now find ourselves in the position where completion a dual carriageway freeway standard link between Melbourne and Sydney is only a few years away, while something similar between Sydney and Brisbane is being vigorously pursued by both Federal and State governments. Trucks in particular have now developed in line with roads in a sort of circular waltz – more and bigger trucks require more multi-laned heavy pavement roads which allows more and bigger trucks and so on. But as with all things there is the Pareto principle to take account of. Most of the gains on road have been achieved and to get more will involve increasingly huge financial donations by governments which over time are likely to be less and less willing.

Once the Hume Highway is multi-laned throughout there is little that can be done to significantly improve the basics of service – transit time, reliability and capacity - on road. On the other hand rail is till relatively immature and has considerable scope to improve service quality. There are many small scale improvements that would have a beneficial impact on rail service quality, many of which are being taken up by ARTC in their current round of investment. However as these ‘smalls’ are gathered in there will still remain the fundamental of a rail route that is around 60 km longer than the nominally parallel highway, that has an average *maximum* (1500 metre long freight) speed over its length of 96 km/h, with the half north of Junee having an average *maximum* speed of just 86 km/h. Under absolutely ideal conditions rail could not better 10 hours, which as it happens is not much different to normal truck times. ARTC plan to, inter alia, marginally improve curve speeds and attend to some of the yard, formation and bridge related speed restrictions to achieve a Melbourne – Sydney rail time of 10.7 hours, compared to existing times of around 13.5 hours. Yet if appropriate alignments were progressively adopted, which coincidentally would remove some of the excess distance, the average *maximum* speed would rise to close to 110 km/h and potential end to end time to a bit over 8 hours. In other words, if an attitude similar to that which has applied to highways over the last 30 years was applied to rail, times of around 2 hours better than the ARTC target and 5 hours better than existing practice could be consistently achieved.

The biggest single remaining time gain that can be achieved on the Hume Highway will come from completion of the Albury by-pass (bisection is a more accurate description) in the next year or so and will amount to around 10 minutes. Beyond that there are marginal time gains to be had from completion of duplication but these will make little difference to road times. Quite simply road has almost reached its achievable Melbourne – Sydney transit times while rail has something

like 5 hours that can be out off existing times, 3 of which are likely to come in around three years time and the remaining (and in some ways most critical) 2 hours will have to wait.

Terry Lane recently commented in the Age how politically overspending on the \$750 million Regional Fast Train (perhaps more accurately Regional Frequent Train) project was causing the political system considerable grief while at the same time a proposal to spend \$1000 million to add lanes to Melbourne freeways (Terry described the Monash freeway as a sewer in the off peak and a parking lot in the peak) caused hardly a political murmur. His point was the politics of the situation, where a well intentioned rail project has drawn all sorts of fulminations while a badly conceived and potentially futile road project gets nothing but acquiescent nods all round.

Rail is in the position of having a long way to go, which in ‘the glass half full’ context means a lot that remains that can be achieved. The down side is that there is an equally long way to go to turn around our ‘cheap shot’ political attitudes and their adherents who make simplistic, but flawed, decisions on our behalf.

Government Relations Committee

The Government Relation Sub-committee has been active in two areas since my last report. Firstly, the Government Relations Sub-Committee appeared before the Federal Parliament’s *Senate Inquiry into Australia’s Future Oil Supply and Alternative Transport Fuels* on 30 June 2006. Max Michell and myself put our general concerns for improved rail freight measures and integrated public transport systems (with heavy and light rail). Our evidence occurred before the recent petrol price hikes and is a reminder of how quickly the pressures and impacts within the transport sector of can change.

RTSA submissions can be viewed on the RTSA web site www.rtsa.com.au/publications/submissions/

It was around this time that Max Michell and Philip Laird put to me that the RTSA should think about a one-day symposium on regional rail, following the recent study tour. There was widespread support within the Sydney Chapter as well as the National Council for such an initiative. In particular Associate Professor Ian Gray, School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Charles Sturt University (who conducts research on regionalism) was particularly keen to conduct a joint initiative with the RTSA, specifically targeting local government capability and regional transport (particularly rail).

Recent regional rail efforts have focused on rail and road costs (infrastructure, operations, social and environmental). This symposium however will focus on some of the basic

regional, institutional and market factors that are at play in regional transport. Bringing the practitioners of small-to-medium rail management together with research on regional governance, factors in industry alliances, evidence from other Australian states, and with government representatives, it is hoped that a better understanding of possible regional solutions can be developed.

Subsequently, Max Michell, Ian Gray and myself appeared before the Neville Inquiry on 1 August 2006 to explain our report and recent study tour. We also announced the joint RTSA Charles Sturt University symposium initiative. We were also able to highlight the commendable NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) scholarships for undergraduate civil engineers (with a rotation scheme through regional RTA offices), and suggested that this could be enlarged to rotate the same people through regional rail agencies as a broad-based approach to integrated regional transport. The symposium will discuss some aspects of this alignment of regional road, rail and logistics capability within a regional context.

