

RT&BU LOCOMOTIVE DIVISION

LOCO LINES

Newsletter for Locomotive Enginemen of the Rail,
Tram & Bus Union - Victoria

EDITION 41 MAY 2007

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**Publisher
Brian Hill**

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Divisional Secretary's Report

By Brian Hill

The Real Reason Why People Are Terminated

On 4 May 2007, the Industrial Court of NSW fined a Rail Freight Company and two of its Directors for breaches of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 (NSW) that resulted in the death of a driver who had been riding on a moving wagon.

The company and the two Directors were charged with: Failing to ensure that systems of work were safe and without risks to health and safety.

Failing to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all the corporation's employees, and in particular, Alan Green, contrary to s8(1) of the Act.

The company and the 2 Directors pleaded guilty to the charges.

The Industrial court of NSW states:

Evidence revealed it was normal for employees to ride the side of trains where there was a foot and hand bar. The evidence established that the shunter or second person were given an unfettered discretion as to where they were located during the shunting operations. An employee could ride the train on the end steps or side steps of a wagon. The only precautions taken by employees, were to ensure: there was a good hand and foot hold; that the driver did not come back too fast; a line of sight to where the train was heading and ensure the train was stopped before getting on or off. On examination, all of these precautions were inadequate and the shunting work was inherently unsafe

The decision goes on to state:

I find the evidence establishes there was an unsafe system in place for shunting work. This was reflected in a risk to the safety of any employee falling from the train onto the tracks. I accept from the evidence there was a failure to prevent an employee who was performing shunting work from riding on a moving wagon; a failure to instruct, inform and train employees to prevent them from riding on a wagon, and a failure to undertake a risk assessment of the shunting task. These failures reflected in a risk of

injury to the employees performing shunting work.

At para. 37 the decision states:

While there were methods of control by way of radio hand signals, employees shunting had the choice of riding on the last wagon or walking beside the train. There was no direction given as to how such a discretion should be exercised. I accept that the practice in the industry allowing employees to ride either on the back, or on the side ladder was not safe because "there was a chance of falling off, being run over, hit by other rolling stock, being hit by infrastructure". Employees themselves undertook some safety precautions such as having a good foot and hand hold, making sure the driver did not back up too fast and having a line of sight to where you are heading. However, the statutory obligation of all employers is to ensure safe working does not fall upon the workforce – the employees.

The company was fined \$60,000 and each of the Directors were fined \$10,000.

The accident and death of the driver occurred in 2004. At that time, companies such as Pacific National had already banned the riding of wagons during shunting. Since that time, the practice has been the subject of a blanket ban by the Regulator in NSW.

This decision confirms the point that riding on moving wagon in any capacity is unsafe and a breach of the provisions in the occupational health and safety legislation across the country.

The decision can be found on the website of the NSW Industrial Commission.

Pacific National management have, and will continue to state that they have enforced the policy of not riding on vehicles, but it continues due to their inability to review shunting procedures here in Victoria at all locations.

Picture— Front Cover:

Yet another derailment due to Pacific National's lack of investment in track and infrastructure despite receiving payment from the government for track maintenance.



Divisional Assistant Secretary's Report

By Paul Carr

Pacific National, (ex Freight Australia) Union Collective Agreement

The Division has been working, through the issues with Pacific National over the new Union collective agreement (UCA), (formerly known as an EBA.

This process is extremely slow as the first phase is to identify and remove all non allowable work choices matters from the earlier industrial agreements, and/or policy and practices (from the Freight Australia/Public Transport Corporation period), that may be interwoven within those agreements. The parties then have to rewrite them in a work choices compliant manner, obviously by agreement.

The parties have also agreed to jointly develop U.C.A common clauses of employment for what will be agreements across the individual business groups, i.e. Grain, General Freight, Industrial and Bulk, S.C.T and Maintenance/Workshops.

These discussions have been progressing slowly but surely as the draft proposed clauses pass back and forth between the parties for consideration.

The next phase in the process is to arrange meetings between the various business groups management, and the local workforce representatives, with the view to progress local initiatives from either side of the bargaining table.

V/Line all purpose rate and superannuation

The superannuation saga at V/Line Passenger appears to be finally reaching its conclusion after V/Line Passenger management were able to clearly explain the new formula to the representatives from the Government Superannuation Office, (G.S.O.) This will result in members being pleasantly surprised in the very near future.

The interest of the above matter with Connex members has not been forgotten, with the process to expand the concept to them to commence upon confirmation at V/Line Passenger.

The current difficulties for rail freight companies within Victoria, compliments of the drought and the very tight competitive market, has seen both

El Zorro and SSR work allocation reduced to the level that El Zorro has had to let 8 locomotive members go from their employment, and members at SSR take leave for the next few months.

This Division is currently attempting to assist members into full employment as opportunities arise.

Cab/vehicle modifications and issues.

The cab committee co-coordinator Ian Cashill has sought to address issues relating to the 'N' Class loco toilet ventilation, with the modification of N452 completed.

Members are requested to provide feedback to this modification to the Cab Committee.

The AM/FM Radio on the VLocity is still not working correctly, with various technical approaches taken that fix one problem, but result in another. The issue is ongoing, but not forgotten.

As members would know, some air-conditioning in VLocity Cabs are not as effective as in other cabs, and/or the saloon area.

It would be appreciated if members could notify the cab committee so that tests can be done and a data base commenced

VLocity location holes/pin on mirrors are regularly found to be out of correct adjustment, resulting in the driver being unable to properly set the mirrors to his/her correct seating position.

The mirrors are also not in sync with each other, i.e. number 2 location left side, but something other on the right. Please log faults with Cars office and let the cab committee know which units are effected.

As this article goes to print we should have loco's rostered through the shed at Dynon for the radio change out i.e., am/fm radio and cd player, as well as new type train to base radio this should give one loco per week modified.

STOP PRESS

This Division is actively lobbying the government and the regulator to ensure companies comply with the rules in place in Victoria. It is no coincidence that 3 members at South Dynon stood down because of a recent safe PTSV, (Public Transport Safety Victoria), audit Drivers need to be aware that management will look for a scapegoat when there are incidents to cover their own arse.



Presidents Paragraphs

**By Terry Sheedy
Divisional President**

Encouraging Signs

I must congratulate Mark Rendell, Secretary Maryborough Sub-Division on his excellent report in the last edition of Loco Lines.

It is encouraging to see a younger member take on a union position such as secretary and submit a report not only for his members, but for the Victorian Locomotive Division members information.

We need more of these types of reports to come from our country regions, so come on regional delegates, tell the state members what's going on, whether it be union, social, etc.

Offers of Rewards

What a mistake in the last Loco Lines, 400 Exceed points from Father Christmas (Bruce) when it was only 40, how miserable. They tell me that on the floors above level 1 Flinders Street, they're knocking one another over trying to nominate for the 'Brown Tongue Program.' One employee at North Melbourne received a twinkle, twinkle little star for coming in and cleaning up his depot room in his own time – sounds like 'Workchoices.'

The other week I was trying to contact a manager re Hitachi trains during off peak, and guess where he was, he was at an Exceed luncheon, and I still haven't heard back from him, it must have been some feed! Now they are attaching the propaganda junk mail to member's pay slips, saying 'just log on it.'

How long does it take for Connex to get the message that our members are not interested in their primary school games. They just want their Myer voucher back, and returned to its original value.

Garages 'R' Us

That's what it looks like at Craigieburn, and are the graffiti artists going to have a ball! It's obvious Craigieburn isn't in a swinging seat or the eastern suburbs as the project has been cut back and trimmed so much from the original

specifications due to the funding not going as far as it could have if the project was completed on time. My forecast is for a less than smooth operation with very early OPR storms and localized flooding. The island platform has now been shelved, and suburban trains will now arrive and depart from the down platform. The option of arriving on the up platform the same as Broadmeadows which allows for 'follow on' clear run for a down regional passenger or freight train is not available either.

The station amenities are to be shared by drivers until the now agreed Driver's amenities block located in the sidings on the down side of the road overpass is completed next June.

Following an inspection on Friday 18th May, it was found that the male toilets had one cubicle, an extra large shower, twenty two lockers, and no urinal, but provided for a disabled toilet for staff. The car compound was sealed and well lit, with a useless cyclone fence and gate as a surround. The fence bottom is too high above the ground, and an adult could roll under the bottom of the gates. There is no razor wire around the top of the fence, but there is some lovely plants and mulch along the sides, and one could probably be nominated for Exceed points to keep it weed free.

The further development of Craigieburn is to be done in another 3 stages and this division will continue to lobby the government to ensure that the location remains fit for purpose for members.

Stage One:

Five additional sidings to the one already provided, each siding will accommodate six cars.

Stage Two:

Driver's amenities depot and car compound located in the precinct of the stabling sidings, this stage is set down for June 2008.

Stage 3:

The six stabling sidings are to be extended to hold two 6 car trains, a total of twelve trains will be stabled at Craigieburn.

The DOI and Connex have been informed that crews will not be located at Craigieburn until the shared amenities are up to our required standards.



Divisional Vice President's Report

By Darren Lamont

Early negotiations with V/Line after the track and infrastructure transferred under the V/line umbrella, indicates management are now going pursue Driver only on the Warrnambool line with new vigour and I suggest, with the leadership style currently displayed with as low as reasonably practicably approach.

