

## From the Executive Chairman

Your executive has been working hard to bring as many member benefits to you in the way of professional development, information and educational opportunities and I am pleased to report on a few items that you can look forward to this year.

You may have found the weekly emailed web links informative and we plan to bring those to you as well as links to information created in conferences and research.

Our electronic reach also extends to our website where you can find the presentations given at your Chapter meetings, seminars and the Newsletters. The site continues to improve and will be updated to include the education opportunities now available in Australia which include Operations and Signalling from CQU, Infrastructure at QUT and rolling stock from Wollongong.

Our most ambitious initiative is to extend the reach of our Professional Development Program particularly for young engineers who are seeking Chartered status and also students who are thinking about joining our industry. There will be events announced shortly. Ravi has taken up the challenge to spearhead this initiative.

Despite being a non-CORE year there's plenty happening. The STORE tour to Asia originally scheduled for March was delayed to later in the year and the details of that will be on the website shortly. It will consist of 10 days through most major Asian centres. The Executive has just authorised a financial package aimed at assisting young engineers to join the tour.

The tour is likely to cost around \$5,000 or more and we want to encourage the young engineers to learn and experience an unforgettable start to their career. We are pleased some funds were made available from the Metro seminar in Sydney; thanks to Andrew Honan and his team for trading at a slight surplus, and in true RTSA style we simply plough it back into the industry.

We've also been busy with submissions to government enquiries. We joined with ARA to submit to the Senate enquiry on Public Transport and Philip Laird has just done a great job in a submission relating to the role of the NTC.

Just a few more initiatives: You will begin to see an RTSA banner being displayed at our Chapter meetings. Thanks to a Victorian initiative we have developed a banner that can be rolled up and will give our Chapter meetings a professional image. We are a conservative lot and we thought it was about time we displayed how proud we are of the Society.

The most exciting of all is the development of our Wellington CORE2010 program. The Executive met in Wellington during February and we were appraised of the New Zealand Chapter's plans.. Thanks to John Goodall who ran the Perth conference, a full hand-over pack was developed that will help establish the Wellington conference as a superior event. They are well progressed, with a great venue and the formulation of ancillary events.

PLEASE make a point of diarising September 2010 for the event and if you need special permission from your boss (work or home) start to tell them about it and get your approvals in place. More will come out about the call for papers and the program as we progress through the year.

Shortly after writing this note I heard of the terrible tragedy on the BHP line near Port Hedland where a rail worker was hit by a train. Our sympathies go to his family and his fellow workers. Our industry is known for its safety and we will continue to strive to make sure any mishap is one too many.

*Martin Baggott*  
*RTSA Executive Chairman*



# Rail Horizons

Contents – March 2009



ENGINEERS  
AUSTRALIA

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## Point of View

Max Michell

*"In nearly 2000 km of main line through the more populous parts of regional Australia we can hardly get to double figures in the number of places that now are able to do business with rail. A very sad situation indeed."*

Back in November 2008 I wrote in the NSW Chapter newsletter how a significant volume of rail traffic in the last half of the 20th century had been abandoned by the railways themselves. Some traffic went when it was realised that it was an unsustainable financial drain on the railway, but added to that was a rather myopic zeal that threw out the baby with the bathwater.

With the mantra 'Intermodal is good', out went the majority of wagonload traffic. 'Shunting is bad', so out went anything and everything that had any connection with shunters and shunting.

Effectively the main line railways of this country converted in a fairly short time from a variety of traffics in relatively numerous trains to fewer (but larger) trains that were mostly made up of intermodal (container) traffic. The big bulk traffics, coal, grain ores and a few other strays survived as block trains running point to point, but most of these did not involve hauls between the major population centres. That was left to the intermodal business.

Over the last few decades inter-capital rail traffic (which is closely aligned to the rail intermodal traffic) has declined on all but the Perth corridor from a modest market share (30-50%) to negligible volumes (10%), which suggests that in among all the other issues intermodal is not the mechanism to save rail in the retail and consumer freight business.

There are many issues related to intermodal, particularly on the East Coast routes, and market share loss. Pricing is one - rail line haul on large trains (up to 1500 metres long) is relatively low cost, far lower than road, but when the pickup and delivery (PUD) costs are added that cost advantage can be substantially eroded.

Is there not some way that the rail line haul could be coupled to something that is less costly for that last little bit at each end which at the same time would strengthen rails position? Somewhere in the terminal and delivery process there are gross cost 'penalties' which are very much to rail's detriment, but have we ever seriously tried to work our way out of these?

Which brings us to another issue with intermodal - customers who use intermodal 'learn' how to use road trucks but have no idea about using (or dealing) with rail. We are effectively setting up all our customers to be road users, rather than providing them with a choice from source.

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The fact that the truck at the loading dock carries a container is purely incidental to the sender - a non intermodal truck would look and be just the same to them. So now we have our customers trained to deal entirely with road, which has the potential to significantly add to the cost of our product, which surely has to be a recipe for failure. All the key decision making issues (as far as the customers are concerned) are virtually out of our hands.

Rail of course has taken this another stage further. The love affair with Forwarding Agents detached the rail systems from their real customers - rail became the third person in a two party arrangement. Our visibility to the major originators and receivers of freight was eroded to the point where rail was essentially irrelevant to most freight customers. Even where forwarders were essentially set up to make use of rail for line haul rather than being a large road operator (e.g. FCL, SCT) the invisibility of rail (and its poor service record) drove these operators into additional line haul road capability.

Allied to the passion for all things intermodal is the 'long trains are better' belief. Long trains, or rather trains that have increased revenue freight aboard, are indeed good, but only in the right context.

In the case of intermodal the extension of train lengths from around 600 metres (maybe 80 TEU at best) to 1500 metres (over 200 TEU) in the mid 1990's virtually halved the frequency of trains between east coast capitals. In most cases adjoining capitals were reduced to a single daily intermodal train with 24 hour gaps between successive departures which had only 14-20 hours transit time to the destination.

From a customer's point of view (ignoring a number of other drags in the system) the real transit time was between 14 and 44 hours for a journey that in most cases could be done by road overnight. With shorter trains there potentially was greater choice in departures and therefore a reduction in excessive wait times prior to the next intermodal departure, but the line haul cost would then be higher - a classic trade off between service and price which the railways never really came to grips with.

A major impediment to efficient intermodal rail operations that are competitive with road is the time taken at terminals to interchange between PUD road trucks and the trains. Based on the typical terminal operation in most capital cities a 1500 metre train will take something like 3 to 4 hours to fully load or unload - which is another blocker to road competitive transit times. Not only is the load and unload time excessive but the interface between rail and individual road trucks is quite unpredictable, leading to considerable truck waiting time - a major factor in the high PUD costs. In effect the efficiency of the rail line haul is being optimised by adoption of gross inefficiency in other parts of the supply chain, which is hardly a recipe for success on the part of rail.