The Chair of the inquiry Paul Neville MP has agreed to talk at the symposium, to explain the forthcoming recommendations of his report (conditional that parliament is not sitting). For further details on the regional rail symposium, see Page 15.

Andrew Honan
Chairman, Government Relations Committee



Toll's train shutdown a bad mistake

By Philip Laird

As one who has used Wellington - Auckland train services over many years, the news that Toll NZ intends to withdraw these services is most unwelcome.

It counteracts the present drive by the New Zealand Government to attract more tourists from Australia. This campaign stresses that New Zealand is not just a place with great scenery but also a place to do things.

This includes great train rides such as Christchurch to the West Coast. The Auckland - Wellington day train is also a great tourist experience. Both trains have been featured on the Australian commercial TV programme *Getaway*. However the Auckland - Wellington train is under marketed.

The New Zealand Government in recent years has contributed to the attractiveness of the service. This includes the completion in 2003 of Britomart Station, the \$200m commitment to track upgrades and now the \$20m upgrade of Wellington station. This contribution should be more than enough to offset any loss of revenue to Toll NZ due to cheap air flights etc.

The Overlander is not just a scenic way of travelling between Wellington and Auckland. It also serves the two University cities of Palmerston North and Hamilton along with many towns. The train is also more energy efficient and so uses less imported oil than either driving a car or flying.

Informed reaction within the Australia rail industry notes that ideally these intercity passenger rail services should have been kept in public ownership so they could be operated and maintained in the public, not private interest. One can understand Toll looking after its bank balance, but the decision does highlight the potential failure of privatising inherently loss making activities that are for the 'public good'.

Improved marketing and on-board facilities may have reversed the patronage decline of The Overlander. Obviously for people in a hurry flying is a better choice. However, the magnificent scenery of New Zealand's North Island that the train traverses makes it an ideal trip for tourists who are a major market for the train'.

Toll should have tried harder.

The question now is "what's next?"

The Australian version of The Overlander runs between Melbourne and Adelaide and is called The Overland. Its patronage has increased by over 40 per cent since it became an all daylight operation. The Australian Overland runs on a longer corridor (830km) and hence less

suited to day travel than the more scenic Wellington - Auckland train journey (681km). The Australian train is operated by a private company (Great Southern Railway), but with some government help offers concession fares. While some people have been critical of its slow timetable it is likely to be speeded up by 90 minutes in September, which will further increase its appeal.

If Toll NZ is not prepared to operate the NZ Overlander train, there is a good case for the Government to require Toll to relinquish the train path and be prepared to sell the train sets at a reasonable price to another operator. In addition, if Toll NZ wishes to be a rail passenger operator, it should not be allowed to 'cherry pick' the services it chooses to offer.

In 2003, Toll's aim to acquire 90 per cent of the TRH shares was frustrated by three institutions and many small New Zealand share holders. As then reported, the prevailing view of many of the individual share holders who did not sell was that *'We do not want you Australians running our trains.'*

Australians running New Zealand trains is one thing. But closing them down is another.

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STOP PRESS

At the end of September, Toll NZ announced that due to an overwhelming public response it would continue operating the *Overlander* with a reduced timetable of three trains per week in each direction

Victorian Mayors call for Regional Rail Freight Action

The Municipal Association of Victoria in conjunction with the Alliance of Councils for Rail Freight Development called a Mayoral Summit at the beginning of October to give Local Government from across the State the opportunity to discuss rail freight problems; to give the Bracks Government and the Opposition parties the opportunity to state their vision and policy for the future of the country rail freight network and to enable a consensus position from Local Government to be put forward to the respective political parties.

Mayors and Chief Executive Officers from all over regional and country Victoria attended the summit and unanimously adopted the following resolutions:

- This Summit expresses its extreme dissatisfaction with the current and unacceptable state of the country and regional rail freight network.

- The Summit demands that the State Government establish a funded, 'Rail Freight Advisory Council' to create an agreed long term vision and Business Plan for the country and regional rail freight network, both to be completed by the end of 2007.
- We call on all political Parties to commit to creating a viable, seamless, connective and competitive country and regional rail freight network.



The Summit was told that the country and regional rail freight network in Victoria is in a substantial state of disrepair after almost six decades of successive State Government failure to invest in the rail infrastructure. The country rail freight network is now at the crossroads and is in danger of collapsing to just operate where passenger trains operate. The State Government needs to provide leadership and vision coupled with commitment and appropriate funding to restore to the State, a viable, seamless, connective and competitive rail freight network.



The current state of the network is of major concern to Local Government because it inhibits regional economic growth and negatively impacts on their residents' safety and social amenity, the environment and council budgets. The resulting environmental damage from a collapsed rail freight system should be of major concern to all Victorians. Government leadership to ensure the rail freight system does not collapse is urgently required.

