

NEWSLETTER No 2/2005



Railway Technical Society of Australasia
SA Chapter
Engineering House, Bagot Street
NORTH ADELAIDE SA 5006

FEBRUARY 2005

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on the **3rd March 2005** at

Riviera Motel and Function Centre
which is located at
31-34 North Terrace, Adelaide

commencing at 5.30 pm. when Max Shuard will present
a talk on the proposed

Port River Expressway

The main features of the Expressway are the two new river crossings, one road and one rail, east of Port Adelaide. The Expressway is however, an integrated transport corridor designed to service the Port of Adelaide.

The history of the upgrading of the Port and its transfer from Middle to Outer Harbour, have directly influenced the options adopted for the Expressway.

For rail, it will mean metamorphosis along the Le Fevre Peninsula from a quiet backwater handling about 600,000 tonnes per year to a major transport link transporting 4 to 5 million tonnes per year.

For road, it may mean the introduction of the first tolled carriageway in South Australia in modern times.

The talk will trace the recent history of the Port and Expressway to where it is today.

Max is a Civil Engineer formerly from Australian National. He held several positions in AN including Perway Engineer Adelaide. Max has a lot of perway experience and was involved in a number of AN construction projects including most recently the Adelaide-Crystal Brook standardisation project.

This will be a joint meeting with and hosted by the PWI South Australian Section.

THE DRIVERS SEAT

I have been more familiar with Sydney than Adelaide over the long span of my years, although the last 12 have been in the latter city. Never the less moving to Sydney has been a bit of a shock in some respects. There are the obvious comparisons of moving from a rustic hills village in S.A. (even if it was just 25 minutes from the middle of Adelaide) to a 'shoebox' in the centre of the largest city in the country – basically they do not have points of comparison; both have their pluses and minuses. At least here the 'garden police' have been put out of business since we do not even have a balcony let alone a garden (although we now realise that our 'garden' is maintained by the City Council, has a couple of the best imaginable garden ornaments (like a bridge and opera house) and is regularly visited by great passenger liners (as cruise ships) of up to 100,000 tonnes instead of birds and bandicoots.

However of more direct interest is public transport. As might be expected living in the middle of a city places the mass of public transport at ones door, so to speak. Sydney's ferries, Circular Quay station and Wynyard stations are within 5 minutes while most city bus routes run within a few blocks. Even the airport is only 15 minutes away by train. So in terms of accessibility Sydney is a new experience. In terms of vehicle quality (and ignoring the comparison of 'Freshwater' and Popeye) the train system here leaves quite a bit to be desired. Apart from the recently introduced 'Millenium' trains most are tired looking, prone to leaking in Sydney's heavy downpours, and as a result of their double deck design do not have the ambience that a good condition 3000/3100 class car has. A reasonable proportion of the fleet (around 500 cars by all accounts) are not air-conditioned which leaves Sydney as the last bastion of such vehicles (Melbourne's few remaining Hitachi's are close to extinction). In the relatively humid climate here, coupled with the residual warmth of the underground system, lack of air-conditioning is very noticeable. Late running (or at the least inconsistent running) coupled with complex timetables makes navigating the system here something of a lottery. Adelaide's well developed off peak, shoulder, and peak pattern services are a good model for any rail system that want to keep to a simple (and therefore reliable) model.

The reach of the Sydney network of course has no equal in SA with typically hourly services all day to places up to 200 km away, and much more frequent closer in. In fact the Inter-Urban trains (still electric multiple unit trains but of a better class) that I have used in recent months have been really quite reliable and comfortable, apart from the 'slowness' of this busy

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system where curves, junctions, stops etc. combine to give very ordinary times in comparison with cars on reasonably congested roads. Only on one occasion has an Inter-urban journey been a failure, and that interestingly was on a two car suburban train running a Sydney to Newcastle service (in the end it was so late by Hornsby (30 km) that I bailed out and got a car instead).

One notable attribute of the Sydney system is that it reaches a substantially higher proportion of the city than in Adelaide, so that train (and bus) will get you to most places here with greater ease than by driving (at least during bank hours). This is substantially offset by the bad habit of massive shutdowns just about every weekend and frequently at night as well to do 'track work'. It would not be hard to suggest that the weekend service reductions brought in during July 2004 (to save drivers for weekday services!) would simply reduce the cost of bus hiring. In fact they could well have replaced the weekend system with buses and saved the variability of service provision one weekend to the next.

