

ACCREDITATION AND ITS EFFECT ON TRAMWAY MUSEUMS IN NSW

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Accreditation is defined as:

- certified as being of a prescribed quality;
- being declared as meeting official requirements.

BACKGROUND

On Sunday May 6, 1990, an historic train trip, hauled by locomotive 3801, was climbing Cowan Bank heading home after a trip to Newcastle.

For various reasons 3801 could not lift the train up the grade and, after several attempts, had come to a halt. Without warning an Intercity express ploughed into the rear of the train, resulting in several fatalities.

As a result, the State Rail Authority imposed an immediate and total ban on all steam-hauled train trips in NSW. This ban applied to main line and branch line operators. Operators on private lines were not affected.

At the following coronial inquiry, the NSW Deputy Coroner, Derrick Hand, handed down a finding "that the accident did happen because of that 'million to one chance'". Basically the evidence presented at the inquiry led him to believe that due to excessive sand on the rails the whole train was effectively insulated from the signalling system which allowed the following train to proceed. The overall actions of the Society running the trip did not contribute to the accident.

For reasons unclear, the Transport Minister had formed the opinion that as steam train operations were not all that popular the ban should remain. Within a couple of weeks he had changed his mind, perhaps due to the volume of correspondence he had received regarding the social importance of steam-hauled train trips. These letters had come not only from the well-organised enthusiast lobby, but from many councils and shires throughout the state as well as community groups, all expressing the feeling of fondness for steam trains held by the public at large.

The Minister then set up a meeting early in January 1991, between the historical societies, the State Rail Authority and the Department of Transport to discuss a proposal for the accreditation of historical train operations on SRA main lines. The major thrust was for main line operations and branch lines connected to the main system, whether used by SRA for normal services or not. Two working parties were established to consider two key issues: Accreditation Standards and Public Liability Insurance.

All historical societies were invited to present submissions detailing their respective group's views.

Our [ie SPER's] major point of issue was that we were an electric tramway and not a railway, and as such we should not be considered in the same category as rail tour operators. We operate on purpose built, private tramway right of way with no common workings with other operators, travelling at relatively low speeds with light passenger loadings. We are a long term operator with no operation related incidents during 26 years of running the trams.

On March 11, 1991, the Minister announced the resumption of heritage train operations. Along with this announcement the SRA released the Accreditation document for main line operations. The document was basically non-negotiable. The NSW Rail Transport Museum and 3801 Limited prepared their accreditation submissions to the Authority and following extensive and detailed questioning the Accreditation Panel gave in-principle support to the proposals. These two organisations eventually received full approval, followed shortly afterwards by ARHS (ACT Division).

One outcome from the accreditation steering committee was a proposal that the SRA not be responsible for operations on non-SRA lines and that the private line operators come under control of the Workcover Authority (formerly the DLI). The Workcover code in force at that time regulated industries only where there was a demonstrated public safety need. The Workcover Authority did not regulate private railways over 650 mm gauge and would require internal changes if it were to set and monitor accreditation standards. The WCA decided that it would continue its current policy of non-active involvement until a change of incident/accident record justified otherwise.

SOCIETY'S ACTION ON SELF REGULATION

At this point it is relevant to return to the early days of the Museum in the Royal National Park.

As the Museum developed after 1961, plans were also undertaken to ensure the project would stand official scrutiny, more so since the enthusiast group had been subject to public ridicule from various quarters. For that reason, an early official act was the publication, by the Board of Directors in 1963, of a set of "Regulations for the Conduct of Traffic and Guidance of Members and Employees". (The Grey Book)

As the time for trial electric operations approached during the latter part of 1964, the museum executive appointed a member, who had been a tram driver, to the position of Chief Driving Instructor. He was in control of all driver training for the next 5 years. The early operation was supported by the first issue of

"Tramway Working Orders" based on the documents previously used by the Department of Government Transport.

After 4 years of operations, the Directors were faced with a number of problems. The initial power supply had such a limited power output that trams were restricted to slow speed operation. This was about to change as approval had been given to boost power supply. The number of trams being readied for traffic was increasing, as was the number of members seeking approval to drive.

These factors forced the implementation of the next stage of development. It became necessary to form a committee of experienced members to establish a training programme for traffic staff and to expand the Rules and Regulations to include Working Orders and other instructions due to the increasing number of new members who had not had previous contact with trams in their normal operating environment.