Intermodal is not the devil in the system - it is just that, in typical rail fashion, it has been used as the 'one size fits all' answer where sometimes such an approach might be quite inappropriate.

Abandonment of wagon load capacity has reduced the main line freight task in an industry where high volumes are required to support the high cost of track - a cost that is substantially indifferent to volume and is therefore sensitive to changes in rail volume. In many ways the obsession with intermodal over the last four decades has contributed to changes in the demographics of industry that would be hard to rectify - industrial estates with no rail connections (not even close to rail in many cases) with plants designed only for road access with an obsession with 'just in time' that is another of the 'one size fits all' attitudes that is less important than it pretends to be.

Abandonment of wagon load traffic has seen the end of virtually all the regional freight originating on main lines so that between Melbourne and Sydney there are now only about five locations that generate any rail traffic at all (other than grain and coal) - and these are mostly train load traffics that were outside the 'wagon load is bad' remit.

Between Newcastle and Brisbane the same situation applies - apart from coal and ballast there are only about five locations that deal in wagonload traffic and all but one are basically single commodity sidings. In nearly 2000 km of main line through the more populous parts of regional Australia we can hardly get to double figures in the number of places that now are able to do business with rail. A very sad scenario indeed.

It may be too late to recover the situation, but even if not it will take years if not decades to change the habits of a whole generation of companies and freight dispatchers back to a viable relationship with rail.

Maybe a starting point would be to reverse our attitude to one of 'how can we adapt ourselves so that we become an essential part of the supply chain'. Wagonload by definition is a complete service since it (should) provide transport between one private siding to another, cutting out all the problems of terminal handling and PUD that bedevil the current intermodal operations. Wagonload may not be everyone's cup of tea but it should be an integral part of a viable rail freight portfolio.

Henry Posner III, Chairman of RDC (regional USA railroad) with experience in Estonia, Africa and South America as well as USA is quoted as saying "Wagonload is the canary in the coalmine - if it goes you have a sick business. But wagonload (in Europe, unlike America) is still considered a liability. If you convert customers from wagonload to intermodal ... you are teaching them how to use lorries, and if you are successful another open access operator will try to take the business off you." Henry's comments are directed to Europe but look to be entirely appropriate for Australia.

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## Submissions and Inquiries

The level of submissions to inquiries has not been very high over the last 6 months. The RTSA however did lodge a paper on the review of the National Transport Commissions (NTC) (being conducted by the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government).

### NTC Review

The Review asked what stakeholders thought the 'big issues' were, and the RTSA put forward the following:

- There is a considerable backlog of mainline interstate track work needed.
- Federal land transport dollars should be allocated on economic grounds rather than political grounds, with environmental and social factors taken into account.
- Present NTC road user charges result in under-recovery of road system costs for the heavier articulated trucks hauling large distances each year. Mass-distance based charging for such trucks is now long overdue.
- Too many land transport costs are externalized.

As such the RTSA suggests that in the review of the NTC, a 'new' body be formed that requires the NTC to give much more consideration to the social and environmental costs of road freight than has happened hitherto.

There is also the impression that the NTC, which is born out to the road transport industry, has strong capability and advocacy for road productivity, but does not have the same capability in articulating and promoting policies or programmes for rail productivity or intermodal terminal efficiencies (between road and rail).

Advocacy in road productivity, such as B-triples and performance based trucking regulation, are commendable from that mode's perspective, however there is not a similar advocacy say for double stacking of rail containers, or interstate track upgrading (both of which would increase rail productivity), that promotes overall transport efficiency. Indeed, it was only in 2008 that the NTC placed on exhibition papers concerned with rail productivity.

### NSW Grains Line review

Many of the RTSA members will be aware of the NSW branch line study tour in March 2006 and the Future Frameworks of Regional Rail conference in Wagga Wagga in February 2007. Both of these initiatives were to inform, educate stakeholders and support the 'Neville Enquiry' (the House of Representatives' Enquiry on the Integration of Regional Road and Rail Networks and their Connectivity to Ports). These initiatives occurred after a 'calling to arms' by Paul Neville at AusRail 2005 for individual and groups to get involved in the issues of rail, road and port integration.

Unfortunately there was not a response by the previous government after this report was tabled. The new Labor Government has since announced an enquiry, specifically on the grain lines, in which submissions are due by 17 March 2009.

It is likely that the RTSA will make a submission, along previous themes that rail has much more scope to offer if entrepreneurialism and dynamic efficiency is allowed to flourish.

There are a suite of policy issues that can be looked at. Whether it is support for facilitation of short-lines programmes, capital subsidies for private sidings, a process that promotes access paths to rail infrastructure, or a safety regulation system that promotes small-medium rail operators. These and other issues should be looked to see if they are factors that affect the viability of regional rail.

Also there is a case for some academic research on these issues, that could possibly feed into policies *and* practices for regional rail. This research could cover both regional development as well as rail transport origin –destination studies. It is important however that any research find its way both into government policy and any enabling practices for regional rail.

Clearly there are many factors that will be require understanding, unfortunately there will not be the time to go into detail with this submission but it is hoped possibly that a joint submission will be made with some local councils or likeminded associations

**Andrew Honan**  
**RTSA Government Relations Committee**

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### Freight Rail Productivity Review

The National Transport Commission has released a Draft Position Paper on its Freight Rail Productivity Review for public comment.

Consultation with the rail industry has identified poor productivity as a key concern for the sector, with a number of issues raised as key impediments.

Various reforms exist which are likely to impact on productivity within the rail industry and across the transport sector as a whole. The paper investigates how rail currently operates as part of the transport sector and identifies the key barriers to improved productivity. This includes an analysis of the possible gains from continuing with the current transport reform agenda.

The NTC is also seeking feedback on the Draft Position Paper which can be viewed at the address below. Submissions to the paper are also being sought until the 9th of April and can be made online or via email.

[www.ntc.gov.au/DocView.aspx?DocumentId=1827](http://www.ntc.gov.au/DocView.aspx?DocumentId=1827)

## The Sydney Brisbane rail corridor: A big picture view

By Philip Laird and Chris Venn-Brown

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) in 2004 took up a long term lease on NSW interstate and Hunter Valley track. Since then, much work has been done on the track between Broadmeadow and the NSW/Queensland border. This includes three new crossing loops, many crossing loop extensions and/or upgrades, concrete re-sleepering and selected bridge rehabilitations. In June 2008, CTC signalling finally replaced Electric Train Staff safeworking north of Casino which was estimated to save 45 minutes of transit time.

All up, the intention is to cut the freight train transit time between Sydney and Brisbane by some four hours to about 15.5 hours. As seen by ARTC Managing Director David Marchant, the combined track and signal work is "perhaps the biggest rail project since the track was originally laid," and "For ARTC it marks rail's resurgence as a realistic freight option."