PC releases draft report on Road and Rail Pricing

By Mark Carter and Philip Laird

With the release of the Productivity Commission's draft discussion report on Road and Rail Freight Infrastructure Pricing, which contains the preliminary findings of its public inquiry, the rail industry appears to have taken a big hit. In a turnaround to the widely accepted view, the Commission suggests that heavy road vehicles do pay their way and even where they do not, any adjustment to pricing is unlikely to deliver any great shift in market share to rail.

The Report runs to 554 pages and therefore it is not yet possible to provide a comprehensive assessment for the Commission's findings. The Commission is seeking further submissions and comment on the Discussion Draft and will hold public hearings prior to reporting to COAG by the end of the year.

Releasing the draft, Productivity Commission Chairman, Gary Banks, said "The current approach to road charging for heavy trucks has some clear deficiencies. But these appear mostly to impact on the efficiency of the road sector itself, rather than hurting rail."

So far, the Commission believes it has not found compelling evidence to support claims that rail has been disadvantaged by subsidised provision of road infrastructure.

The Commission found that charges based on nation-wide road expenditure and average road use, may exceed the costs actually incurred by trucks on the main east-coast freight corridors. However other factors confound a definitive assessment about the extent of any net subsidies to particular freight operators.

"New technologies for monitoring road use are making it feasible to give more accurate signals to truck operators about the costs of them using roads, as well as giving road infrastructure providers a clearer indication about where road funds should be directed," said Mr Banks.

"But the costs of these pricing systems are not trivial and must be weighed against the benefits."

In its report, the Commission says that there appears to be scope to moderate economic regulation of parts of the rail network which face strong inter-modal competition, to enhance their financial viability. Other key findings include:

- Within the existing PAYGO system of road charging, heavy trucks in aggregate more than cover their assessed costs, but that this will soon not be the case if road expenditure continues to rise and road charges remain unchanged.
- B-doubles currently do not cover the costs attributable to them on a network average basis.
- The level of policy-relevant externalities generated by trucks using major corridors is likely to be low, given that most impacts occur in urban areas and that many are already being dealt with, to some extent, by regulations and other measures. A uniform externalities 'tax' on road freight would be an ineffective and costly way of dealing with remaining externalities.
- Government financial contributions to rail infrastructure allow access charges to be maintained below the economic costs of providing some rail freight services, further clouding assessment of competitive neutrality across modes.
- If road charges were to rise, any shift to rail is unlikely to be large, even under optimistic assumptions. This largely reflects different service characteristics of the two modes and the small share of road charges in road freight costs.





Looking beyond the reports findings, it would seem that the rail industry in general, and Pacific National in particular, are going to have to do a lot more to win the hearts and minds of government.

The findings of this report and the imperative to do more follows on from the rejection by the nation's transport ministers of the NTC's modest and benign third determination on heavy vehicle charges in March this year and the Federal Budget announcing in May a \$1.2 billion saving to the road transport industry via holding down charges etc with an extra two billion for roads to 2009 (+\$270m for rail).

It will be interesting to see how the rail industry reacts to the report with it all but rejecting Pacific National and other rail industry submissions regarding the under-recovery of road system costs. The ongoing road subsidies must impact on FreightLink's as well as PN's and QRN's bottom line and will not help raising private sector cash for track upgrades such as the inland route.

There appears to have been a big change of thinking since the 1980s when the Inter-State Commission was finding under recovery by heavy vehicles as did the BTCE in 1988 (articulated truck operations had a resultant under-recovery of road system costs of \$1283 million in 1986-87).

In its 1992 Annual Report the Industry Commission (now PC) said, "Annual fixed charges are not efficient because costs vary with the distance travelled and the mass of the vehicle. The result is that some vehicles - the heaviest travelling long annual distances - will meet less than 20 per cent of their attributed costs. ...The charges, as recommended, will therefore potentially distort the long-haul freight market as rail reforms take effect."

In 2006 however, the PC is now suggesting that overall the charges are about right and if B-Doubles are subsidised, it won't matter too much.

News

Sydac wins UK simulator contract

Australian simulation company **Sydac** has won two new contracts from Metronet Rail to provide its award-winning train-driving simulators to the London Underground.

Already contracted by Scotrail for their driving simulators, Adelaide-based Sydac has now established itself as the market leader in a rapidly growing rail simulation industry in the UK, estimated to be worth over \$30 million in the next few years.

Almost 1 billion passengers use the Underground each year and with trains arriving at stations every few minutes their drivers have to be highly trained for all possible situations affecting safety and the tight schedule.

The Sydac simulator is an exact replica of the train cab and is an evolution ahead of traditional training methods. It feels, reacts and sounds the same as a real train, the only difference is that if trainees make errors of judgement, they just try again. With the computer-generated graphics providing a highly realistic view of the rail environment, London Underground will have the flexibility to train drivers in almost any situation, the instructor testing the driver across all safety critical scenarios ranging from train and track faults, difficult passengers and even life threatening events.