The Crew Training Course Committee reported back to the Directors in 1970 with outline proposals for training to be implemented as soon as details could be finalised. A number of senior members were appointed to the Committee to establish a practical training programme, based on the outline proposals. These members became the Society's first "Instructors".

In 1972, the first review of drivers resulting from this Committee's training programme was held. This took the form of lectures based on the Handbook, which contained Working Orders and Equipment and Operation sections. Following the lecture, each member was asked to demonstrate his capability in driving. For the first time he was instructed on the methods of operation of electrical emergency procedures. Those who showed reasonable competency had their previous authorisation renewed. Those who did not attend this review had to undertake any new training programme from the beginning. Concurrently, a similar programme was instituted for the conductors.

The final stage was to invite other members to undertake training. It was stressed that all new trainees would have to be approved as a conductor before driving instruction could commence.

The programme continued until 1980, being altered and adapted as the Instructors gained experience in teaching and the peculiarities of the system and the tramcars became evident. At that stage a number of changes took place to further improve the training programme situation.

In 1980, the Crew Training Committee suggested that the next stage of training should be implemented. This was a written examination for previously authorised drivers. The examination consisted of 20 questions which covered the topics of museum philosophy, working orders, electric operation and mechanical operation. Three instructors marked the

papers independently and the marks were aggregated, with the pass mark being set at 45. The Crew Training Committee would discuss any major difference in the marking of any particular answer at their next meeting.

With the plans drawn up for the new tramway at Loftus, it became apparent that the new line would present totally different operating situations with which we had no experience, including the crossing of a side street and several property access crossings. A new training programme was devised and once again the traffic staff had to be retrained.

Prior to this training, the then Chief Training Officer was able, with the co-operation of the Melbourne tramway authorities, to attend the Hawthorn Training School as an observer and to have lengthy discussions on training with their staff. This co-operation has continued through the years.

In view of the new accreditation procedures being implemented by the government, we are in the fortunate position of having in place a well structured training course for our traffic staff, which has been based on our many years of experience.

OTHER EVENTS AFFECTING THE MUSEUM

Until mid-1991 the Museum was prepared to sit and wait until the relevant authority approached us. However the State Rail Authority ceased electric train services on the Royal National Park Branch Railway line. This was an opportunity which the Museum could not afford to miss, so when invitations for Expressions of Interest for the disused Branch Line were called, the Museum lodged a proposal. The format of the Expression of Interest was based heavily on accreditation procedures. This gave us an insight into the new requirements. The Authority accepted our proposal "in principle", subject to further negotiations including accreditation.

So, in a relatively short space of time the situation had changed from the Workcover Authority's "let well enough alone" to one where, for the first time in our 40 year history, an outside authority was to regulate our operational procedures.

Prior to the SRA letting out the Expression of Interest documents, the SRA Accreditation Officer, Keith Audet, sought an unofficial visit by a number of SRA representatives from the Special Trains Unit and their legal department.

Apart from Keith Audet, none of the SRA group had visited the Museum previously. The only knowledge of the Museum was, quote, "a few trams in a tin shed". In fact prior information hinted that one of the group was indifferent to visiting the Museum at all. It was therefore an eyeopener for them to see the facilities that existed.

During the mandatory tour of the display hall it became evident that the visit was more than a sightseeing trip. Questions on our history, formation

and legal standing were the first raised followed by those dealing with financing of the enterprise and its long term viability. As the party passed into the "works" side of the Museum, the thrust of the questions centred around maintenance procedures, planned maintenance, the qualifications of those involved in tramcar maintenance and the keeping of records. Although impressed with the workshop facilities and our workmanship in general, the discussions inevitably returned to accountability of personnel. The fact that our Chief Engineer is a professional electrical and mechanical engineer and those responsible for maintenance have the appropriate trade qualifications appeared to alleviate the earlier concerns.

On the subject of the Operations staff, especially the tram crews, it was stressed by the Museum that the Directors had initiated the training of our tram crews and the publishing of the Rules and Regulations early in our public operations. The current set of Rules and Regulations were shown to the visitors, along with the earlier documentation to illustrate our long term commitment to safe public operations.