However, the ARTC's submission to Infrastructure Australia recognises that: *"For rail ... to maintain competitiveness against a constantly improving road network there is no alternative but to start to consider deviations of the current poorly aligned sections of the network."*

### When do we start ?

When will work actually start on the first of many Sydney Brisbane deviations needed to make rail an attractive option on this corridor is a good question. In this regard, the May 2004 Federal Budget speech in allocating \$450m to the ARTC noted that it was for projects like straightening the track.

This was confirmed in the 2004 AusLink White Paper. However, after an examination in 2004-05 by the ARTC of potential rail deviations, it was decided to put them on hold with an undertaking that *"...Deviations will be further analysed for future AusLink funding packages and ARTC will undertake more detailed analysis of deviation options during this period."*

In 2007, the Neville Committee of the House of Representatives in its report "The Great Freight Task: Is Australia's transport network up to the challenge?" noted that *"... the greatest need for Australia is the reconstruction and realignment of the main freight networks. This would: allow faster speeds and greater axle loads; clear the way for longer trains and double stacked containers; make it possible to reduce the steepness of grades, straighten lines and remove loops; and allow for the elimination of many level crossings."*

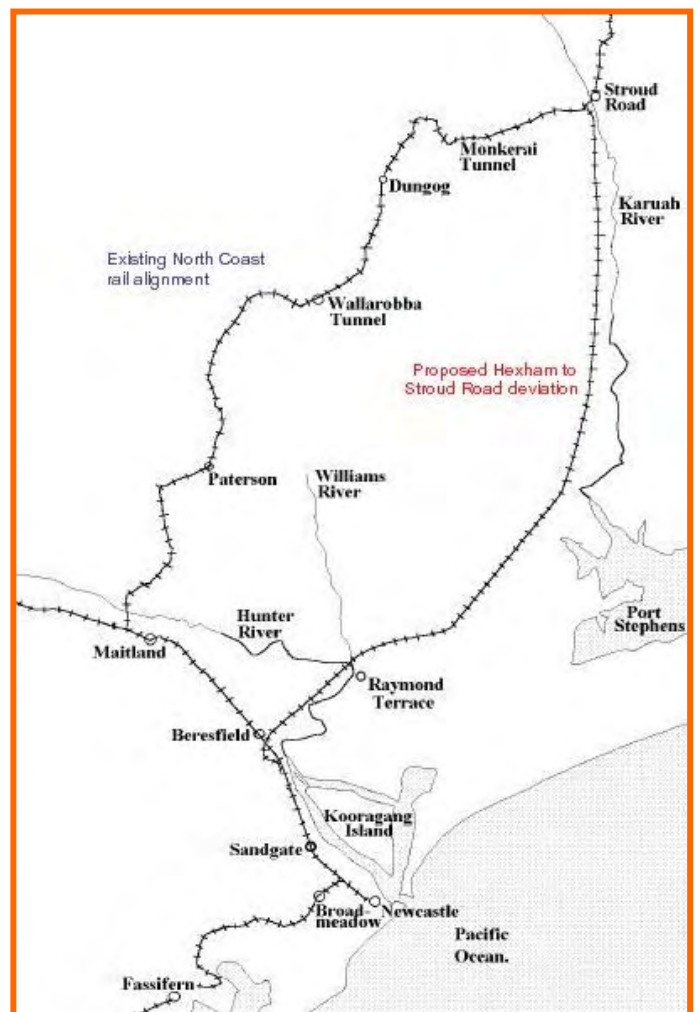
The Neville Report gives a case study outlining the benefits of a major North Coast rail deviation between Hexham and Stroud Road.

In 2000, RTSA Member Alex Stoney suggested in this journal, construction of 67 km of new track would replace a substandard 91 km section with poor alignment.

Subsequent computer simulation indicated that the benefits include a time saving of 42 minutes, significant fuel and other train operating costs plus lower track maintenance and external costs.

A further dimension, put forward by the RTSA in various submissions to the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority is for the potential for some Pacific Highway Upgrades to be combined with rail deviations. The RTSA has taken a particular interest in the Kempsey to Eungai section and regards it as having good potential for a shared road/ rail corridor.

Track with substandard alignment imposes additional costs on freight train operators due to excessive transit times, fuel use, and braking applications. It also leads to unattractive transit times for train passengers.



Proposed Hexham-Stroud Rd deviation

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## The wider perspective

It is instructive to see the Sydney to Brisbane rail corridor through the eyes of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*) and its readers.

On Monday 19 January 2009, the lead editorial noted "the inadequacies of Australia's most notorious road, the Pacific Highway", a \$6.6 billion plan to finish the highway's upgrade being short-listed by Infrastructure Australia, and a call for [Rudd] Government approval.

Not a word was mentioned about rail, but *The SMH* on 21 January 2009 ran in its "First word" letter to the Editor, "Sydney to Brisbane railway has crooked track record" by the first writer (PL).

This letter noted how as the Pacific Highway was upgraded from 1996, when interstate road freight on the highway was about 1.5 million tonnes per annum (mtpa), it has grown to more than 6 mtpa. Over this time, rail's share of Sydney-Brisbane freight has fallen from about 25 per cent to less than 10 per cent. The letter also noted safety concerns (30% of fatalities on the Pacific Highway involve trucks), and included:

"The Sydney to Brisbane railway was built as a string of branch lines for much of its length. The worst sections need straightening, and this should be given equal priority with Pacific Highway upgrading. Indeed, in some sections, such as Kempsey to Eungai, it would be possible to combine road upgrades and track straightening on the same corridor.

"Track straightening for faster and heavier freight trains has worked well on the Queensland North Coast line, where rail now handles more than 25% of land freight. In addition, the track straightening facilitated the introduction in 1998 of the Tilt Train, which can reach speeds of up to 160 km/h."

Two days later, on 23 January 2009, *The SMH* ran another lead letter "Trucks beat trains when it comes to timely deliveries" from a Mr Michael Lane of St Ives claiming that the above letter was a plea "for funding to be transferred from the Pacific Highway to the North Coast rail line" and, "Even if the rail line was straightened and upgraded, this standard of performance cannot be met by the rail system. It takes a minimum of three hours to get goods from the factory to the train and a similar time at the other end, leaving only 10 hours for the 1000-kilometre trip."

Some other remarks were made including road safety and "A higher proportion of freight is carried on the North Queensland rail system but this is largely coal; huge trains hauling vast loads of bulky, low-value material."

At this stage, it was possible that the ARA, Pacific National, Queensland Rail, or the ARTC would move to set the record straight and put forward rail's superior safety and energy efficiency record.