Discussions concerning signals on the Warrnambool corridor have been cordial except for a minor hiccup with an ex P.N engineer, but I have to wonder if it its not a case of good cop, bad cop at the moment or with all these extra staff manoeuvring not to be left without a seat in musical chairs in network and access and the safety group.

V/line has a thought process to make Driver only as easy as possible, hence, why it makes perfect sense to them, to straight rail all stations.

They are aware of our heritage and recovery and crossing of train concerns!

At this stage level crossing signage and marker post reflectorised tape have been completed.

Radio testing has been completed but we will require a non scheduled test to verify! Members are requested to submit radio fault reports for all corridors especially the Warrnambool, and be persistent in talking to control over the radio. Don't use the mobile unless absolutely necessary. Meetings/inspections have taken place at Warrnambool for paths and lights, with no resolution as yet.

Did you notice the new signal at Waurn ponds?

The Division will release more detailed information on Driver only in Loco lines as we progress through it a little further.

As members would be aware, as it was reported in the April edition of Loco Diversions the Interail Union collective agreement was voted in and already interpretations on different clauses have certainly been a topic of conversation..

One of the matters that arose at the Altona depot was the Driver Only allowance, the fact that Interail procedures and Altona yard are not set up for Driver only was the reason negotiated to stop the current practice of shunting with only one man on the loco.

On behalf of the Division I take this opportunity to welcome the new members at Interail, which at this point in time are all current or ex Victorian drivers.

The Division continues to attend a meetings concerning the Hitachi and Vicers with Brian and Terry and I'm sure other officials will go into depth on these subjects.

I do wish to mention a common thread within the transport industry, which is the growth of human factors and human relations. To be short human factors is being used within the Vicers project and being undertaken by V/Line on a review of systems.

Human factors has been kicking around the transport industry for a long time under different names and different projects. An article on this subject will follow at a later date. In the mean time take the time to do a bit of research yourself on the net.

There are still a few complaints regarding the Divisional Officers not spending enough time at Connex. With the movement of Loco Hall, I can understand that members might perceive this to be a problem, but your local officials do a very good job on your behalf, and with Terry there everyday as well as Brian, Paul and myself attending meetings with Connex that are either at Spring St, Flinders Street, or at Loco Hall, and all of us are interested in attending your branch metro meetings as often as we can.

Maybe I am easily impressed, but there is an attitude change from management to what I was told once existed. Like all the wonders of the world time will tell.

The many calls to the Divisional Office and discussions at branch meetings concern the length of shifts and working conditions.

One common thread around the state is Locomotives, either a lack of horsepower and or a lack of toilets. While V/Line trials a new model toilet for the 'N' class and still only rosters a needs break for this purpose.

A basic right to have a shitter.

It is the employers obligation to provide basic facilities. So where do members, in the dark and in the middle of nowhere, go for a shit on freight trains?

The subject is where do members go for a crap. Let's not muck around with niceties, it's a normal bodily function daily, or twice daily if you're

lucky. Those who shirk this daily function must be full of it?

All members are qualified to discuss this subject as we have had lots of experience. As lots of members have said, I'm off to give birth to a manager!

I'm told that steam drivers would shit on the shovel. It supposedly stopped the coal from rolling off the shovel before it got into the fire box thus, everyone's a winner.

Rewind a bit when many stations were manned and had a decent place to have a potty stop at other places the toilet and telephone were maintained, and were just pit stops.

Along came the locomotive with a toilet. I didn't give a shit what model or classes I just knew there was somewhere I could park my arse.

As stations with toilets became less frequent no one gave a toss, (that was a steam agreement), because we were driving trains with locos that had an outhouse.

Welcome to 2007 were members who give a shit and don't want to be full of it, are concerned about stopping a train for fear of being in the shit

because the train will lose its path, and will be buried in it, in a siding, possibly waiting for a Connex (Xtrap) shit trap to run through them.

This subject continues to come up or down depending on the gravity of the situation, and having personally, unavoidably delayed passenger, freight, sparks and many a pilot over the years just to have a poo, I understand the issue.

VLine recently tried to overcome the situation when with their lateral thinking. Instead of using an outhouse equipped loco for ballast trains during R.F.R, it was proposed to put a portable loo on a flat top just for me. I thought it was a reasonable request to put some astro turf down and multifunction the flat top to be able to get some chipping practice in while we are waiting to make a discharge. Common sense came to rescue.

So, where do members go to contemplate?

While some might think it all amazingly amusing this Division does not. I guess we give a shit and this is a right that must have retention.

And still on the subject of locos without toilets.....

NO QUEUES BUT MIND YOUR PEES

Bulgarian train drivers have been issued with rotating chairs so they can pee out the window without having to stop.

The driver's union KNSB complained that on some older trains there were no toilets and they were having to pee out the window.

In response, the management agreed to fit the special chairs so the driver can turn and pee out the window without having to get up from the controls.

Congratulations to Trainee Driver Group Number 49 who all qualified as Drivers on Friday, 16 March 2007.



Looking very happy with themselves are the Group 49 graduates. From left: Chris Bowman, Anthony Popple, Harish Gulati, David Pietrzak, Anthony Simmons, Noel Brown, Stewart Mayne & Peter Lipsett.

State OH&S Cab Committee

By Wayne Hicks

SCT: A decision was made by the ACCC that a starter kit had to be given by TOLLS to an opponent within the rail industry, and this was between two companies being SCT and Interail (Queensland Rail). The starter kit consisted of 8 "G" class locomotives and 2 NR locomotives were awarded to SCT. The 8 "G" class locomotives are currently at Newport workshops undergoing modifications to suit desert running across the Nullarbor. Even with the modifications being done at Newport on the "G" classes, there has been no consultation with the union regarding any modifications.

ARG crew the SCT trains on Thursdays with Pacific National crewing on all other days. The national office endeavoured to arrange a meeting with SCT for the purpose of negotiating an enterprise agreement. This proved fruitless as I believe SCT will pursue AWA's rather than a collective agreement.

With the recent acquisition of the rail network bought back by the Victorian Government from Pacific National, of which V/Line Pass now operates, Pacific National are now complaining about the access charges that V/Line Pass charge even though the charges are identical to those that were charged by Pacific National. This is irony in its best form!

It appears that Pacific National had bought the old Freight Australia with one intention, to asset strip the company. Most of the "G" class locomotives are now interstate and will not return to Victoria, leaving our members now manning old series "X" class locomotives without toilets and other creature comforts.

Its still the same ole same ole with the different managers with in Pacific National business groups not communicating with each other, and causing confusion within, with members wearing the brunt of mismanagement.

A rumour has it that the old "S" class locomotives will be transferred to Bendigo for refurbishment, these old girls never cease to amaze people as they just keep on going with little or no money being spent.

CFLC: Are currently rebuilding "C" class locomotives at RTS South Dynon as well as

rebuilding 10 RL locomotives with the possibility of a further 10.

Another 10 locomotives are being built at McIntyre, which are named 'VL' locomotives. Leasing of locomotives, has become a very profitable business/asset, as most of the current fleet are older than most drivers with little or no money being spent on locomotives over the years.

V/Line Passenger: Rolling stock now has been fitted with TPWS systems and have been operating for some time. Another system that the D.O.I. are going to investigate is GPS, and with the technology that is currently available, the D.O.I. with V/Line management are looking at introducing an air dump feature that can be operated at key locations to operate the brakes on equipment should it detect over-speeding. This will allow a variation to the vigilance control to function at 27 to 32 second timing cycles at key locations. The Division has asked for further meetings are to take place to obtain further information.

Finally bridge work is about to start on the down side of Kilmore East so no more 50 kph restrictions.

Pathways at Southern Cross have been on the agenda for sometime and an agreement has been reached to fix the paths.

Number 1&2 sheds are near completion with only pathways to be completed, this allow locomotives to serviced at this location. Members are to be advised that locomotives are to be pushed and pulled out of the shed by a locomotive that will be stationed at South Dynon.

Wallan platform on the up is a cause of concern with rolling stock hitting the platform; it has taken a self imposed speed restriction of 50 kph before the problem was rectified.

There were a number of PIN notices issued recently with WorkSafe being called in as a result. One of the notices at Riggs Creek resulted in this location to be manned when trains are to be crossed until this location has been fully signalled. This issue has been outstanding for years and finally resolutions may be forthcoming. Trains at Southern Cross are not being stabled at platforms unless they have been manned for safety reasons, if this can not be manned this rolling stock is to be shunted out.

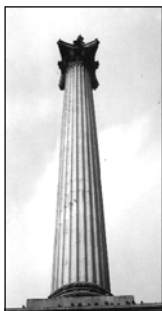


Pictures courtesy of Wayne Hicks.

Pictured above and to the left are SCT locomotives at Newport undergoing refurbishment.

Pictured below is a 'G' class awaiting refurbishment. There are a further 4 'G' classes waiting to be refurbished.





NELSON'S COLUMN.

with Ernie Nelson
Vice President
Metropolitan Sub-Division

Lies, Dammed Lies And Damned Infernal Lies of the Press.