Metronet works under a public-private partnership contract with London Underground to maintain and upgrade two-thirds of London's Tube network and the new Central line simulators will be based at Hainault Depot in East London.

ARTC places sleeper contract

Australian Rail Track Corporation has signed a contract with Austrak to supply 1.25 million concrete sleepers as part of its North South improvement programme.

To meet the demand, Austrak will be manufacturing approximately 250,000 concrete sleepers from their Geelong factory, with the balance being manufactured from a new factory to be built near Wagga Wagga. The new Wagga facility will cost \$11.5m to build and will employ approximately 60 people locally for a six days/week, 24 hour operation.

ARTC earlier this year announced an initial order of 1 million concrete sleepers from Rocla for re-sleeping work on the North South rail corridor and following a funding allocation of \$270 million from the Australian Government, placed a second tender to allow for the complete concrete re-sleeping of all parts of the North South corridor under its jurisdiction.

ARTC launches Evolution 2006

Australian Rail Track Corporation has launched Evolution 2006, its inaugural mentoring programme aimed at developing the careers of rail's future leaders and stem the outgoing flow of knowledge and experience from the rail industry.

Twenty-one mentorees have been matched with a range of mentors from both within ARTC and external to the rail industry from sectors such as utilities, services and logistics.

Speaking at the launch of Evolution 2006, ARTC GM Corporate Services, Geoff Atkinson said, "With an ageing workforce, ARTC can expect to lose one third of our workforce in the next decade, just when rail is undergoing regeneration nationally and with its market share predicted to grow substantially in the next ten years."

"Rail is facing tough competition from other industries to attract and retain workers. Programmes such as Evolution 2006 provide an excellent forum to recognise and retain the wealth of knowledge and experience of our older workers, provide greater job satisfaction and to nurture the careers of outstanding talent at ARTC," Mr Atkinson said.

Helping launch Evolution 2006, Australasian Railway Association CEO, Bryan Nye said that in 1995 transport congestion was costing the nation \$15 billion a year, but it was predicted that this will double to at least \$30 billion by 2015.

"There are currently \$11.4 billion worth of rail infrastructure projects to meet this challenge, and these are going to need a lot of people. We need to allow workers to phase out of the industry rather than completely retire, ensure there is a smooth knowledge transfer and improve the understanding and respect between generations within the industry," Mr Nye said.

Funding to assist Evolution 2006 has come from the Transport and Logistics Centre (TALC) amongst others. At the launch TALC Director, Daryll Hull said there was a saying that the rail industry was 150 years old and just over 10 years young. He said that in 1990s the traditional close-knit culture of the industry had changed with different business models, new organisational structures and new ownership.

"We are seeing an evolution to a new kind of rail culture based on goodwill and mentoring. In five years time there won't be a need for trial programmes such as this – mentoring will be part of the rail culture," Mr Hull said.



North South Rail Study Released

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has welcomed the release of the North South Rail Corridor Study saying it is a watershed study that confirms a long held belief that an inland rail link between Melbourne and Brisbane is needed and government now needs to show a commitment to make it a reality.

"The study firmly establishes that an inland rail link needs to be built between Melbourne and Brisbane, but just as importantly, it confirms that an integrated transport solution that includes linkages to port, intermodal terminals and road/rail interfaces is required," ARA CEO Bryan Nye said.



Released in August, The North South Rail Corridor Study was commissioned by the Department of Transport and Regional Services and undertaken by Ernst & Young, Hyder Consulting Pty Ltd and ACIL Tasman Pty Ltd. The Study has comprehensively examined the adequacy of the existing Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane rail corridor to meet future freight demand, recognising the major ARTC improvement programme currently underway.

Four possible route options were considered that would address forecast increases in demand once the current coastal route reaches capacity in 2019. Key issues included infrastructure links, engineering, environmental, urban and regional planning issues. The route options were compared using an optimisation model specifically developed for the Study. The model determines an optimum route configuration by analysing each route within a sub-corridor for a number of feasible freight demand and access price scenarios for specific budget constraints and financial criteria.

The four corridors are:

Far Western Corridor

via Junee, Parkes, Narromine, Coonamble, Burren Junction, Moree, North Star, Goondiwindi and Toowoomba.

Central Inland Corridor

via Junee, Parkes, Dubbo, Werris Creek, Armidale, Tenterfield and Warwick.

Coastal Corridor

following the existing coastal route.

Hybrid Corridor

combining elements of inland options to Muswellbrook, Maitland, and then following the existing coastal route.

While a final route has not been determined and the Study does not recommend adoption of any particular route, the Study finds that, regardless of the final route chosen, a substantial Government contribution would be needed to make the inland railway a reality. It is fairly obvious when reading the report that the Far Western corridor would deliver the fastest transit time at the lowest price. It would cost at least \$3.1 billion to build and would achieve a transit time under 21 hours between Melbourne and Brisbane. About \$2 billion of this funding would be required to construct the line between Toowoomba and Brisbane. Of all the options it also has the greatest potential to attract new traffic to rail, principally agricultural traffic.