Instead it was left to the wider public, with no fewer than four *SMH* letters on 24 January 2009, as follows. The lead letter "For passenger comfort, look at the Finnish line" from Chris O'Rourke of Bathurst noted that Michael Lane "underestimates what can be achieved when building modern railways, especially with regard to passenger travel. In Australia we have developed a dependency on the car and the truck, but it does not have to be this way. Some countries have made a conscious effort to invest in rail, with some success."

"In the 1960s Finland decided to modernise its rail system. Now there is an electrified line from Helsinki to Rovaniemi (population 60,000), a distance of about 900 kilometres. Passenger trains take eight to nine hours at an average of about 100 km/h. There are seven services in both directions every day. This is about the same distance as the twisting and turning rail line from Sydney to Tweed Heads. Yet a realigned line between Sydney and Brisbane would be shorter and much faster for passenger and freight trains."

This was followed by Moya Crowe of Orange starting with Michael Lane, "emphasizes the time factor in transporting goods. Perishable goods apart, what is the hurry? Why can't firms rethink their ordering timetables to allow more time for delivery?"

Then Robyn Hansen of Pennant Hills wrote in part "Michael Lane says trains are only good for transporting low-value, non-time-dependent freight. The VIA train from Winnipeg to Churchill in Canada takes two days and transports fresh milk, meat, fruit, wine and perishables safely and efficiently, summer and winter. No need for a road laden with mean, dangerous fuel-guzzling trucks."

A Port Botany truck problem observed by David Mackinnon of Kings Cross was that of "truckies enduring 35-degree heat (with no water or food available) waiting for hours to pick up goods that have probably been at sea for weeks or even months. Having finally made their loads, the truckies battle their way through bottleneck inner-city traffic and negotiate the trip to their destination, perhaps hundreds of kilometres away."

## The Last Word

There were other letters that did not make it to the pages of the *SMH*. This includes one by the second writer (CV-B) as follows.

"Michael Lane (Letters, January 23), misses the main point about rail freight transportation, and is misleading on others.

In these days of global warming and the need for minimum energy use, the most significant advantage of rail transportation is its energy efficiency. A steel wheel rolling on a steel rail meets a great deal less resistance than a rubber tyre on bitumen. This is fundamental physics, and nothing can change it. Trains are also inherently more

aerodynamically efficient than an equivalent number of trucks.

It has been shown that, in round terms, a train will transport about three times more payload than a truck will, using the same amount of energy. It is therefore imperative, for this reason alone, that as much freight as possible is transferred from road transport to rail transport.

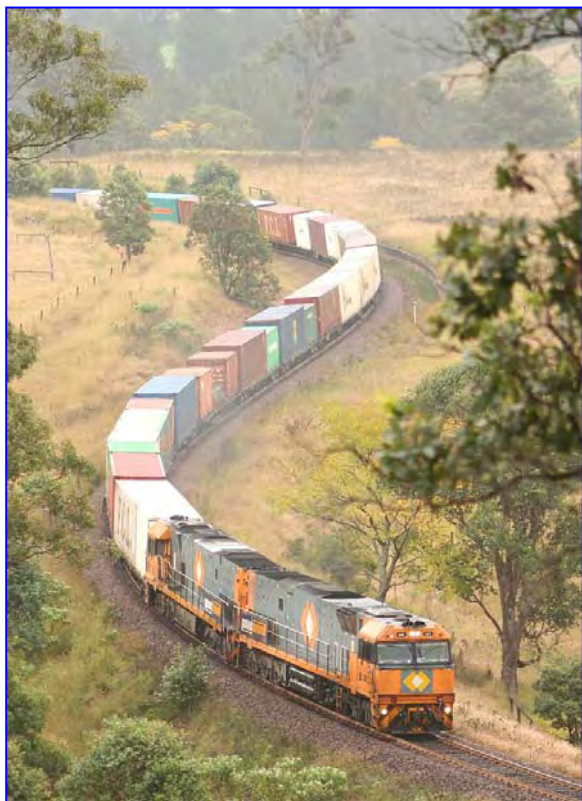
To meet this imperative, it is important to encourage more freight on to rail by reducing rail freight door-to-door times.

Most existing freight rolling stock is already capable of travelling at speeds approaching 120 km/h. Minor and relatively inexpensive design modifications would allow much higher speeds. Freight train speeds are limited not by the design or condition of rolling stock, but by the condition and alignment of the track. This point was addressed by Philip Laird in relation to the Sydney-Brisbane line (Letters, January 21).

It is true that door-to-door rail freight shipping times are increased by the need to transfer the goods between the door and the railway terminal. However, there are modern technological improvements and systems available, which would, if embraced by an integrated road/rail transportation industry, dramatically reduce this time."

*Philip Laird is at the University of Wollongong, a Life Member of the RTSA and inaugural National Chairman of the RTSA.*

*Chris Venn-Brown is a NSW North Coast based Railway Consulting Engineer and former National Secretary of the RTSA.*



## CORE2008 Update

A total of 944 people participated in the RTSA's CORE2008 conference held in Perth last year. Questionnaire responses from delegates have provided some interesting data in regard to delegate participation:

### Gender

Male	95%
Female	5%

### Age profile:

35 and under	27%
36 to 45	19%
46 to 55	28%
56 Plus	27%

### State/Overseas:

WA	33%
NSW	25%
Vic	14%
Qld	12%
SA	7%
NT/ACT	1%
Overseas	7%

### Membership/attendance:

RTSA Members	66%
Engineers Australia Members	13%
First time attendees	51%

Three questionnaire responses relating to participation were as follows:

### The two factors that influenced decision to attend:

Relevant speakers/papers	34%
Networking opportunities	37%
Management	11%
Location (Perth)	16%
Price	2%

### Was the decision to attend a:

Personal decision	37%
Employer decision	10%
Joint Decision	53%

### How did you first hear about CORE 2008:

RTSA function/magazine	22%
RTSA website	4%
At CORE 2006	30%
Email blast	28%
Advertising in magazines	16%

## ► International approach needed for rail research

Having just returned from a trip to the UK, France and North America, it has become strikingly clear to me that the CRC for Rail Innovation is not alone in facing the challenges related to issues such as transport emission reductions, rail operations and safety, rail capacity, urban mobility, and technologies and capabilities required for the future railways.

Since the privatisation of the rail industry in Australia and elsewhere, there has been a general diminution in the public availability of information and research knowledge. In addition, a large amount of institutional and research knowledge is languishing in paper files or disparate information repositories. There is no simple way to “Google” international rail research or industry knowledge and the results of research literature reviews can, therefore, be patchy.

There is an emerging international consensus of the need for a clearing house for the identification and retention of world rail research that is open to the world’s carriers, research groups and infrastructure owners. This coincides with an Australasian demand for an up to date ‘Research Portal’ (Knowledge Bank) providing access to Australian and international research publications and other rail information.