Well did you read all the articles published in *The Age* during the recent Siemens braking debacle, when there seemed to a ungodly rush to feed crap to that Paragon of Yellow Journalism Stephen Moynihan Transport Reporter for that fine journal, what young Steve did not appreciate was that he was being fed lines by ill informed wreckers who only gave him half the lines to try and destabilize the Union after being well and truly rejected by an overwhelming majority of 70% of members in the 2006 Union Elections.

That's right it had nothing to do with Connex, it was a premeditated attempt to undermine the Executive Office Holders of the Locomotive Division and the Metropolitan Sub-Division as a spoiling action, in the 33 years I have been a Union Member I have never witnessed such treachery by members hell bent on destroying their own union like a teenage girl rejected by her boyfriend.

The acts carried out by this gang of rats is an act of Treason and they should be expelled from the Union for their disloyalty to their Brother and Sister Drivers, this Union was built on respect for the Grade of Train Driver and this reprehensibly vile act of sedition carried out by a small minority of people bent on the destruction of the A.F.U.L.E. and its successors merely because they were resoundingly rejected by that most democratic of institutions the Ballot Box used in a Secret Election.

Little Steve was not told the fact that the Comeng Fleet had numerous brake problems when they first appeared in the early 1980s or the Hitachis Rheostatic brake won't synchronise which isn't dangerous just annoying or the fact that Alstom changed the software on the

X'Trapolis Train some time after Unit 58 (Last one of the order) entered Revenue Service so that the Emergency Brake now blows the Brake Curve out by 100 metres above 100 Km/h because our toads did not want to hurt their funding from industry sources at the next Union Election in 2010 as ever.

The reason for this selective targeting is unclear but I suspect it is a leftover from the old Hillside and M>Train Divide, you know us and them crap that Connex managed to get some blokes to believe before reunification but has since been disregarded by most blokes as divisive bullshit.

You mark my words it is a long bow to draw for any reader to believe and that Moynihan is a Journo, when he happily swallowed a load from the Crew of the Damned he was convinced was fact when if he used his head and checked with the Union Executive at Kingsway to get the truth.

Mark Rollinson is alive and well.

We were all shocked to hear of Mark "Rolly" Rollinson's sudden illness due to a heart condition. Well let me tell you the fat bastard pulled through alright and has made a recovery, so don't cross his name off the seniority list just yet.

We also wish Trevor Mitchell and Hans Werner, who also recently fell ill speedy recoveries and hope to see them back on the job soon.

Reactionaries.

Well the Prez's letter about grubs and cockroaches really got some people worked up like they were the ones that were being talked about or somethin' the sure sign of guilt for past sins, well girls its like this the members rejected you for what you are not what you pretended to be so get over it and if you don't like it, go and squeal to your ARU mates at Queen St. With a bit of luck we'll give them all the arse before long.

New Rolling Stock.

Gawd knows what we'll end up with but it can't be any worse than what we got now with Der Schprogger and the Spring Loaded Shit Trap, all I know is it is 24 units by 2010 and no doubt our social betters will make their usual Pharque up decision that joy of joys we'll all get to wrestle with from disaster right through to catastrophe stage at which point the DOI and Connex will come begging to us to help while they both tell the State Government what a pack of Caring

Understanding Nice Types the Union is for causing all the problems in the first place.

Who the farkenell are they gonna blame if Johnny Howard the Arch Coward has his way and abolishes Unions as Terrorist Organisations, I know they'll have to blame each other what a novel approach for the bunch of unholy wankers.

The Real Meaning Of The Exceed Program.

The exceed program is easy to understand, the cost of post and handling will exceed the value of the trinket selected, as happened to on member



at the Sparx who ordered a toaster with a value of 40 exceed points but it would of cost him \$20.00 post and handling when he could have bought one in K-Mart or Target for 15 bucks.

Who is this?

I think this Picture of Itchy Brother looks like Brian Hill, don't you?

RAIL NEWS AROUND THE WORLD



A range of interesting issues occur each day around the world, from the quirky to the innovative.

UK - A mother goose delayed trains in Essex after she got onto a railway line. Railway line workmen caught her and returned her to Mountfitchet Castle where she was reunited with her clutch of eggs.

South Africa - The South African Rail Commuter Corporation has enlisted volunteers in an effort to curb crime on trains.

China - 140 new high-speed trains with a speed of 200km or faster began to enter services on

high speed routes between major cities. The number will increase to 257 trains by the end of the year.

France - The high-speed Eurostar trains linking London with Paris and Brussels will be carbon neutral from November. Eurostar also said it would reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 25% per passenger journey by 2012 as part of its bid to go green.

Ohio, USA - Trash trains will be removed from Sandusky, Ohio. The trash originates in New Jersey and ends up in a landfill in Ottawa County. The main track leads right through Sandusky, and the sidings in Sandusky are where the cars wait before the heading to the landfill.

Canada - Only 81 per cent of GO's trains were considered on-time in February. That's well shy of GO's 90-per-cent target, and follows an even more dismal January, when trains were on time just 77 per cent of the time.

China - To solve the problem of overcrowding, the Beijing metro Corp plans to shorten the intervals between departures during peak hour from 5 minutes to 4 minutes by the end of this year.

Vale Neville Nichols

23rd August 1960 to 19th March 2007 Aged 46.

Driver late of the Electric Running Depot and various other locations throughout Victoria.

It is my sad duty to inform the Members of the passing of our Comrade Neville Nichols after a brave fight against cancer.

Our condolences go to his Wife Norma and Children Sarah and James in this most difficult of times.

It is with a sense of pride that I tell you that Spark Drivers donated a substantial amount of cash to the Nichols Family by way of practical assistance.

Sadly missed by one and all.

LETTERS

Exceed.....Exceed to what

I strongly agree with the comments made in the last issue of Loco Lines by the Divisional President Terry Sheedy concerning the introduction of Exceed award points to Connex employees by employers. Come on, what a joke.

I find the whole Exceed program an insult to my intelligence. Do I really need my work colleagues analyzing my work performance to make me work better, so I can be awarded some 'Brownie' points. Oh please, just how stupid do Connex think I am? Do I need any incentive to do my job properly?

This program belongs in the school yard, and sub-primary at that. Maybe it can be used on the set of Ugly Betty, where it is, dog eat dog.

I cannot imagine anyone wanting to embrace this childish game, and with over 37 years on the job, this is the most ridiculous program I have seen.

Yes, I have heard that Connex is concerned about the lack of Driver involvement. Well, let me be the first to congratulate the driving grade for rejecting it.

It may work, and probably does in an office environment, but out on the track and in the yards where we work alone. Sorry.

I have seen drivers carry out their jobs efficiently plus more, when things go wrong, whether it be with breakdown, ill passengers, hostile passengers, or just to keep the show on the road, but unless there is a witness, their effort goes unrewarded or acknowledged.

So Connex, the system you adopted from wherever at whatever great cost is flawed. I have a strange feeling that the Exceed program did not come cheap, and those printed Exceed updates are just like the Connexions rag, a total waste of trees.

I could not imagine our late Chairman of Commissioners, Mr George Brown, either embracing or introducing such time wasting events. Maybe because he started as an apprentice at Newport workshops, and rose up through the ranks as an engineer and was therefore a practical man. Oh what has happened to that line of promotion? Those hands-on men have all disappeared in the top levels of railway management. No wonder Connex are now

making such horrendous decisions in the operations and equipment purchasing department.

But alas, all is not lost, we have the Exceed program to carry us through.

One senior driver from the hills has commenced writing down everything he does that is beyond the call of normal duty that should normally give him award points, and he has several pages written out, but guess what? That's right, no Exceed points. I wonder why?

Right again, he had none of his mates around at the time to recommend any awards. What a joke. I don't want special information programs, picnics, prizes, trinkets, or whatever. Just give me a good wage and good conditions with a pleasant work environment.

Connex, or whatever we are called this wee, must understand one very important point. I am not a company man, but a railway man. There is a huge difference.

Robin McMurray
Electric Train Driver
Flinders Street.

Please be advised that I will return to all the fun and excitement of active employment at Connex Trains/MTE from Monday 30th April 2007. My period absence commenced on Monday October 30th 2006 after my injury the previous day on Sunday October 29th 2006. I am officially unfit for all duties up to and including this Sunday April 29th.

Please recommence billing me for RTBU dues from April 30th.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the State Officers of the RTBU Locomotive Division (especially Marc, who was **immediate and genuine** in his offer to minimise financial hardship for me when I contacted him by suspending my payments) for the kind and considerate suspension of my dues whilst I have been on insurance payments.

Furthermore I'd like to especially thank my Sub-Divisional Officers at Flinders Street for their tireless and invaluable support over this expended and quite difficult period of absence. I really couldn't have done it without their guidance, genuine care and help. They're great guys. Many thanks :)

Yours truly,
Sean Kelly.