The link to Melbourne would be via either Albury or Shepparton. Via Albury would cost about \$500 million less and would save up to 45 minutes in transit time, but would not allow for double stacking south of Junee.

Releasing the Study, Federal Transport Minister Warren Truss said he believed that the study had established that an inland railway will be required by 2019, otherwise there will be further congestion on our roads and rail lines resulting from the anticipated doubling of the transport task by 2025.

“The financial analysis undertaken with the Study highlighted that any investment on the corridor is likely to require Government subsidy as major development of rail track along the corridor will not achieve commercial rates of return for the private sector,” Mr Truss said.

The Study highlighted the fact that the greatest hindrance to rail achieving good reliability on the inter-capital city routes is congestion in the Sydney metropolitan network.

Mr Truss said the Australian Government will now seek comment on the proposals from industry, the states and local communities. The report is likely to provoke some intense lobbying from councils along the potential routes, many of which have already passed comments staking a claim to any final route.

GE secures Kazakh loco deal

KAZAKHSTAN is set to sign a \$US650 million (A\$860 million) deal to buy 310 railway locomotives from General Electric reflecting surging rail traffic between China and Russia.

The Kazakh rail system has become an important trade route for increasing quantities of energy products and other freight flowing through central Asia. "Kazakhstan is a land bridge between China and Russia," said Patrick Jarvis, spokesman for GE Transportation. "It is an area experiencing explosive growth in freight volume."

The deal involves GE's fuel-efficient Evolution Series engines, which were designed to meet stringent environmental regulations in North America but are now attracting interest overseas.

The Kazakh deal marks the single biggest sale of Evolution Series engines made by GE and the first time they have been sold outside North America. The product is part of GE's push led by chief executive Jeff Immelt to develop technologies to meet environmental challenges.

The locomotives achieve 3-5 per cent fuel savings over the previous generation of GE locomotives and reduce emissions by more than 40 per cent, according to the group.

GE will manufacture the first 10 locomotives in Erie, Pennsylvania, in 2008. Production of the additional 300 locomotives will be completed over the following four years, with components manufactured in the US and assembly undertaken in Kazakhstan.

- There is no truth in the rumour that the first of the new locomotives will be named 'Borat' after the nation's most famous son.



RTSA Chapter Reports

Victoria and Tasmania

The Victorian Chapter's AGM was held on the 16th August 2006. It is with regret that Gerry DeBont has stepped down as Treasurer after many years at the helm, but ably replaced by Wayne Milfull who has immediately stepped into Gerry's shoes. Thank you, Gerry and we look forward to have you continue on the Committee. Also stepping down this year was David Griffiths who has served many years with the Committee on many tasks. Thank you, David. Due to pressing commitments on a wider scale Ravi has stepped down from the Victorian Committee but will be looking after all our interests as National Chair. Thanks Ravi.

Martin Baggott was re-elected Chair, John Scott Secretary, together with Doug Hayhoe, Phil Dunn, Dave Ferris and Peter Metcalf. We were also very pleased to welcome our first special interest member, Wilson Wong, onto the Committee. I look forward to another very productive year with an excellent Committee.

The Chapter continues to operate at breakneck speed with events every month as well as a special half day seminar.

The recent events include:

- Geotechnical fabric solutions for rail – Tensar International
- A New General Scheme OF Tramway Development For Melbourne by C Louis Fouvy
- An Outline of the Control and Monitoring Systems for the Melbourne Public Transport Network by Kevin Davey, Department of Infrastructure
- Innovation in Melbourne Rail Network (half day seminar) - 12 speakers covering signalling infrastructure and rolling stock

My thanks to Peter Metcalf who conceived and organised the half day seminar.

Our Annual Dinner will be held on September 15th and we have great pleasure in hosting Jim Betts the Director of Public Transport.

The pace continues with:

- An update to our metropolitan rolling stock, hosted by Siemens in October and
- A tour of the new Southern Cross Railway Station in November
- Christmas Function hosted by Williams - Worley

We are currently formulating next year's programme so any ideas will be gratefully received.

Martin Baggott, Chapter Chair

Western Australia

Activities over the past three months have been relatively busy with two presentation meetings, a site visit and the launching of the CORE 2008 Organising Committee.

Thursday 22 June

The mining boom in WA has seen an increase in the rail haul component of the industry. This has had impact on the export of iron ore from the Koolyanobbing deposit 450 km east of Perth to the port of Esperance in the south. The presentation delivered by Mr Raymond Marks, General Manager, Longrun Transport Developments Pty Ltd. This was the company engaged to manage the upgrading of the Kalgoorlie to Esperance section of the route. The session explained the work necessary to elevate the railway to a capacity reaching 10 million tones per year and the rearrangement of track work within the port of Esperance to manage a changed operating pattern.