Overkill with recorded messages is another downside. I have been at Central (Electric not the Steam Station) when there were no suburban trains at any of the eight platforms while the pre-recorded message was telling us to 'mind the gap' (do they mean the 20 ft gap to the next platform??). Equally the PA on an island platform will often run different messages concurrently for each of the two sides – with total loss of comprehension by intending passengers.

The area where Sydney fails utterly is in the fare and ticketing department. Rail tickets are magnetically

encoded but really are still built around a fare structure that dates back pre-decimal and is quite rigid in its application. A single fare from Wynyard to Newcastle is cheaper than one from Central to Newcastle, despite the fact that the former requires travel for two more stations (distance measured via the North Shore line is the secret here). Equally, unlike say Melbourne, the 'City' is not recognised by the ticketing system. If I buy a ticket 'City' to Airport at Wynyard the system will not recognise it as valid from any other city station (even though it is valid).

However the biggest drawback of all is that there is no multi-modal ticketing (apart from a few token gestures) so that going on a journey of say bus, ferry and train (quite possible from say the northern beaches to Parramatta) could involve up to six separate ticketing transactions for a return journey. Every other city in Australia has some form of time based and/or zone system that works across all public transport; even Brisbane came into the fold last year. There is no doubt that road congestion is a major and growing factor in Sydney, aided by the dominance of the harbour and the relatively aggressive terrain. The public transport system here has great potential but it will never be fully realised while dithering goes on around the issue of simplified and multi-modal ticketing. Given the ponderous (almost Neanderthal) bureaucratic processes here, not restricted to rail by any means, it is unlikely that any rapid changes could be introduced even if the desire was there to do so. Even that is doubtful.

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FUTURE MEETINGS

| Future Speakers/Dates/Topics | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------|--|---|
| Date | Speaker | Organisation | Topic | Venue |
| 03/03/05 (joint PWI) | Max Shuard | Transport SA | Port River Expressway | Hosted by PWI. Riviera Motel and Function Centre |
| 07/04/05 | Malcolm Owens | ARTC | ARTC Expansion into NSW | Engineers Australia Chapman Hall |
| 05/05/05 | Robb van Toledo | John Holland | The new RG9 Rail Grinder | Engineers Australia Chapman Hall |
| No Meeting in June | | | | |
| 07/07/05 | Dean Philips | TransAdelaide | Re-Tendering of TransAdelaide's Railcar Maintenance Contract | Engineers Australia Chapman Hall |
| 04/08/05 | TBA | | Review of Heavy Haul Conference-Brazil | Engineers Australia Chapman Hall |
| 01/09/05 (joint PWI) | TBA | TransAdelaide | New Trans Adelaide Trams | Engineers Australia Chapman Hall (RTSA to host) |
| 06/10/05 | TBA | TBA | Upgrading of Glenelg Tram Infrastructure | Engineers Australia Chapman Hall |
| 03/11/05 | TBA | TBA | TBA | Engineers Australia Chapman Hall |
| 29/11/05 | Annual General Meeting of RTSA - SA Chapter | | Dinner meeting | |

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KEY RTSA CHAPTER COMMITTEE CONTACTS

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|--------------|------------------|--------------|
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Articles or editorial comment for Newsletter are very welcome. We have over 100 members locally some of whom will have stories, events or developments of interest that could be reported in Newsletter.

Part of the function of RTSA is to keep members in touch with what is going on in the industry and with each other and to that end we are only too happy to publish items of interest.

Send copy to the Editor, Stephen Townsend at st771048@bigpond.net.au or fax to 08 8390 3772

Electronic despatch of Newsletter is undertaken by Malcolm Menadue – contact Malcolm on mmenadue@ozemail.com.au if you have any problems receiving Newsletter electronically or in hard copy. Note that electronic subscribers will get their Newsletters and flyers as soon as the editorial stuff is done, while the hard copy mail will of course be some days slower.

For all other matters relating to RTSA SA Chapter contact Robert Schweiger (Chairman) at e-mail robert.schweiger@jhg.com.au or

by phone on 0413 128 775.