OUR MATE VERN

There've been lots of stories told of late
About Vern Dalley, cobber, mate

New Zealand as a child full of wit
To the little town of Donald
Where he found his railway fit

Where a man could be so bold,
Dragging people from their beds
"A union meeting to be held"
The great wise man had said

From the sleepy town of Donald
To the city he did go
From fireman, tramway buses
Guards clerk then T.C.A.O,

He would talk of his adventures
And he'd listen to ours too
A mighty man with a great big heart
And not a bad beard too

The stories will continue
The memories they will stay
And we will be filled with laughter
As we greet another day

He related well to all he knew
Bikes, music, movies and travelling too
Over Anzac bikkies, cups of tea
A pot of coffee, K.F.C

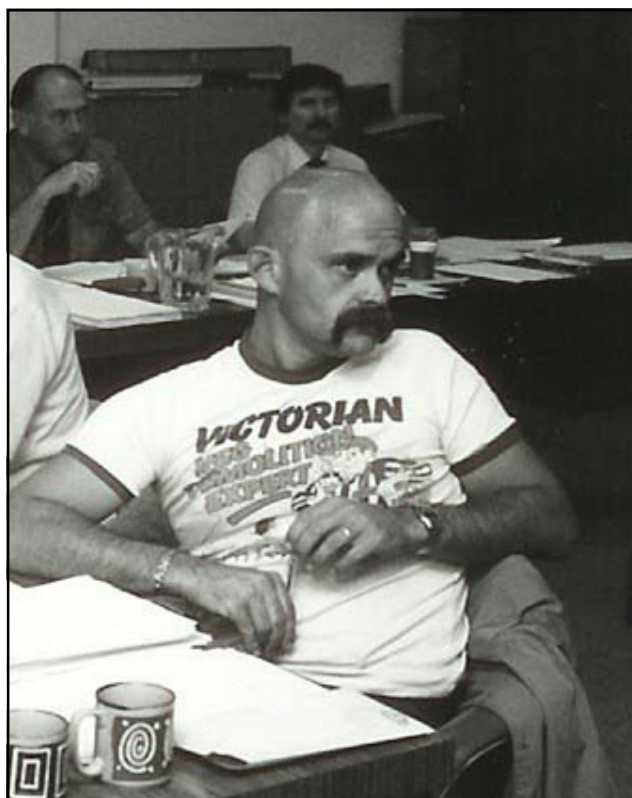
He touched us all in many ways
But there is one thing we'd all agree
'Our Mate Vern' was one
Of the best there would ever be.

Hold your memories in your heart
Or share them if you like,
"F.O.H", "C for Pussy",
"On your bloody bike"

With many memories in our hearts
Of varying degrees
We say goodbye to 'Our Mate Vern'
Taken from us tragically

Rest in Peace

Submitted by Belinda Croce



Pictured above: T.C.A.O. Vern Dalley who was tragically killed in an accident on 16th May 2007.

Dear Brian,

As I am retiring on 13th April from Pacific National, I wish to inform you that I need to resign from the Rail, Tram & Bus Union – Locomotive Division.

I would like to thank the union for its assistance over the last 45 years and would like to take this opportunity to wish all continued success.

Robin Davy

Locomotive Driver - Maryborough

Re: Retirement Ill Health.

Dear Brian,

I am writing to advise you that I am retiring from my position as a Driver with Connex Melbourne account Ill Health to take effect from 30th May 2007.

I wish everyone in the Union good luck for the future and as a Life Member I will take a keen interest in the Unions progress.

Yours fraternally,

Bob Lawrence

Driver, ERD

Pacific National Rural & Bulk

By Adrian Power

Over two years have now elapsed since Pacific National took over Freight Australia.

I don't doubt that any employee that is left with this organization has seen anything positive that has come out of the takeover by Pacific National. Many have left for the alternative employment and some were even given an incentive by the company providing targeted separation packages at South Dynon, but not at other locations in Victoria.

At South Dynon we now have 65 employees running a 96 week roster and still running the same number of services, you don't have to be a number cruncher to realise that this entails triple and quadruple rostering of jobs, overtime, fatigue, low morale and a feeling of hopelessness but bigger profits for Pacific National at our member's expense.

El Zorro SSR was, until a few weeks ago, supplying crews to make up for the shortfall doing take outs and some local jobs. A decree was then made by the Sydney hierarchy not to continue hiring outside contractors so this has exasperated the manpower situation and caused liquidity problems for the El Zorro in the short term but increased profits for Pacific National.

To further compound on the manpower shortage, because of an A.C.C.C. decision on the Toll-Patrick buyout to eliminate the sale of 50% of Pacific National, a starter pack of 12 locomotives all high horse power G class Locomotives and 4200 metres of rolling stock had to be sold to another rail operator, leaving us in Victoria with a severe lack of more modern

(albeit 1984) locomotives.

All this brought to you by the largest transportation company in Australia. Is this as some pundits report Asset stripping of Victoria rail by Pacific National?

I have not even mentioned the long suffering customers. Trains are continually missing their timetabled path, running up to a day late. Why do they persevere with such a lack lustre service? Some are voting with their feet, others not so lucky due to lack of competitors on the broad gauge.

Pacific National in Victoria has no plan, no apparent leadership or ability to provide a freight service that Victorians demand in these contemporary times of high fuel process, climate change and crowded road infrastructures. In rural Victoria, because of the devastating drought, we have members being forced to take leave because of the lack of grain traffic. The opposite problem we have in Melbourne.

Due to the union intervention we have brokered a deal with the usually intransigent business groups, Grain-Bulk etc, to transfer some employees surplus to requirements to South Dynon to help out. This brings on another problem of training in South Dynon jobs but it is a start in the right direction.

As I write this report it is raining, maybe the drought is finally breaking and good winter crops will be planted to provide a brighter future for all in the rail freight industry in Victoria. Let us all hope this happens.

Some good news on Super for revised & new scheme contributors regarding Salary Sacrifice. As soon as I find out more I will inform you all.

Congratulations to Cameron Phillips and Adrian Butera who qualified as drivers on the 1st and 4th June respectively.

South Dynon OH&S Report

Submitted by:

South Dynon OH&S/SHE Reps.

This month we have had a few interesting developments regarding changes to operations within the confines of South Dynon Loco. Firstly, with EDI taking over the fuel point operations. We find we have no after hours

contact numbers to ring regarding locomotive faults.

This is something that should have been worked out well in advance of any changes being made to operations at Dynon. Currently this matter is still being worked out with management.

Also we have had an issue raised with the supply of locomotive kit equipment being unavailable on Saturday and Sunday evenings.

Fuel point being unattended all spare equipment is locked up including multi unit jumper cables. Management have been made aware that if

locomotives are not fully kit equipped they are not to enter service.

We now have the lock out procedures in place at the back of the diesel shops all roads 5 to 11 have derail blocks fitted and locomotives are to be placed into road 5 clear of the derail block unless otherwise stated.

Locomotive issues raised this week at the meeting with management being scheduled for this Friday, seems the Provisional Improvement Notice issued a few weeks ago has now got their attention.

This P.I.N. highlights the fact that we require toilet equipped locomotive on all main line trains. We did bring this to management's attention last year, and we had received lots of great ideas from them, but in reality, nothing has been accomplished to date.

This issue has the full backing of the WorkCover Authority.

The car parking issue has again been raised with VicTrack advising that we cannot park around the S/G Turntable as it limits their access to locomotives for servicing requirements, also with

E.D.I. marking their territory we have no spaces on their turf. Seems even the dumpmaster has to be moved.

As none of us are happy with the security arrangements regarding a secure lock up compound that we have been waiting for since our return to the old depot, this also will be raised with management.

Recent incidents regarding breaches of company policy have highlighted the importance of following the company line, and I cannot stress highly enough the importance of not putting yourself at risk of severe disciplinary action should you be caught not following procedure.

They are not taking prisoners on these matters. However unpopular they may seem, they are what we operate under, and as such are designed to make our work environment a safe one.

I would like to thank all crews for their assistance in submitting green forms and highlighting safety hazards within our work place, and urge all crews to continue assisting us in maintaining a safe work environment.

Victorian Locomotive Division Scholarships

The Department of Education has announced the winners of the Victorian Locomotive Division sponsored scholarships.

The scholarships are administered by the Department of Education and funded by the Victorian Locomotive Division. They are open to children / dependants of financial members of the Victorian Locomotive Division. Scholarship details and applications are available from the Department of Education website, <https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/scholarships/> in November/December each year.

Congratulations to the following winners.

The Frank Carey Memorial Scholarships: Valued at \$600.00 each, (\$300 per year) for students commencing year 11 in 2007. The scholarships were awarded to Jamie Huggett and Vanessa Lodington

The Steve Gibson Scholarships:

Valued at \$600.00 each, (\$300.00 per year) for students commencing year 11 in 2007. A scholarship was awarded to Emily Spicer. Unfortunately there were no other completed applications.

The Glen Moorhead Scholarship:

Valued at \$600.00, (\$300.00 per year) for students commencing tertiary education in 2007. The scholarship was awarded to Zandra Lodington.

The Ken Matthews Scholarship:

Valued at \$600.00 over the first two years of tertiary education. Unfortunately there were no completed applicants for this scholarship.

V/Line Passenger Spencer Street

**By Gary Jordon
Secretary—Spencer St Sub-Division**

Over the past couple of months a lot of happenings have occurred in and the area. After months of trying to get the appropriate pathways and walkways up to standard and getting nowhere, it seems the only thing that gets action is P.I.N. Notices and Cease Work Orders.