The CRC for Rail Innovation is planning to progress the concept of a ‘Knowledge Bank’ which will pull together as much existing Australian research as possible in an electronic format that will be easily accessible and searchable. Positive discussions have already been held with interested parties such as the RTSA, Rail Track Association Australia and the IRSE.

The benefit will be easy access to rail research and industry information leading to a reduction in duplication of research effort and greater confidence in originality of research, reduced cost and time of literature reviews and reduced reliance by the Rail Industry on their own ad hoc libraries and knowledge/ literature collections. Obviously, many paper-based records will need to be digitised.

This project aims to open up access to a wide range of information services, including research, libraries and industry information. The CRC for Rail Innovation will also work internationally to seamlessly link this knowledge bank with those of other international rail research organisations. The objective is to create an international one-stop-shop to provide simple access to search the world’s rail research and technical knowledge. This may, on occasions, avoid the need for research if it becomes clear that it is more appropriate to leverage or adapt existing international knowledge to an Australian

context. It will also give the CRC for Rail Innovation a high level of confidence that its \$100m research program is maximizing potential and extending existing knowledge to provide major benefits to the Australian rail industry.

*The above article was CRC for Rail Innovation CEO David George’s message in the CRC’s Research Briefs February 2009 edition*

## ► PN Queensland to receive first electric locomotive

In late February, the first Class 7100 locomotive for Pacific National was despatched from the Siemens Locomotive Manufacturing Plant in Munich en route to Australia. Scheduled to arrive in early April, the narrow gauge, 25kV heavy haul electric locomotive will then be transported from Brisbane to its commissioning site in the Queensland Goonyella Coal System by rail.

In 2007 Pacific National awarded Siemens a contract for the design, supply, testing and commissioning, and warranty support of up to 35 (including options) Class 7100 locomotives. This milestone marked the award to Siemens of the third contract for this locomotive type within a two year period. The locomotives are similar in many respects to the 38 class electric locomotives currently being delivered to QR by Siemens.

Mr Philip Tonks, Project Director, Pacific National Queensland Coal, stated that the new Siemens locomotives form a key component of Pacific National’s objective to secure a portion of the coal export market in Queensland.

“Pacific National is Australia’s largest private rail freight business - therefore, to maintain our leadership in high volume rail haulage, we need to be at the forefront of innovative rail technologies that will provide competitive answers for our transport customers.”

Siemens Vice President, Mobility, Mr. Paul Bennett, said Siemens is pleased to be working with Pacific National and providing world class locomotives to support their entry into the Queensland coal market.

“Our locomotives are designed and built in Germany with bogies from our global Centre of Competence located in Graz, Austria and will enable Pacific National to deliver a reliable operation in the arduous heavy haul coal operations over a lifetime of at least 30 years.

“The Class 7100 locomotives are customised to meet specific requirements of rail operation in Australia and are part of the Siemens locomotive family E40AC, designed for heavy duty freight services which provides the highest reliability combined with low maintenance cost.

“The locomotives are equipped with three bogies - each with two powered axles - providing many operational advantages. These benefits include low weight shift, low lateral and vertical forces and optimum weight distribution enabling maximum load haulage.



“We are also proud of the PN 7100’s low energy consumption which significantly reduces carbon dioxide emissions due to the highly efficient AC drive system and regenerative braking ability. Adding to this, the high traction locomotives maximise the use of the available track adhesion and thus, the payload which can be hauled by each train, resulting in improved cost efficiencies,” Mr Bennett confirmed.

Pacific National has also started to receive deliveries of its 83 class diesel-electric locomotives from EDI Rail at Maryborough (Qld) and expects to be running coal train in Queensland before the end of the 2008/09 financial year, some 6-9 months earlier than anticipated

### ► **Uncertainty over Asciano PN coal operations**

Despite the news in the item above, uncertainty continues to surround the future ownership of Pacific National’s (PN) coal business - and in fact all of its operations.

In mid-March, Pacific National’s parent company, the Asciano Group, announced a number of developments in relation to the strategic initiatives currently being undertaken to help manage and alleviate Asciano’s substantial debt profile.

At its recently announced half yearly results, Asciano signalled an extension to the scope of its monetisation process that would go beyond the possible sale of part of

its Coal business; it had previously suggested it was considering the possibility of a partner taking an approximate 50% share in the PN coal business.

Asciano says that now, in response to multiple expressions of interest/proposals from a range of industry and financial parties in relation to a variety of potential transactions, its monetisation process now includes formal and concurrent consideration of:

- the sale of up to 100% of either its Coal or Container Ports business;
- proposals received in respect of other assets and businesses; and
- proposals received in relation to transactions that would result in a change of control and/or a recapitalisation of the Group.

Asciano says that these proposals will be assessed based on delivering the maximum value to all shareholders and its objective remains to announce a transaction by the end of the current financial year. ABN AMRO and Lazard Carnegie Wylie have been appointed to advise Asciano.

In August last year, Asciano knocked back a \$2.9 billion takeover bid at \$4.40 per share from a consortium led by Texas Pacific Group. Since then the company’s share price has plummeted to as low as 0.45c a share valuing it at around a tenth of the August offer. In mid March Asciano shares were trading at around 0.75c.

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## ► ARTC North South works pick up speed

Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) says that records continue to tumble as its upgrade of the North South rail corridor continues. Figures released today by ARTC indicate that in February crews working on the concrete re-sleeper project between Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne broke the Australian record for continuous sleeper laying.

Crews working south of Wodonga laid 131,166 new concrete sleepers in just 19 days, breaking the old record set in 2008.

ARTC has allocated \$400 million to replace wooden and steel sleepers on the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane rail corridor with around 2.2 million new concrete sleepers. The record breaking sleeper drive coincides with the laying of the 2 millionth concrete sleeper between Brisbane and Sydney in February.

ARTC CEO David Marchant said the achievement of the crews working on the project was an outstanding effort and testament to ARTC's commitment to the resurgence of freight rail in Australia.

"The upgrade of the North South rail corridor is the largest since the line was originally laid and one of the most important infrastructure improvements for the Australian economy."

"Once the re-sleepering, additional passing lanes, loops and signalling upgrades are completed, ARTC will be able to offer the freight industry transit times as low as 10 hours 40 minutes between Sydney and Melbourne and 15 hours 35 minutes between Sydney and Brisbane."

In February, work on the Wodonga Rail Bypass was well underway including preparatory works for five bridges along the rail corridor.

"Construction of concrete piles is the first step in constructing the five duplication bridges as part of the bypass. The base of the bridges will rest securely on these piles as the bridge proper is pieced together."

"2009 will be an exciting year, not only for ARTC but for the Albury and Wodonga communities as we see the construction of the Wodonga Rail Bypass duplication hit full speed."

The Wodonga Rail Bypass duplication is part of the overall upgrade of the Victorian interstate rail network by ARTC as a result of the extended lease agreement signed during 2008.