Thursday 27 July

The opportunity was taken to inspect the new servicing depot for the Prospector rail cars within the Kewdale depot complex. Rationalisation of the previous servicing depot in Forrestfield necessitated the move to a new site and the land occupied by private lease in Kewdale adjacent to Abernethy Road was made available for the purpose. Servicing bays and track work adjustments were necessary to provide the essential facilities which now service both the Prospector and Avon Link (Perth to Toodyay) diesel railcars on a twice weekly basis. The inspection of the facilities and the new Prospector rail cars was sponsored by the Public Transport Authority who conducted the tour of facilities and hosted refreshments at the conclusion for a group of RTSA members.

Thursday 31 August

Over the past months the management of the Australian Railroad Group (ARG) has transferred to Queensland Rail. The Chief Executive Officer, Mr Murray Vitlich provided a valuable presentation relating to the new management structure and the visions for the company in the future. Mr Vitlich has a background with Wesfarmers Group before moving to ARG as Chief Financial Officer in 2000. In 2002 he was appointed General Manager Operations then to Chief Operating Officer before his appointment earlier this year as Chief Executive Officer.

Throughout the past period the CORE 2008 Organising Committee has been active in preparing for the event in two years' time. The group has met on two occasions during this time. The initial meeting was held at the conference venue, The Perth Conference and Entertainment Centre to familiarize the members with the facilities available. At the subsequent meeting the group considered a theme and generally developed a schedule for the activities leading up to the event. In the meantime a sub group has been busy in the selection of a suitable

Professional Conference Organiser and this has almost reached finalization.

Looking Ahead

The activity in the Perth area associated with the new Perth to Mandurah Railway has given opportunity for site visits of key new installations and the WA Chapter has planned a series of inspections associated with the works.

Already an inspection has been carried out within the tunnel construction in the Perth Central area and this was fully subscribed by members with an overflow of interest. A second inspection has been planned for Monday 11 September.

The track laying work and station construction for the new railway is progressing well south of Perth and an inspection of these activities is to be carried out on Friday 8 September. Members will be transported by bus to the site office at Thompsons Lake prior to moving to the inspection site within the Kwinana Freeway at a typical station construction. The tracklaying will be taking place nearby.

A final meeting presentation is being planned for the October/November period. This meeting will feature an overview of the New Metrorail Project, the Southern Suburbs Railway delivered by Mr Andrew Cartledge.

John Syers
WA Chapter Chairman

New South Wales

The Sydney Chapter have held three member meetings during this quarter, one in the city during the shutdown period of Engineers Australia during their move to their new premises at Chatswood and two at the new venue. Attendances at the new venue have been less than encouraging due perhaps to the additional distance to travel from the city or perhaps the winter months?

The monthly newsletter continues with good support from the membership thanks to the editor, Max Michell. Some members of the Executive committee are still working on major rolling stock projects which have taken up so much time this year leaving less time for organising other activities.

John Watsford and Bill Laidlaw continue to attend the Steering Committee meetings for the AusRail 2006 Conference to be held in Brisbane in November. This two day event commences on Tuesday the 21 November with the Gala Dinner on the Wednesday night. Accommodation is reaching saturation in Brisbane with the Ashes Cricket Series commencing shortly after AusRail 2006. Any member intending to attend AusRail 2006 needs to secure their accommodation with some urgency.

Following the success of the STORE to the grain lines of the West and Riverina areas of NSW in March, a one day symposium will be held in Wagga Wagga on 1 February 2007. See the separate article by Andrew Honan, Chairman of the Government Relations Committee and also page 15 for details. The Symposium is being held on the first Thursday of the month which is the regular meeting night of the Sydney Chapter hence following the Symposium it is proposed to hold the February monthly Chapter meeting in Wagga Wagga for the benefit of those members living and working in the area or attending the Symposium. The Victorian Chapter has been invited to attend and further details will be sent to members through the Monthly Newsletter(s).

The members functions held this quarter have been:

Thursday 6 July

Dick Day, G.M. Timetable Strategy and Development, RailCorp – CityRail Timetable Planning. Mr Day's presentation is fully covered in the Chapter Newsletter which should shortly be available on the RTSA Website.

Thursday 3 August

Joint meeting with PWI & IRSE at Masonic Centre in Goulburn St. This combined meeting included: The PWI AGM with election of officers. A presentation by Allan Logan, Sales & Marketing Manager of Plasser and Theurer on his recent trip to Germany, and A paper by Bill Palazzi titled "Signaling Systems – Keeping Trains Moving" This paper covered the proposals to replace Ordinary Train Staff & Electric Train Staff with Train Order Working in NSW using TMACS and radio communication.

Thursday 7 September

"New Developments in Track Maintenance Machines" by Allan Logan, Sales & Marketing Manager, of Plasser and Theurer. Once every three years the Association of German Railway Engineers (VDEI) organises an International Exhibition of Permanent-Way Technology. The 24th exhibition was recently held in Muenster, Germany, following on from a tradition of highly successful events.