Such is the case where we have put a cease work on certain roadways/walkways around the Spencer St area. This has achieved the response we have been after, and hopefully in the coming week or two we should have the West End Plaza walkway up and running. We also have confirmation that the Latrobe St bridge walkway will be done by early June.

Drivers are reminded that whilst these works are in progress the roadway across from No. 1 box is out of bounds altogether, and access to the platforms or the car sidings is via Spencer St itself, or via Adderly St and the bottom of the Bank Sidings, and across pathway at Latrobe St bridge.

Drivers have asked if this is because we are after a Disruption Allowance. NO it is not. It is about getting things up to a standard that should be afforded to us at all times and not for us to be bought off with a few cents. Notwithstanding that due to a lot of other construction that is going to happen around the area in the next few months, there could be something to pursue for the members.

There is also a cease work for not doing runarounds at Sth Kensington, (in the hours of darkness), due to lack of lighting and the poor standard of pathways. Work is in progress to put up new lighting and to re-screen paths. We hope to see the end product shortly.

A proposal to move from our car park to the DFO car park is in progress, and at this stage, are negotiating the finer points of what is needed for security etc. We hope to have this finalized very soon. Mobile phones have come up as a concern for some of our members. An audit was conducted for the month of February, and some of the bills were a bit over the top, to say the least.

Drivers are reminded that you are allowed \$40 a month to use on non work related calls, sms, etc, (this is what we have informed management), so all work related numbers and call back numbers are not counted. Members must keep in mind that whilst we are on a cheap rate, don't go overboard as this could turn out to be quite expensive for some who don't heed the warning.

As the CDMA network is being faded out and we are going to be moving on to the 'Next G' band early next year, we are going to be looking at some new phone models over the next few weeks. We will try and get a user friendly model, that we hope will suit most of us—not like the piece of blue crap we have now.

The old meal room rumors have also been in full force regarding the so called loss of our rest jobs. Just a brief update on this. Management came to us a few weeks ago regarding concern for lack of drivers and through various suggestions they produced some so called quick fixes which suited them but certainly not us at that stage. We took a look at some of their so called fixes.

One concern was they didn't want to train up any more drivers to learn the Bairnsdale and Swan Hill corridors. About 40 drivers have been trained to drive on these corridors and the cost of training and releasing drivers to learn these corridors as part of your rotation was too expensive, and lack of numbers to release these drivers was at this stage unachievable. What they proposed was to take these 2 corridors off Spencer St and put a number of drivers into Swan Hill and possibly Bairnsdale. They also were going to look at putting some drivers into Warrnambool as well, as they also wanted to see what the savings were to them in manpower and expenses. As you can see this has a far greater affect on us than just saving a small number of bodies and rest expenses, so when this exercise is completed shortly we will sit down and digest it.

Remember management can go away and propose pie in the sky stuff like driving to the moon and back, (2 person of course with a needs break), but that means jack shit to us when we have the final say whether it if it meets all criteria, such as affects on depots, lack of quality running, lack of conversion on corridors etc, so lets not get excited just yet until we digest it and talk to everyone involved.

We have also been in discussion regarding the plans for the new Gerald Dee building. Plans have been presented, but don't seem to meet the criteria we need to accommodate the ever increasing number of drivers we have. Talks are progressing to come to agreement and when we have something to show the members we will.

Speaking of increasing numbers, welcome to the new team players that have come across from Connex over the past couple of months. We hope you enjoy your new environment. I think there are still 10 to 15 more drivers to come across in the next couple of months.

Timetable changes for the North East have been put back until the end of September, when Craigieburn opens up.

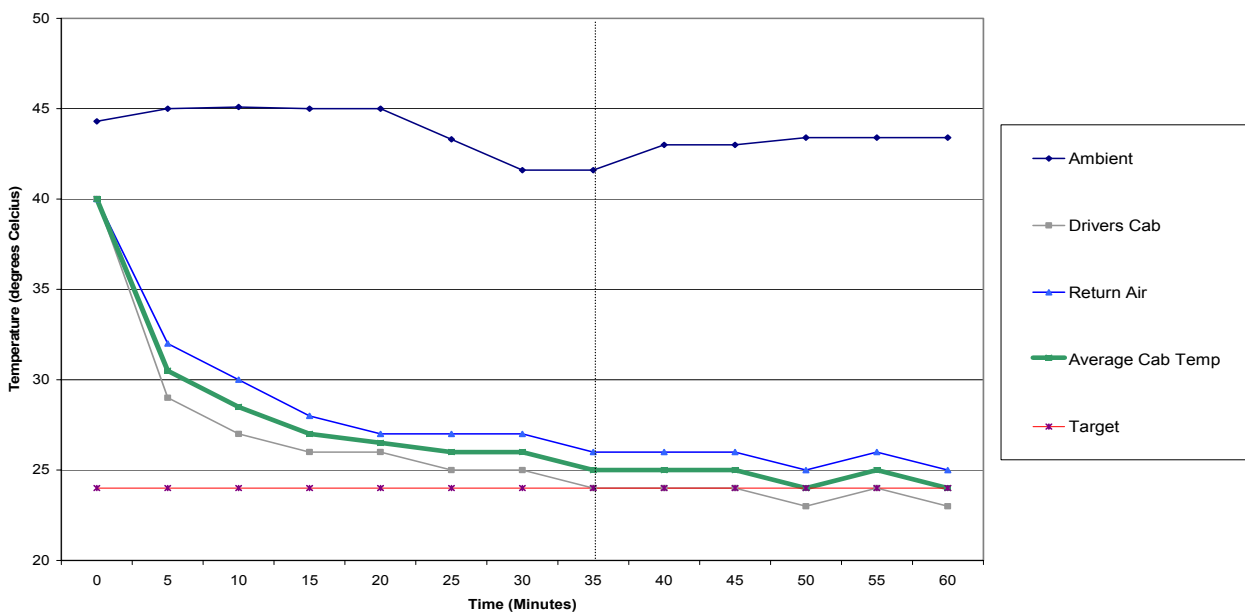
Hitachi Life Extension and Cab Air Conditioner

The Division has worked through the Drivers issues in regard to the proposed refurb, and have agreement with the Connex to revisit our position should, as we suspect, the Hitachi get a further reprieve on its death sentence.

The graph below is the result of the testing of the loco style cab air conditioner. The test was conducted to ensure the temperature in the cab was reduced significantly in a very short time. As indicated, the ambient temperature of the cab was raised to around 45 degrees for an hour before the test was conducted, and the working party believes that these results, together with the other improvements/procedures agreed too, should achieve the desired result.

The other modifications still to be done are insulated ducting and improved vents/diffusers, window protection, carpet or similar product on walls and floor of the cab.

Thermoking RAC60 Trial 110507



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Derailment Oakleigh Thursday 3rd May 2007.

Submitted by Ernie Nelson

If a picture paints a thousand words then this looks bugged.

Siemens Motor Car No.794m looking forlorn at Oakleigh with two Bogies in the dirt in the classic position of a train that has tried to go down two roads at once.

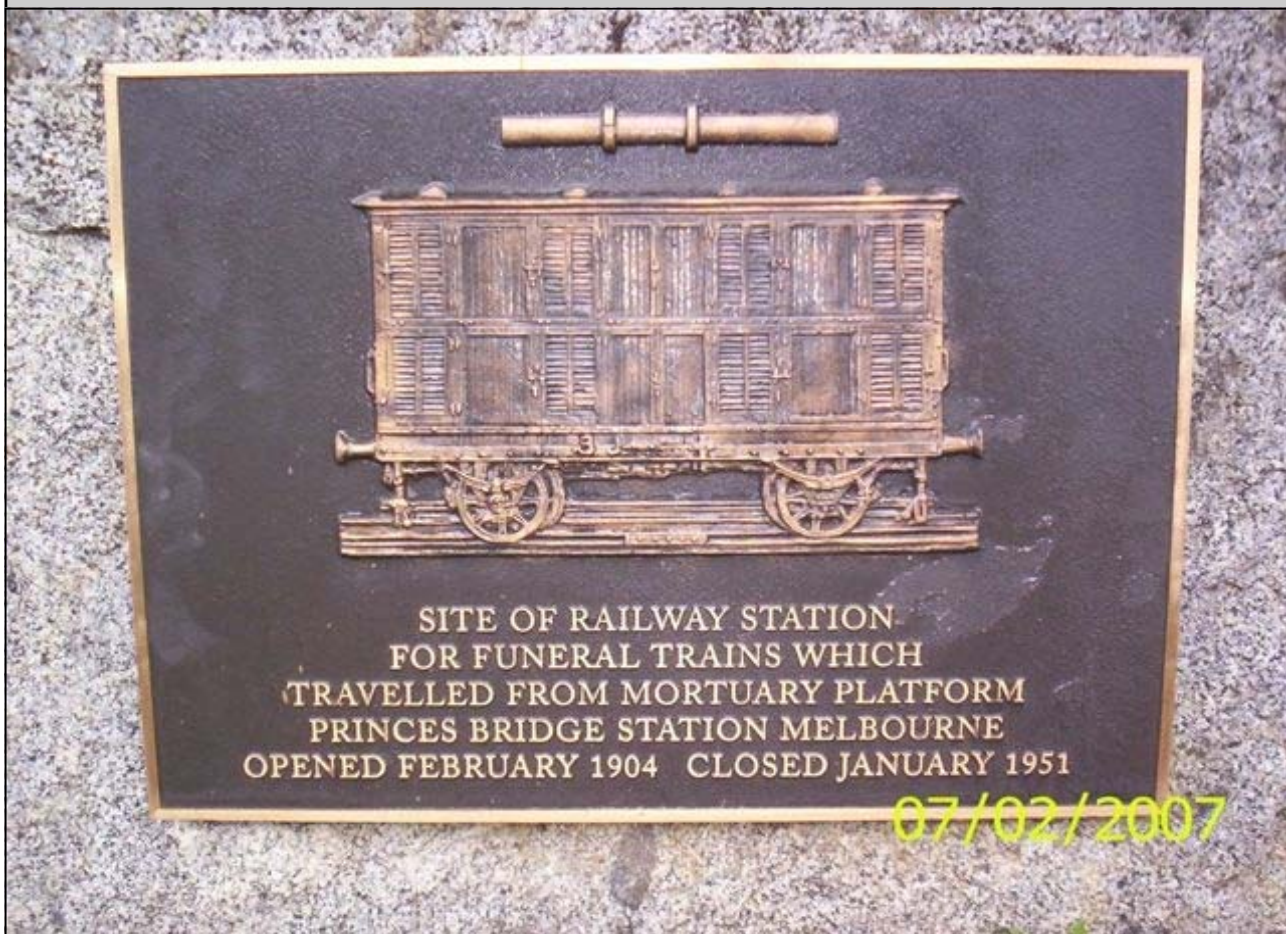
This is the aftermath of a derailment that occurred at Oakleigh.