The plan to proceed with full duplication of the Bypass - previously planned as single track - was taken late in 2008 when additional funds were made available as part of the Federal Government's economic stimulus package.

## ► Federal funds to boost Hunter Valley works

Further funding from the Federal Government's economic stimulus package will be used on projects in the Hunter Valley, with \$580 million of equity investment, supplemented by ARTC debt raising, to expand capacity along the rail corridors connecting the Hunter Valley coal mines to the Port of Newcastle.

Total investment of \$1 billion will more than double the amount of coal being transported to export markets from 97 to 200 million tonnes per year. The additional works, starting in mid-2009, will create over 500 construction jobs and likely to peak at 650 jobs during 2010.

Projects include:

- The provision of bi-directional signalling already underway, which allows trains to travel in either direction on either track providing more flexible operations, will be extended to cover the section of track between Maitland and Branxton.
- Construction of a third track at a reduced gradient of 1:100 along the length of the Minimbah Bank starting from the north of Whittingham Junction to provide extra capacity thereby reducing congestion on heavily utilised trackage.
- Duplication of single track sections between St Heliers, Muswellbrook, Bengalla and Koolbury providing additional track capacity for new mines in the area and reducing congestion at Muswellbrook Junction.
- Four New Passing Loops on the Ulan Line to reduce running time between loop locations and create additional train paths.
- A new alignment over the Liverpool Ranges near Ardglen will eliminate this short section of steeply graded track and improve the capacity on this section, allowing the operation of longer and heavier trains.
- Additional and extended crossing loops will be constructed between Muswellbrook and Werris Creek to allow a reduction in running times, increased train length and additional capacity for coal trains servicing the Gunnedah Basin.
- Construction of a third track between Maitland and Minimbah to reduce the impact of routine maintenance and to provide additional surge capacity within the network.

Over the weekend of 20/21 December 2008, 328,000 tonnes of coal were delivered to the Port of Newcastle over a 24 hour period, breaking the old record of 314,000 tonnes. This was to be broken again only a fortnight later when 336,000 tonnes were delivered during a similar period on 2 January 2009.

## ► New Chinese locos for New Zealand

The New Zealand Government's funding for new locomotives for the rail freight network and Tranz Scenic carriages is recognition of the important role rail plays in the New Zealand economy, the Chairman of KiwiRail, Jim Bolger said.

The Government announced funding of \$115 million for 20 new locomotives and 17 passenger carriages for KiwiRail's Tranz Scenic Fleet. In a surprising move, the new locomotives will be built in China.

"The Government's decision is timely and welcome," said Mr Bolger. "The new locomotives will enable us to make considerable efficiency gains on key freight routes such as Auckland-Tauranga-Murupara and on the 'Coal Route' between the West Coast coal mines and the Port of Lyttelton.

"The key to lifting KiwiRail's revenue and profitability is improving customer service. We have locomotives that are at or near retirement age and we also have a contractual obligation to supply locomotives to Auckland Regional Transport Authority later in the year.

"The new locomotives will be more powerful and reliable than those in our existing fleet and in some cases, will be able to do the work of two existing locomotives."

Mr Bolger said the new passenger carriages would enable Tranz Scenic to provide the kind of travel experience that passengers, particularly overseas tourists, expect.

"The role of long-distance passenger services is evolving into a high quality tourism experience," he said. "It's essential we have the carriages to complement the magnificent scenery that draws people to the Tranz Alpine, Tranz Coastal and Overlander.

"Between them, Tranz Scenic long distance passenger experiences and the Interislander ferries represent an important but underrated element of the New Zealand tourism industry."

Mr Bolger said he was encouraged that the Government understood where rail can make the most effective contribution to the economy.

"Apart from tourist rail experiences, it has a fundamental role in carrying bulk goods, containers to and from ports and urban passengers in large cities. In all these roles, it takes thousands of vehicles off roads that are already congested.

"We firmly believe that investment in rail significantly reduces the amount of money that would need to be spent on roads to achieve the same result."

KiwiRail's Chief Executive Jim Quinn says the new locomotives, which will arrive progressively during 2010, will be lighter, more powerful and more fuel efficient than

the models they replace. They will be fitted with a German-built engine that is approximately six tonnes lighter than those fitted on locomotives in the current fleet.

"They also provide superior fuel economy and improved running times, meet EU III emission standards and are likely to require less maintenance.

"They'll enable us to make a 'two for one' replacement on many services that run in the Auckland -Murupara corridors. Services that have previously required two locomotives running 'back to back' will be replaced by a single locomotive.

"We looked closely at the merits of building the locomotives locally but on cost, performance and importantly, delivery time, the Chinese option was superior."

Mr Quinn said the new passenger carriages had been allocated to the South Island services, the Tranz Alpine and Tranz Coastal because they were the more heavily used and tourism oriented trains.

"We have a number of options available to us for the Overlander and we are actively looking at these, including mounting a business case for new carriages."

Mr Quinn said building the carriages in New Zealand would provide a fillip to Hillside Engineering in Dunedin which will carry out the work in conjunction with a large number of New Zealand suppliers.

"Today's announcement is a combination of a great deal of hard work and careful planning by many people. It is important that we acknowledge the contribution they have made," he said.

### Bill Killinger AM

The Executive of the RTSA is pleased to alert members to the news that RTSA member, Bill Killinger, formerly of Barclay Mowlem, and no doubt known to many, was awarded Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the recent Australia Day honours.

Bill's award was for service to railway engineering through the construction and development of passenger and freight transport systems in Australia and internationally, to professional organisations, to the mining sector, and to the community.

I'm sure we all extend our most hearty congratulations to Bill.



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# Society and Chapter News

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## South Australia

The South Australian Chapter's 2009 programme has started well, and a varied calendar of events is planned for the remainder of the year.

Our first meeting, on 5 February 2009, jointly with Permanent Way Institution as hosts, comprised a site visit to Southern Quarries, to view quarry operations first hand. Following the quarry tour, members adjourned for a barbecue lunch and refreshments. Our thanks go to Southern Quarries, and to the PWI, for organising a successful event.

A second February meeting, two weeks later, featured a presentation by Chapter Deputy Chairman Daniel Martucci on developments in public transport in Germany and nearby European countries. Daniel visited the area in 2008, including a study tour to various facilities and manufacturer's works.

The presentation highlighted how European cities with similar populations to Adelaide tend to have considerably more extensive public transport systems, with a heavy focus on providing a high standard of service to patrons.

An aspect covered in some detail was the operation of tramtrains, including the technologies used for seamless transition from tram tracks to rail tracks, with their differing wheel and rail geometries, and for the transition between power supply systems.

Forthcoming meeting topics include the non-destructive measurement of neutral temperature in rails (March), ultrasonic rail flaw detection (April), new developments in turnout technology (May) and maintenance trends in the Pilbara (June). Full details can be found on the RTSA website as the meeting dates approach.