More than 160 exhibitors occupied large areas in both indoor and outdoor displays – indoor space of over 10,000 sq. metres and outdoor space of over 8,000 sq. metres on 3 km of track. The world's leading manufacturers presented machines for track renewal, tamping machines for plain track and switches, machines grinding rails and cleaning ballast as well as cranes for installing points and building bridges, inspection vehicles, rail/road vehicles and track-mounted welding machines.

Allan Logan was one of a large contingent of Australian railway industry visitors to the exhibition

and provided members with a broad overview of some of the more interesting items of equipment and new developments in the field of permanent way maintenance and construction.

Member meeting for the last quarter for 2006 are:

Thursday 5 October

Discussion concerning the adoption of the new RTSA Constitution and a speaker or entertainment to be confirmed.

Thursday 2 November

Details to be confirmed.

2007

January

A meeting with the Eminent CORE / Symposium Speaker, details in the Newsletter when finalised.

Thursday 1 February

A regional meeting in Wagga Wagga following the Regional Rail Symposium, possibly in the format of a dinner meeting with a speaker(s) on events happening on the Sydney to Melbourne Corridor.

Thursday 1 March

Committee member, Malcolm Cluett will present a paper on current advances in steam technology with examples of overseas research and trials.

Normal Sydney Chapter monthly meetings are held at Engineers Australia, ground floor, 8 Thomas Street Chatswood commencing at 17.30 for 18.00 and concluding by 19.30 at the latest.

Joint meetings will have their venue advertised in the monthly newsletter. To have the monthly newsletter sent to you please send a request to billlaid@bigpond.net.au with your contact details.

Bill Laidlaw
NSW Chapter Chair

Queensland

Chairman's Comments

I would like to open by thanking my predecessor, Cameron Smart for his guidance of the Queensland chapter over the last two years. I look forward to continuing his good work and hope to put together an interesting and informative program of activities. As always, all suggestions or requests welcome.

Well, as with the national rail industry, Queensland is also rolling out infrastructure and rolling stock programs with the words "Billion" and dollars attached to it. I am sure many would agree that there has been no better time to play a part in the future of the rail industry.

Recent Meetings

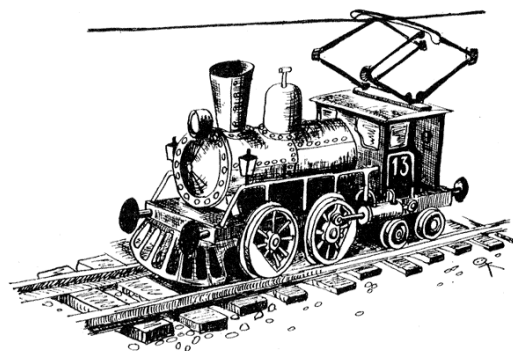
Meetings to report on since last issue:

28 June 2006

Michael Allt and Jeff Leong provided an informative update of their Rail CRC Masters theses, continuing on from work presented in 2004. This was combined with the presentation of the winner and runner-up awards from the RTSA national awards student thesis competition. *Attendees 16*

26 July 2006

The Queensland Chapter AGM was combined with the Annual Dinner and held at the Irish Club in Brisbane City. The theme of the evening also included a railway trivia night, which was a roaring success, enjoyed by all who attended. *Attendees 55*



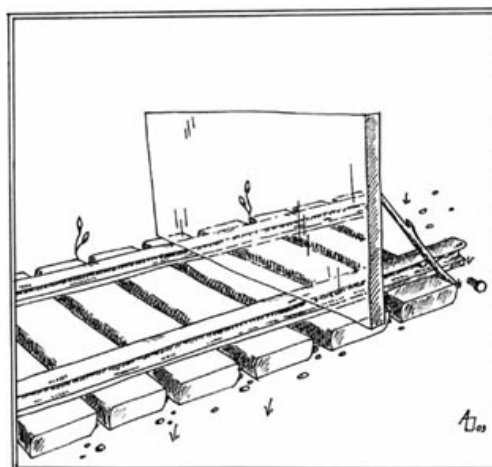
Try your knowledge of railway trivia:

Question 1: The practice of referring to trains as up and down came from the display of destinations on the timetables of which railway?

Question 2: Who invented the continuous train air brake and in what year?

Question 3: In which Australian state were the railways first used to transport a circus and in what year?

Answers can be found on Page 16



23 August 2006 (lunchtime event)

Rob Wilkinson from Interfleet Technology gave us an interesting presentation on the privatisation of the British rail industry and his experiences working in British Rail and then as an asset manager for one of the UK's ROSCOs (Rolling stock Leasing Companies). *Attendees 35*

Upcoming Events

The Queensland Chapter have organised the following events for the remainder of 2006, which is fast running out. The committee is in the process of formulating the 2007 program so any suggestions are welcome.