The visit was beneficial to both the Authority and the Museum as it changed the visitors' preconceived ideas of the museum consisting of "little boys playing trams" to a dedicated group of "professional amateurs".

The visit by representatives from the Department of Transport was almost a carbon copy of the SRA visit. Apart from operations safety, which included maintenance standards and conformity to those standards, their concern was one of management stability and financial ability.

As the Museum has been established for over 40 years and the majority of the current Directors have been on the Board for over 10 years, the officials believed we had satisfied the management criteria. They commented that the Museum had shown great innovation over the years and had been prepared to accept responsibility for its actions. This would hold the Museum in good stead with the authorities.

Both groups of visitors who viewed our Operations Handbook expressed surprise that such an authoritative document had been produced by a volunteer group and requested a copy for their files. We have been led to believe that other groups have been shown the documents as a guide to what is desirable.

The only shortcoming for the Museum to receive full accreditation approval is in the area of records. Although maintenance for trams, track, overhead wiring and buildings is being carried out, the new accreditation conditions require documented proof that such maintenance is carried out in accordance with predetermined standards.

ACCREDITATION CRITERIA REQUIREMENTS

The accreditation document forms part of the Operating Deed between the SRA and the operating organisation. There are two types of Deed: a "Main Line Operating Deed", where only the equipment requires registration, and a "Disused Lines Deed", where the SRA infrastructure as well as the private infrastructure requires registration.

Managerial Capacity

1. Incorporation

- the group must be incorporated.

2. Operational History

- a heavy reliance is placed on this aspect.

3. Organisational Structure

- must be appropriate for the operations.

4. Management Personnel

- Directors:
looking for managerial experience
- Engineers:
must have qualifications and relevant experience
- Operations Staff:
training, qualification and/or authorisation, experience
- Maintenance personnel:
qualifications and experience

5. Financial requirements

6. Statement of Assets and Liabilities

7. Profit and Loss Statements

8. Statement of Opinion

- by bank or financial institution

9. Insurance:

- minimum of \$10 million

Certification of Equipment and Infrastructure

1. List of equipment to be used

- Engineering drawings — especially any modifications
- Certificates
- Results of tests and inspections

2. List of Private Infrastructure to be used

- Engineering drawings
- Certificates
- Results of tests and inspections

3. Engineering and Safety Standards to be developed by Engineers

- these standards should be based upon relevant existing standards (SRA standards in the case of mainline operators). The standards have to be approved by the authority.

Safety and Maintenance Plans

1. Safety Operation Plan

- Identification of any hazards
- Safety Facilities and Procedures: based on these hazards
- Safeworking procedures

2. Safety Monitoring Plan

- to monitor the above Plan

3. Maintenance Plan

- formal mechanisms to ensure adherence
- Inspection facilities, procedures and checklists
- Records to be kept and history to be developed

4. Regular review of Plans to be undertaken

Part of the accreditation procedure is the inspection by the Authority of the vehicles to be registered for operation on the line. Each annual inspection will incur a cost of \$200 per vehicle.

The deed for the disused line can be for any period up to five years. A permit to carry out operations will be issued, but this permit must be renewed each six months. This requires the lodgement of certificates from both the Mechanical and Civil engineers, at least 14 days prior to the end of the period.

SUMMARY

The main theme of accreditation is "Self Regulation"

The group seeking accreditation must display:

- sound management and financial control
- adequate insurance and legal responsibility
- registration of equipment
- operational and maintenance standards
- qualified personnel
- safety and maintenance plans
- ongoing monitoring and reporting
- continual improvement

CONCLUSION

Although accreditation of enthusiast groups, or for that matter commercial organisations, wishing to use steam engines and historic carriages for tours was invested with the SRA, they are also the accrediting authority for all organisations wishing to operate any form of rail based activity. Within 18 months, however, the Department of Transport will take over the responsibility for accreditation for all groups, including the SRA itself we believe, and that will be interesting.

The accreditation criteria is demanding on all aspects of Museum operations. It will increase costs in the form of insurance and inspection charges. The accreditation criteria will be enforced and compliance will be mandatory to keep operating. Survival requires that a culture change in the Museum's attitude is necessary. Once accredited, "playing trams" will be gone. Only through responsibility and accountability as demanded by accreditation will the Museum continue to attract the support it requires to continue into the future as a viable force.