Reports of meeting presentations are published in the Chapter newsletter. Lucie Mitchell has been appointed newsletter editor, replacing Stephen Townsend who has stepped down from the position after producing an excellent publication over several years.

## Upcoming Events

### Thursday 2 April 2009

New ultrasonic rail flaw detection contract for ARTC (joint lunchtime meeting hosted by PWI)

12.00 pm, ARTC offices, Mile End

### Thursday 7 May 2009

Improved turnout technology introduction in Australia, by John Lazaro, Pacific Rail Engineering; + Developments in Australian standards for track materials - recent developments, by Robert Schweiger.

### Thursday 4 June 2009

Rail maintenance trends in the Pilbara, by Peter Mutton, Associate Director, Institute of Railway Technology, Monash University.

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings: 5.30 pm for 6.10 pm, Chapman Hall, 11 Bagot Street, North Adelaide

*Duncan McLeod, SA Chapter Chair*

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## Queensland

### Chairman's Comments

A quarter of 2009 has passed already and the Queensland Chapter is well into its programme of events.

Since the last report the Queensland Chapter has held two technical presentations. Our first Technical Meeting in February and combined Christmas Drinks and December Technical Presentation.

The committee is also keen for members to nominate any topics on which they would like to hear a presentation or field trip arranged. Remember it is your RTSA.

Membership of the Queensland Chapter has reached 197. We are still working towards the target of 200 and is dependant upon members (that's you) to encourage colleagues to join the RTSA. Remember the society is *for all who have an interest in railway technology...*

### Recent Meetings

#### 11 December 2008

The combined draw cards of Philip Laird and Christmas Drinks drew a great crowd to 2008's final technical meeting. The lobby of Engineers House was at capacity. Philip Laird gave an informative and passionate presentation outlining the benefits of previous investments the Queensland North Coast Line and what could be gained with similar investment in the NSW North Coast Line. (*Attendees 75*)

#### 25 February 2009

John Larcome of the Queensland Department of Infrastructure talked about the lessons learnt from his Churchill Study of Light Rail and Metro Systems in North America.

John outlined the findings of the study tour and how Brisbane could benefit from applying similar systems. This presentation has generated a great deal of interest with request for more information since the evening. (*Attendees 68*)

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## Upcoming Events

### 25 March 2009

Larry Matters of the ATSB is giving another of his entertaining and informative presentations. This year Larry will be talking about the role human factors play in SPADs and level crossing incidents.

### 22 April 2009

The April presentation will be co-hosted with the Risk Unit. Geoff Gates and Dave Schonfeld will discuss Rolling Stock Failures and Investigations.

### 27 May 2009

Rail and the Environment - Further Details to be confirmed.

### 24 June 2009

Brisbane Inner City Rail Capacity Study - further details to be confirmed.

### 22 July 2009

Railway Technical Society of Australasia Queensland Chapter Annual General Meeting, Dinner and Trivia Extravaganza.

Please see the RTSA website for more info and dates

Remember, Most of the RTSA Queensland Chapter technical presentations can be streamed through the Engineers Australia Queensland Division website.

<http://eaq.mediavisionz.com.au/>

We look forward to seeing you at any or all of the RTSA events.

*Alex Howie, Queensland Chapter Chair*

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## Victoria & Tasmania

Our first Chapter event for 2009 was held on 18 February. A site inspection of the V/Line (EDI) Regional fleet maintenance depot at Dudley street was attended by over 40 members and guests.

Attendees were able to view and inspect the maintenance facilities and the rolling Stock that was in the depot at the time. Members and guests were also given an insight into the maintenance practices and procedures adopted by EDI. The chapter appreciates the level of co operation and betterment of our knowledge base provided by the staff at EDI.

The program for the balance of the year has been set and published and includes;

- Tony Canavan-Director of Partnerships Victoria, presenting on "Building tomorrow's transport system".

- Technical presentations on track and bridges .
- A number of sessions on the various aspects of the much debated refranchising process and outcomes for the Tram and Suburban Train operations. The current franchises conclude later this year.

These are very topical subjects and the Committee looks forward to being able to generate significant interest from the Transport industry and wider community.

*Russell Trevaskis  
Victoria & Tasmania Chapter Chair*

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## New South Wales

The NSW RTSA committee met on Thursday 26 February to discuss activities for the next several months. This meeting followed the National Executive meeting in Wellington on the previous Tuesday.

Firstly I have to report that Lucie Mitchell has resigned from the NSW RTSA Committee as she has relocated to the SA. (I understand that Lucie has already joined the SA Chapter committee as the editor of their newsletter). I want to express my gratitude for Lucie's participation in the NSW Committee particularly on the Asia Metro sub-committee.

I am pleased to announce that the study tour of Asian metros is back on again. The exact details will be announced by the end of March and the event will be widely publicised, with a special announcements via email as well as through the newsletters and on the RTSA web site.

The itinerary is currently being finalised as well as pricing. The RTSA National Executive also agreed to sponsor this study tour. The exact details of itinerary, pricing and CPD points' accreditation are currently being finalised and will be announced by Candice Ng toward the end of March.

The NSW Committee also discussed the possibility of a local dinner with guest speaker. This would be a formal dinner, where partners are invited. The purpose of the dinner is as a social event, where we can meet with partners and catch up with the great rail fraternity.

The planning is only in the early stages. We are however conscious of the timings for the Asian Metro study tour, AusRail and PWI events. Some dates in July or August have been suggested.

As plans develop further Chris Venn-Brown from the NSW Committee will advise details through the NSW newsletter.

There are also some tentative plans for a Hunter Valley Coal tour. Again the plans are only just evolving but a suggestion is that we go on a 3-day tour (setting out on a

Friday and returning on a Sunday). These are only ideas at the moment but if you have any suggestions please contact Andrew McKay or Bill Laidlaw through [nsw@rtsa.com.au](mailto:nsw@rtsa.com.au)

Of course there is also the Grafton event on the weekend of the 13-15 June 2009. If any young professionals want to organise any special activities at this event please contact Coen Stoltz again through [nsw@rtsa.com.au](mailto:nsw@rtsa.com.au).

At the National Executive meeting in Wellington on Tuesday 24 Feb, the executive was keen to promote the RTSA Contact Mechanics Award as well as the RTSA Student Engineering Thesis Award. Both of these awards will have their closing dates around November 2009 for the 2010 year. It is hoped that a delegation of the NSW Chapter will get around to the engineering faculties of NSW universities to promote these awards. It will also be an opportunity to meet with academics to develop closer relations between the RTSA and the engineering faculties.

**Andrew Honan, NSW Chapter Chair**

## Western Australia

The WA Chapter activities began with a lunchtime event held on Feb 19. This was a jointly sponsored function with the local Transport Panel of Engineers Australia.