24 October 2006

Clay Hack of EDI Rail will provide a presentation on "Locomotive Adhesion Improvement", which will be held in Rockhampton and coincide with the QR Infrastructure Conference.

29 November 2006

Marcus McAuliffe of Pacific National Queensland will provide a presentation on Pacific National's operations on the North Coast line in Queensland.

Mark Wishart
Queensland Chapter Chair



In early September, the RTSA West Australian Chapter undertook a site visit to Murdoch Station, south of Perth on the new Southern Suburbs Railway. As it happened the tracklaying machine was passing through the station as the group arrived so they were able to observe the work at close hand. A party of 17 participated in the tour and it was conducted by the PTA with the assistance of the joint venture design/construct company, Rail Link.

The first photo shows the front end of the operation just north of the Murdoch Station, while the second shows the group assembled in front of the tracklaying machine.



RTSA Diary

A listing of RTSA Chapter meetings and events along with those of kindred organisations and conferences endorsed by RTSA

International

14-17 November AsiaRail 2006 International Congress, Hong Kong
www.asiarail.com/en/home.html

National

21 and 22 November AusRAIL2006, Sofitel, Brisbane, Qld
www.ausrail.com

1 February 2007 Future Frameworks for Regional Rail (see next page)
Charles Sturt University, Wagga, Wagga

Sydney Chapter

2nd Nov Government and Opposition transport spokespersons debate their policies ahead of the 2007 election (to be confirmed)

Victoria Chapter

18th Oct Presentation by Siemens Update on Suburban Trains

15th Nov Guided tour of Southern Cross Station

13th Dec Christmas Gathering and Corporate Presentation by Warren Williams of WorleyParsons, at 21 Bedford Street, North Melbourne.

Queensland Chapter

24th Oct Locomotive Adhesion Improvement – Clay Hack, EDI Rail

29th Nov PN Operations in Queensland – Marcus MacAuliffe, Pacific National

South Australia Chapter

12th October PWI Quiz Night

3/4th Nov IRSE Technical Convention

28th Nov AGM Dinner meeting, Hyde Park Tavern

Western Australia Chapter

October/November (TBA) New MetroRail Project update

For more detailed information on these and all RTSA activities please visit the web site

www.rtsa.com.au

Future Frameworks for Regional Rail

A joint initiative between Engineers Australia - Railway Technical Society of Australasia and Charles Sturt University

A symposium to explore capabilities and frameworks for sustainable regional rail, recognising the benefits of an integrated and balanced approach between road and rail within regional logistics chains.

Thursday 1 February 2007

**Charles Sturt University Agriculture Campus
North Wagga Wagga, NSW**

How Canada Turned Around Regional Rail

Ed Zsombor P. Eng. Director, Rail Projects Saskatchewan Highway and Transport Agency

Regionalism, Railways and Local Government.

Ian Gray BA MA PhD Associate Professor School of Humanities and Social Sciences Charles Sturt University

Regional Governance: Lessons from the Australian Experience with Catchment management

Allan Curtis BA Dip, PhD Professor of Integrated Environmental Management. Director of the Institute for Land, Water and Society

Evidence from Western Australia of an Integrated Grains Industry

John Goodall CPeng. Principal Beyond Rail Solutions

The Factors and Behaviours that Drive the Hunter Valley Coal Alliance

Speaker to be confirmed

A Victorian Perspective of Regional Rail and its Impacts on NSW

John Hearsch Director John Hearsch Consulting Pty. Ltd.

Report on 'Integration of Regional Rail and Roads and their Interface to Ports'

Mr Paul Neville MP (National Party of Australia, Hinkler, Qld) Chair Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services (subject to Parliamentary sitting dates)

Views from an emerging Australian Short-line rail operator

Speaker to be confirmed

- *A more detailed programme will be provided in December and details added to the RTSA web site.*

Registration Cost

\$120 per person **\$60** per person for RTSA members

Lunch and morning and afternoon teas are included in the registration.

The symposium has received financial and in-kind support from the Railway Technical Society and the Institute for Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University.

A limited number of free registrations are available to non-profit community organisations. Please contact Associate Professor Ian Gray (igray@csu.edu.au) for information.

2007 RTSA AWARDS

In 2007, the RTSA will again be offering awards in three categories, namely; the Railway Engineering Student award, the Young Railway Engineer's award and the Individual award.

Nominations for these prestigious awards will close on **Friday 23rd February 2007** and further details of the process of application, together with the appropriate nomination forms can be found in the RTSA website **www.rtsa.com.au**

John Dring
Chairman Awards Committee



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Railway Trivia Answers

(from page 12)

Answer 1: London and North Eastern (LNER)

Answer 2: George Westinghouse in 1869

Answer 3: Tasmania in 1881

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**

RTSA AGM 2006

The Minutes and Reports from the National Annual General Meeting held in Melbourne during CORE2006 on 2nd May can be viewed by members on the RTSA website:

www.rtsa.com.au