Our member was operating under a Signallers Caution Order at the time, and it would appear the vicious rumour circulating that the point clip was put over the rail head instead of under it is a little more than unkind

Photos copyright and courtesy of "The Age".



FUNERAL TRAINS



This plaque is located inside the Springvale Cemetery and is said to be on the site of the former Springvale Cemetery station.

The wagon depicted on this plaque is one of a few that were built to carry the bodies and mourners to Springvale and Falkner Cemeteries. I don't know if any were used to take the bodies and mourners to Brighton General Cemetery as there were sidings at Middle Brighton, North Brighton, Brighton Beach and also Elsternwick.

The wagons depicted were fully braked and also had the standard seven core electrical cable through it, so when the wagon was placed in the consist of an electric train, the leading motor would still have control of the other motors in the consist, ie, powering, lights, pantographs, (Bells weren't fitted to eclectic trains until 1962).

One of these wagons are on display at Falkner Cemetery, just behind the down platform building or if you enter from the road way it's on your left just after you cross the railway line. The train that original ran to Springvale Cemetery and hauled the Mortuary Carriages was Steam Hauled and then later the line was electrified.

While looking at some aerial photos on the wall at the Springvale RSL, I was told by two old Guys that there was a 14 mile post belonging to the old cemetery line just outside the gate but I haven't seen it and as there is a 12 mile post on Clayton platform and I think it's further than 14 to the Cemetery, it might have been an old road mile post they were talking about. I'll have to look up one of my copy of the Victorian Grades Book to check the actual mileage, if there was a mile post there its well hidden or not where they said or its been stolen by an enthusiast.

Submitted by Murray Parkinson.

Signal Sighting Report

By David Campbell
Signal Sighting Metro

BOX HILL—BLACKBURN

Most members will know of, or have already been through, the Middleborough Road section.

The removal of the level crossing was a marvelous thing for all who used the area, road users as well as us.

The project was rather challenging in respect of signal sighting. Most of the section finished up with different alignments both vertically and horizontally. Normally we already have the overhead hardware in place, but here we didn't even have the track.

While the engineers could require signals at certain locations, and even with careful study of planned locations of overhead structures, we had to make assumptions about the best spots for the signals. Overall, I'm fairly pleased about how it all panned out. Some of the signal spacing is uneven, and this appears strange at first.

The signaling is designed for trains to run at intervals of 128 seconds at full speed track, (65km/h), and yes, it does actually seem to work.

Some glitches occurred, as would realistically be expected. The up home signal coming into Box Hill (301) was outside the project, and thus was not to be altered.

A few days before opening of the track, we finally had the chance to walk through the section, and found that the signal was hidden. It turned out that the up line had been realigned, and the existing signal had become hidden behind an old overhead mast.

It was clear the signal had to be relocated further from the track so that it could be seen, and a mast was procured at short notice and the existing signal heads relocated on to the new mast.

This temporary fix was conditional on the units being upgraded to LED, which could not be achieved prior to opening as the units have a long lead time from ordering to delivery.

The illuminated arrows on the down home signal approaching Blackburn (302) were supposed to have LED units fitted. Unfortunately, somebody forgot to order them, and in order to avoid delaying the commissioning, we agreed to using incandescent units as a temporary fix. The correct units should be installed late March.

Up auto signal BBN 203 was outside the project, but will now be fitted with LED's

From a driver's point of view, there are none of the 'hidden' signals approaching Laburnum as there were in the past. The platforms are now straight,

overcoming the difficulties we once had viewing tiny tv monitors with sun shining on them (or the cameras).

The gradient though Laburnum proper is now 1:143 instead of 1:140 which makes both starting and stopping easier. And with high quality track, even the X'Trapolis trains ride superbly through the new section.

It would have been nice to have got a third track while the works were going on, but it was a roads project, and VicRoads could hardly have been expected to pay for that!

As it was, all the works have been designed to match up with the third track whenever it might go ahead, with the cutting and embankments being wide enough to allow the extra track and the new overhead structures for three tracks.

We can now look forward to some more of these grade separation projects. Hopefully the successful completion of the project, two weeks ahead of time, will give the powers that be some confidence to do some more jobs like this.

DANDENONG—PAKENHAM

This section of track was subject to complaints about the signals. A combination of old units, with viewing difficulties caused by the closeness of overhead masts to track, and external influences such as improved lighting, caused the signals along here to be somewhat below the standard seen elsewhere.

Replacement of signal heads with LED units has begun from the Pakenham end. This will overcome most of the issues along this corridor.

NEWPORT—WERRIBEE

Another high speed line with signal viewing problems. Signals at Hoppers Crossing (G and GG957) are to be converted to LED soon. Standard gauge signals at Laverton Loop can be viewed rather nicely by suburban trains approaching them from Westona; this should have been overcome by the time you read this with the fitting of side shields, which will reduce the viewing for trains from Westona, while not affecting the view for trains on the standard gauge.

A few other signals around Laverton and Newport are listed for upgrade to LED units.

FRANKSTON—STONY POINT

Planning is advanced for the replacement of token based safeworking systems used by ATC, with axle counters as on parts of RFR areas. Current planning will see existing signals at Somerville, Hastings, Crib Point and Stony Point abolished.

The points at Long Island Junction will become motorised, remote operated. New signals will be installed at Stony Point, Long Island Junction and

Frankston, with alterations to some signals at Frankston. In particular we expect that the current “low speed caution” for suburban trains arriving at platform 2 at Frankston can become a “medium speed warning.”

The project will deliver time savings to both passenger and freight trains, as well as being much more convenient for train crews along this corridor, with the abolition of manual signal controls.

GREENSBOROUGH—HURSTBRIDGE

Planning is also advancing along here for the replacement token safeworking systems with ATC, using conventional track circuiting.

The works will occur over stages, being Diamond Creek location, Greensborough—Eltham section, Eltham—Hurstbridge section, with consideration later for Eltham yard. This should lead to ability to run more trains along the corridor, as well as improving safety of trains, particularly at Diamond Creek. Diamond Creek works are expected by August this year.

SIGNAL TRIALS

(No, not in a court of law, we just sentence them to be hanged...)

A new type of Alstom LED tri-colour unit will shortly be installed at a few selected locations on the Burnley corridor.

These units should be more reliable than the current units, and will feature a different shaped poly carbonate cover. It is hoped that the current problems of sun shining into the existing LED's and washing out the colour will be overcome with this new cover..

Signal M 235 (down end of Footscray, Sunshine track), has had a new type of mast installed. The mast is designed so that the signal head can be lowered and raised for ease of maintenance.

While the signal is lowered, it will still display an aspect along the track, ie will just be lower! Interim maintenance procedures require the signal to be fixed at stop , thus the previous signal will be at yellow. Maintainers will require permission to lower the signal, and this should only be performed outside of train running times, unless the signal has failed.

In a practical sense, the signal would normally only need to be lowered for a few minutes, and it is unlikely that a driver should encounter the signal in this condition.

Modern health and safety requirements are making access to many signals problematic for maintainers. This becomes an issue for us, when we require a combination of signal lights at particular spots, but it then becomes quite impossible to build satisfactory access ladders and work platforms (landings) to enable the maintainers to access them. At times the

different requirements of drivers and maintainers cannot enable a solution. This can be illustrated by simply looking at newer signals, with many ladders having signs attached warning “danger, do not climb.” Under these conditions, the only way to access the signal head is by using a cherry picker, with the necessary protection and “power off” as applicable.

FLINDERS STREET VIADUCT

Construction of a multi storey building will soon commence on the north side of the track between Spencer Street and King Street, where the car park is now.