It was very successful and attracted 130 members and guests. Eric Englund, Engineering Manager - Rail Oakajee Port and Rail presented a very interesting insight into the proposed new port at Oakajee, located 20 km north of Geraldton.

The port facilities and associated railways are to be developed to serve the proposed new iron ore mines in the Mid West of WA. Railways could extend as far east as Wiluna located approximately 550 kms from the Port.

### CORE2008

CORE2008 is now well behind us and the NZ Chapter are well into the planning for CORE2010. In the News section on page 7 some interesting statistics relating to CORE2008 have been provided for your interest.

The WA Chapter committee is currently finalising its program of lunchtime presentations for 2009. Further details of an exciting program will be included in later editions of Rail Horizons and available on the RTSA website.

**John Goodall  
WA Chapter Chair**



## New Zealand

The RTSA NZ Chapter held its first meeting of the year on Tuesday 24th February to coincide with the RTSA Executive holding its meeting in NZ as a precursor to CORE2010 in Wellington in September next year.

Over a hundred people gathered to hear Dr Murray King (Murray King & Francis Small Consultancy Ltd) speak on "The National Freight Demands Study and its implications for rail" and Jeremy Noble (Senior Consultant: Interfleet Technology NZ Ltd) speak on "Building the first luxury tourist train for China and Tibet", and thanks to Interfleet's hospitality had ample opportunity to continue discussion after the presentations.

The RTSA Executive met at the Wellington Convention Centre and took the opportunity to see for themselves its suitability as a venue for CORE2010 and its convenient location to city accommodation and facilities. You can register your interest for CORE2010 at :

<http://www.core2010.org.nz/>

**Andrew Hunt  
NZ Chapter Chair**



(L to R) Andrew Hunt, Chair RTSA NZ Chapter, Bob Stott, former editor of "Rails" magazine, Richard Harrison, Industry Capability Network.



(L to R) Martin Baggott, RTSA Executive Chair, Ross Twyford, Regional Manager Interfleet Technology, John Goodall, WA Chapter Chair

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## Standards Australia

### CE2 Rail Track Materials Committee - Call for RTSA nomination

The CE2 Committee is responsible for the drafting and updating of Australian Standards relating to Rail Track Materials, commonly referred to as the AS1085 suite of Standards. The following summarises the status of the various AS1085 series of Standards:

Standard	Year	Title	Status
1085.1	2002 and Amdt 1 - 2005	Steel rails	Currently developing a supplement "Steel rails history" to AS1085.1
1085.2	2002	Fishplates	Current issue
1085.3	2002	Sleeper plates	Current issue
1085.4	2002	Fishbolts and nuts	Current issue
1085.5		Heat-treated fishbolts	Superseded by AS1085.4
1085.6		Nuts for fishbolts	Superseded by AS1085.4
1085.7	2003	Spring washers	Current issue
1085.8	2002	Dogspikes	Current issue
1085.9		Rolled steel clip fastening sleeper plates	Superseded by AS1085.3
1085.10	2002	Rail Anchors	Current issue
1085.11		Head-hardened rails	Superseded by AS1085.1
1085.12	2002	Insulated Joint Assemblies	Current issue
1085.13	2002	Spring Fastening spikes for sleeper plates	Current issue
1085.14	2003	Concrete sleepers	Currently developing an update to this Standard
1085.15		Aluminothermic rail welding	Superseded by AS1085.20
1085.16		Cast sleeper plates	Superseded by AS1085.3
1085.17	2003	Steel sleepers	Current issue
1085.18	2003	Screw spikes and threaded inserts	Current issue
1085.19	2003	Resilient fastening assemblies	Current issue
1085.20	2006	Welding of steel rail	Currently developing an update to this Standard
		Turnouts, switches and crossings	New standard under development
		Rail pads	New standard under development
		Dog and lock screws	New standard under development

The CE2 currently has representation from the following nominating organisations:

- Australasian Railway Association
- Rail Track Association of Australia
- Australian Chamber of Commerce
- Australian Industry Group
- Bureau of Steel Manufacturers of Australia
- Monash University Institute of Railway Technology

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and is seeking registrations of interest from RTSA members that would be willing to be an active participant in the ongoing development of the Track Materials Standards. The CE2 committee is conscious of the need to provide a balanced representation from the Industry including railway owners, manufacturers and constructors to ensure that the standards produced meet the requirements of the industry. The current need is for persons experienced in the track construction area to be represented on the committee.

The CE2 committee generally meets every 6 months in an Australian Capital city on a rotational basis. The meetings may be up to 2 days in duration. In addition committee members may be co-opted to attend working group meetings on individual

standards depending on their field of expertise. The RTSA may provide assistance to attend meetings if the need arises.

It is expected that expressions of interest be received from individuals that have gained approval from their employer to attend these regular meetings and to actively participate in the review and approval process inherent with the publication of an approved Australian Standard. The selected representative/s is also expected to communicate relevant information to the RTSA membership as a whole and to provide regular updates for publication in the RTSA Rail Horizons magazine which is published quarterly.

The RTSA Executive will consider the expressions of interest and advise the successful person/s of their acceptance onto the committee.

**Expressions of interest are to be submitted in writing to the RTSA Secretariat as follows:**

Pearl Ansley, RTSA Secretariat, Engineers Australia, 11 National; Circuit, Barton ACT 2600

## *2009 RTSA AWARDS*

In 2009, the RTSA has offered awards in four categories. These are; the Individual Award, the Young Railway Engineer Award, the Railway Engineering Student Thesis Award and the Contact Mechanics Award.

Nominations for the **Student Thesis Award** and for the **Contact Mechanics Award** closed on Friday 28 November 2008. Owing to a shortage of nominations, the closure date was extended until 31 December by which time six nominations for the Student Thesis Award had been received but, disappointingly, none for the Contact Mechanics Award.

For the **Young Railway Engineer Award** and the **Individual Award**, nominations closed on Friday 27 February 2009, with four nominations having been received for the Young Railway Engineer Award and just two for the Individual Award.

Presently the process of review for those nominations received is well under way.

It is disappointing that the response to the Individual and Contact Mechanics Awards has been so limited. Consideration is being given to what can be done in the future to attract a higher level of interest.

## **Members invited to comment on new railway standards**

All drafts of **Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board** (RISSB) standards are available to the general industry for comment. These are available via the RISSB web site (see below). RISSB has indicated that it is keen to receive as much input from industry as it is willing to provide.

RTSA members are welcome to comment on the new railway standards being developed by RISSB and individual opportunity exists for members to review the drafts and their status by accessing the website.

RISSB is also keen to accept any offers from interested persons who may be willing to work on technical groups and sub committees in preparing the standards.

<http://www.rissb.com.au/linkdev/site/index.php>