This is referred to as the former fishmarket site, although some historians might disagree with that reference. One effect of this building will be the current viewing of signals will disappear as the development will block current sight lines.

From our perspective, any reduction of viewing from what we have now, in the most intensely used section of track in the network, could not be tolerated.

This has lead to discussions over the past couple of years, considering the extent of the problem and possible solutions.

The agreed solution is that all signals across the older viaducts (City Circle, Burnley, Northern and Caulfield) will be converted to LED types, and dressed as home signals.

Banner indicators will be installed across all four tracks between certain signals where viewing will become unacceptable obstructed by the new buildings.

The case for conversion of signals from autos to homes was quite strong, based on safety as well as operational reasons.

I guess most members have had the experience of seeing the next signal display a proceed aspect just after the trip goes as we give up waiting at an auto signal. No more!

Installation of banner indicators aroused some energetic debate. At the end of the day, there were many strong reasons for using them here, not the least being that this option does not preclude speed increases across the viaduct at a later time.

Banner indicators have proven to be a great success on the Regional Fast Rail tracks, and most members will remember the trial unit installed at Middle Footscray around 18 months ago.

Their use in the metro area had been opposed by one or two particularly conservative managers, and it is pleasing that we can now move forward.

Special thanks to Ernie Nelson and Colin Holly for their hard work in this matter.

Where Is It ...?



If you think you know where the above photo was taken, call Heather at the Union Office (96821122 or outside the metropolitan area 1800134095). If you answer correctly (only one guess per competition) your name will go into a hat and the winners, one Loco and one Sparks, will be drawn two weeks from the distribution of the current issue. This edition's prize include a union mug and a cap. Good luck!
Picture supplied by Trevor Penn.



Congratulations to Geoff Walker, Driver, V/Line Passenger, Southern Cross . Geoff correctly answered last edition's 'Where Is It', (pictured left) as Moonee Ponds. Geoff has won a union cap and mug.
There were no correct entries from the Sparks.

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APPLICATION or UPGRADE FORM: PAYROLL DEDUCTION FORM

DATE: / /

I (DOB / /) as a financial member of the RTBU, hereby authorise and
(PLEASE PRINT NAME)

request you to deduct from my salary/wages the amount of **\$14.90 / \$15.80 / \$21.50** fortnightly and pay this to A. F. A. Pty. Ltd. on my behalf. All amounts remitted on my behalf in accordance with this authority shall be deemed to be a payment by me personally. In consideration of my employer consenting to make deductions and payments as above I agree for myself, my executors, administrators and assigns to hold my employer and every employee harmless and indemnified against any claim arising out of any act or omission in pursuance of this authority or failure to make deductions and remittances as authorised herein. This authority is to continue until withdrawn by me in writing.

SIGNATURE: OCCUPATION:

PRIVATE ADDRESS: PHONE NO:

SUBURB: STATE: POSTCODE:

CIRCLE LEVEL OF COVER SELECTED:

\$200 per/week - \$14.90 fortnightly: \$250 per/week - \$15.80 fortnightly: \$300 per/week - \$21.50 fortnightly

EMPLOYER: EMPLOYEE NO:

NAME OF WITNESS: SIGNATURE OF WITNESS:

ADDRESS OF WITNESS: Code- 05 ~ AFA ref: 12050180

Late Addition Level Crossings

By Darren Lamont

Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model

While the A.L.C.A.M. (Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model) study sweeps across the state, members continue to endure near misses and fatalities at level and pedestrian crossings.

A.L.C.A.M. is a method of risk assessing level and pedestrian crossings for prioritising funding for upgrades.

The model takes into account the risk factors for the level crossing and proceeds to analyse the following with a point score and a percentage figure. The process continues with recommendations for an upgrade.

The study of a particular site takes into account protection details, road geometry, road traffic control, road vehicles, rail vehicles, crossing geometry, and visibility. A public awareness program will soon be released as well as a website.

While the state Government has allocated 160 million over 10 years to the program, which to be a little fair, is more than any state in the country, is it enough? Whether the funding is a catch up from previous neglect left over from previous Government's inactivity, I'll let you decide.

While we watch the travelling A.L.C.A.M. show travel around the state, having a broader look it, it seems to me, to be a one step upgrade of all level crossings passive to active, and active protection to a higher step, i.e. give way to stop sign, stop sign to bells and lights, bells and lights to booms.

To add weight to the level crossing upgrades, recent trials of initiatives are actively being pursued which include early active advance warning devices and yellow box markings.

Other programs have been suggested which include closing down as many as possible useless level crossings, and therefore utilising the maintenance expense to further assist in a state upgrade program.

Suggestions have come from all directions to solve the ever increasing carnage at level crossings from speed humps to creating sharp turns for road users,

and also solar powered lights where power is not available.

While all suggestions and programs have merit, the one main one not mentioned yet is a federally funded grade separation program especially for main arterial and major highways.

Billions of dollars a year are spent on roads by state and especially federal governments yet how much on rail?

Throwing great globs of money at this problem is a damn good start!

The common factor in recent accidents has been truck, truck and truck, and trains are not designed to take side impacts.

While train drivers face 00 rules, fatigue management, vigilance controls, data logger that records speed, whistle and headlight indication, regular medicals, continuation classes, audit and check rides as well as the please explain accusations from management, what does a truck driver do after getting his licence?

The Division has been preaching the importance of near miss reports to all who would listen, but recently it was discovered that the near miss reports from VLine drivers which were followed up by supervisors, were either not making their way to the people who compile and analyse the data, the Public Transport Safety of Victoria, D.O.I., to look for trends, or these near miss reports were being delayed through the safety group at VLine.

These trends do have the power to bring forward or create extra funding as well as police patrols for level crossing safety.

The recent level crossing accident has a history of near misses and has been mentioned in internal VLine correspondence alarming Management to the increase of these incidents.

Recently the Divisional Officers were told by the C.E.O of VLine that he was concerned with the safety of our members. We think we are concerned about his level of concern!

On behalf of the Locomotive Division Executive and membership we express our deepest sympathy to the families of the deceased victims of the recent Kerang level crossing disaster.

Social Factors Reflections on Railroaders' "Quality of Life"

Submitted by Adrian Power

Frederick C. Gamst of the University of Massachusetts presented the following paper on railroader fatigue at the annual meeting of the Transportation Research Board in Washington, D.C., on January 9.

Introduction

I focus on lifestyle and work-life issues engendered by nonstandard, work schedules in American railroading. Many classes and crafts of railroaders exist but, today, I present regarding the operating railroaders, those who crew trains and engines and switch railcars.

This presentation is from the holistic perspective of sociocultural anthropology in social factors.

A locomotive engineer who would have preferred to spend the recent holiday with his family e-mailed to me: "Thanks to the Chief Train Dispatcher, I spent New Years Eve, New Years Day and most of Jan. 2nd in the [terminal] at the 'Flea Bag' hotel.

I got to watch the 24 hour 'Monk' marathon, 'Twilight Zone' Marathon and an assorted batch of infomercials. I was basically lulled into a catatonic state."

Here we find typical unpredictable separation from family events. A few days earlier another engineer e-mailed me: "I worked down to [terminal] yesterday on the [train designation]--an ostensible hotshot--but it took us 12 hours to get here, since they were staging us to meet up with a crew which was not rested until [time] hours.

Into my [several decades] year, there I was working with a new guy who hired out in 2004. We got 8 hours rest and now we are deadheading home."

Here we find a fast "scheduled" freight train purposely delayed on its schedule plus a typical change in daily traffic pattern necessitating being sent back to the home terminal after eight hours rest, i.e., being off duty.

Additionally, "the conductor [who by rule] supervises the operation and administration of the train" is a neophyte without experience.

These are a few of the typical issues reported by operating railroaders regarding their unpredictable work schedules.

I have many scores of files regarding a railroader, according to the lineup of trains due, expecting a call for a run, say, after dawn, and thus, not taking an afternoon nap. Then, the crew dispatcher calls him on groggy duty a few hours, or less, after going to bed that night.

In brief, those railroaders in pool freight and on the extra board work on first-in, first-out rotating lists from which one's schedule for tomorrow is difficult to predict and two days hence impossible to predict with the normal fluctuations in traffic and available rested train crews.

Irregular Schedules, Work Life, and Lifestyle

Irregular schedules, such as found in much railroad freight operating working the US, can begin at any time of day and are irregular far beyond the usual meaning of the term, as in shift-work rotations.

They are erratically variable, including both unpredictability and regressivity at times. They do not have the predictable patterns of fixed and rotating shifts, and they contribute to fatigue apart from sleep deprivation and debt.

They can be regressive in that the starting times of runs can rotate in reverse, that is, in each 24-hour period the worker goes on duty earlier than in the previous 24 hours. The shifts, therefore, are out of synchronization with the circadian rhythm.

Thus, the schedules are regressively variable with respect to circadian rhythmicity. After years of such irregular work schedules, many such railroaders report to me that their employment harms any semblance of normal sleep and eating patterns, even on a day not on call or on duty.

Such a fatiguing schedule yields benefits to rail employer and employee. The traditional practice allows a carrier to have highly flexible and maximum use of operating employees, and it maximizes employee income because more paid time can be worked, compared to a 24-hour cycle or a 5-day week period, and also allows the individual to assemble large contiguous blocks of off duty time.

I have been frequently told by employees in freight pools and on extra boards that they prefer to work to the maximum amount allowed and, then, mark off, if financially feasible, for leisure days of their own choosing.

Here, then, are issues of lifestyle intertwined with personal finances. Management, however, does not always allow such employees to mark off being on call.

In all, the work schedules of North American operating railroaders are often unpredictably and regressively irregular.

How serious is fatigue on the railroads having the potential for catastrophic accidents?

Testifying at the Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine, then FRA Administrator Jolene Molitoris, said: "About one-third of train accidents, and employee injuries and deaths are caused by human factors. We know fatigue underlies many of them" (September 16, 1998).

John Lauber and Phyllis Kayten found that in two

fatigue-related railroad accidents: "the schedule was also unpredictable: employees had insufficient information to determine when they would next go on duty, regardless of whether they were waiting at home or an away terminal, for the next call. Management was responsible for scheduling policies that made it difficult for crewmembers to plan adequate rest periods." Martin Moore-Ede found for operating railroaders: "The hours of work are even worse than those driving a truck. Particularly problematic is the practice of keeping railroad engineers on a shift roster waiting at a terminal to be called in sequence for the next available train."

The NTSB has repeatedly noted that better industry-wide fatigue countermeasures are long overdue on the railroads.

Established for decades are both scientific principles for countering fatigue, including scheduling of work, and the knowledge that effects of lost sleep accumulate over time and do not dissipate.

One must conclude, as does the FRA: "Fatigue which significantly reduces the alertness of employees, causes railroad incidents and is one of the most pervasive safety issues in the railroad industry."

Fatigue from sleep deprivation in America constitutes a growing menace, and the entire industrial world encounters this rising tide of drowsy hazard. The "man failure" so regularly cited in railroad and other industrial accidents, oftentimes, we could directly translate as sleep deprivation.

Railroaders' sleep deprivation as well as disruption of the circadian rhythm can result in impaired judgment and actions plus the onset of involuntary, potentially lethal microsleep.

It is not only alcohol and other drug impairment that we must scrutinize for a source of rail accidents and near misses, but also sleep impairment, which can have deleterious effects on behavior and accident consequences similar to drugs.

Owing to the norms and values in American culture, however, we do not place the sanctions or opprobrium on sleep-deprived operators of vehicles that we place on drunken operators. ("Real men don't become fatigued.") Either kind of operator might hit us at speed.

Lifestyle off the job is diminished by the irregular schedule of most freight operating work. One railroader's wife told me. "At church, they thought I was a widow woman, because he was never home and rested on Sunday morning."

Railroaders comment on promising to be present for a son's ball game or daughter's piano recital, only to be away from home or sleeping. Anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and other familial occasions can be similarly missed events.

In this era of two employed spouses, many burdens fall iniquitously and sometimes impossibly on the

non-railroader spouse. Often, railroaders must honor in the breach normal household chores, family interactions, and community obligations. The carriers often meet with threats of discipline their employee' attempts to mark off for such events.

As one rail union officer wrote, "These railroads . . . can't even send a get well card without the threat of discipline being included." Rail officers complain to me that almost everyone wants to mark off on the weekend and holidays.

Regulating Against Fatigue?

The concern about rested railroaders is age old and dates to long before the time of enacting the laws contained in the federal Hours of Service Act of 1907.

This Act limits the time on duty (originally to 16 hours, then to 14 hours, and today to 12 hours) of covered rail employees engaged in or connected to the movement of trains in interstate commerce. Congress revised the Act in 1969 and re-codified it in 1992. Today, under the Act, an operating employee can work eight hours on, eight hours off, indefinitely. Actually, train and yard crewmembers can work eleven hours and fifty-nine minutes on and eight hours off, indefinitely.

The editor of *Railway Age* noted: "The wreck of a New Jersey Transit train on Feb. 9, that killed three and injured 162, has raised questions about the practice of split shifts for engineers and about whether the 89-year-old Hours of Service Act should be modified."

Congress drafted the Act before we knew anything about the biology of circadian rhythms and the human and social factors of sleep. The federally mandated eight hours "rest" does not insure that duration of medically required sleep.

What is the fatigue factor if a railroader in an accident previously had the 8 hours "rest" mandated by the Act? But what if closer analysis finds he had a 45 minute commute each way between home and yard and had a customary 1 hour and 30 minute call from the crew dispatcher, allowing 5 hours and 45 minutes "rest," for sleep, meals, sanitary activities, and any conversation with those at home?

The Hours of Service Act has great limitations regarding safety. As Michael Coplen and Donald Sussman explain: "This act does not limit employees, weekly or monthly work hours, restrict the irregularity or unpredictability of on-call work schedules, or restrict mandatory commuting distances without compensatory time off.

Extensive night work, irregular work schedules, extended work periods with few or no days off, and the policies, procedures, and agreements that encompass these work scheduling practices, all evolved within the limited provisions of this act."

The NTSB has welcomed the opportunity to assist the Congress, should it decide to revisit the long-inadequate Hours of Service Act governing durations of particular kinds of railroad work.

Selective Fatigue Remediations

Fundamental to fatigue remediations, Congress will have to revisit its Hours of Service Act in light of relevant information in the twenty-first century.

This is especially so as the carriers move toward one-person crewing in Positive Train Control (PTC), Remote Control Locomotive (RCL), and conventional operations.

Sixteen months ago, scores of operating employees on one district told me that they were fatigued because their company did not hire any new operating personnel.

Therefore, the freight pools were short and men could not mark off. Extra board men sometimes went out on eight hours rest at home and away-from-home terminals.

The situation has changed little to date. Accordingly, one partial remediation to the problem of fatigued railroaders crewing trains is for the apical managers to assess more precisely their future labor needs.

Private programs for fatigue countermeasures wax and wane. Says a management person involved with such programs, "Fact is, they [rail officers] are very good at measuring costs associated with these and other fatigue countermeasures but piss poor at measuring benefits."

Labor and management must reach an agreement on how to end the ancient, unpredictable merry-go-round of scheduling duty time.

This intricate operational and contractual accord, of course, is easier said than done. Past and current projects for fatigue management would have to be evaluated and taken into account.

Moreover, fatigue management must be more than just "fixing" individual employees with various well-intended programs and consultant-purveyed nostrums; it must also include assessment of managerial policy and practice and government regulation regarding work schedules.

Many programs for combating railroader fatigue constitute a form of the old, now discredited Heinrichian approach to dealing with employees--blame it on the "hoghead," "conductor," etc.

Several decades ago, most analysts had a residual category for accident cause called human error. In was a convenient wastebasket for attribution of accidents to a Chimera of a uniform, undifferentiated cause. "Fixing" the individual "culprit" was the one-size-fits-all error and accident remediation.

In this Heinrichian vein, problems of fatigue are a matter of remediation regarding the individual employee and not the carrier (or regulator or

Congress). This tradition of blame it on the individual railroader continues into the present.

In modern analysis, however, an error ordinarily has systemic roots and is not merely attributable to an end-person in a chain of events leading to the error, including that of not getting sufficient sleep. By focusing on an individual's behavior, the correction for error becomes restricted to personal correction. ("You must get more sleep!")

Accordingly, in this myopia of individual behavior, some analysts act as if error is not systemic but individually correctable by admonishments, discipline, advising, training, behavior modification, and written and taped handouts, to condition error-free individuals for future situations. Regarding such personal remediations as the correct-all for operator error, we now know:

The evidence from a large number of accident inquiries indicates that bad events are more often the result of error-prone situations and error-prone activities than they are of error-prone people.

Accordingly, the corrective remediation for fatigue error must not end with the individual railroader but must include contributing errors from actors in overarching societal levels.

Today, systemic analysts advocate moving to the overarching levels of an error problem and, there, redesigning the processes, including scheduling, of work to eliminate a hazard for individuals at the work-tasks level of an organization.

The American railroads have few scheduled shifts for freight train and extra board personnel. Almost all of the rest of the world's railroads have them, however, with rostered operators.

In general, being rostered means paid duty for a fixed (therefore, totally predictable) period, a scheduled shift.

In Sweden, for example, almost all railroaders know their work schedule a year in advance.

More specifically, rostered means being listed for a regular assignment and its period of duty--possibly while standing-by, but not necessarily operating railroad equipment.

Canadian railroad operations and crew scheduling are similar to those in the US. Canadian railroaders, however, often say that their rules and regulations regarding "rest" are superior to those in the America. Both rostered crewing and the Canadian experience have relevance to remediation of railroader fatigue in the US.

Finally, given the age-old traditions, practices, and fatigue of personnel in American railroading--evoking the aphorism "sleeping at the switch"-- it might be that the industry is incapable of correcting its ancient fatigue problem, beyond additional tinkering. That could be an invitation for Congress to legislate a correction.

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A notice of resignation from membership of the Union takes effect:

Where the member ceases to be eligible to become or remain a member of the Union; or

On the day on which the notice is received by the Union; or

On the day specified in the notice, which is a day not earlier than the day when the member ceases to be eligible to become a member, whichever is later; or

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On the day which specified in the notice;

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