

MANAGING ROLLINGSTOCK — THE ADELAIDE EXPERIENCE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The AETM nominally has 13 operational cars — enough for two fleets by our capacity/variety criteria. We enlarge our fleet by one car every four years on average, mainly by restoring hulks obtained over the years.

2. OPERATIONS AND DISPLAY

Since inception of operations in 1974, general opening hours have been Sundays and most Public Holidays 1 pm to 5 pm. (for a short initial period 2 pm to 5 pm) plus charters, commonly organised on Wednesdays but available any time given a fortnight's advance notice to organise the necessary staff. For a long time, mid-week operations have occurred during some school holidays. The AETM has never operated regular services on Saturdays, which have been set aside for maintenance work and restoration projects. Eight trips are generally run each Sunday.

The operating fleet is kept in the old running-shed and takes up traffic duties from the fan in front of the shed. The so-called second fleet is on display in the new tram shed. Trolley buses and a motor bus are all kept in a display shed — only the latter is operational. There is a related floor and wall display in this building. Non-operating cars awaiting restoration or repair are kept out of public view in the old main running shed. Other vehicles housed include a motor tower wagon, a rail-borne tower wagon and a weed-killer trailer hauled by the works car (an ex-MMTB W2 car).

Garford trolley bus 216 has been to a couple of events off-site as Australia's first trolley bus. A-type car 14 has been used in a minor fashion at a public ceremony at St Kilda to promote the proposed 'Century 21' appeal for funds to create a 'Bib & Bub' set.

3. FLEET ROTATION

Passenger traffic on any Sunday can be handled by any tram — small or large. Each fleet is rotated — not totally — about every twelve months. Exceptions challenging this dictum are cold/wet weather (less so hot weather) when passenger loadings decline anyway. Closed cars obviously are used for wintry conditions. The all-steel car 381 is the least affected by operating in cold or wet weather. Also it is not structurally deteriorated by the elements.

Numerous trams and trolley buses in various conditions have been acquired over the years to enable the AETM to have a representative South Australian electric traction collection. The most modern, most

robust cars tend to be the work-horses of the AETM. Of the 13 operational cars these include H1 381, W2 294 and F1 264. The more special vehicles sparingly used, including No 1, are Adelaide's earlier electric trams featuring the most ornate restoration.

4. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE RECORDS

Operating trams have trips and other running details recorded in the Dispatcher's day book for regular Sunday and charter runs. All traction poles along the 2 kilometre line are numbered for distance recording purposes. Ad hoc lineside maintenance trips, 'playtimes', and crew training are recorded by motorpersons on the casual run sheets. All the above statistics are collated for each car in a circulated operations report each month.

Compatible records are also kept on file by workshop staff and are used to determine times of 'pull-ins' for maintenance/servicing. Operating staff also have a form on which to record any deficiencies in cars requiring immediate attention. These matters should be followed up efficiently and records kept meticulously, for they could even be a useful defence in an accident case.

5. HULKS

Regarding hulks (wrecks), all vehicles but one are presently under cover. Parts to restore these hulks have been acquired or can be fabricated.

Our museum members are not jaded or demoralised by the presence of these hulks, as the AETM has a proven restoration record, and the statutory authorities recognise this by occasionally providing assistance or funding programs.

Another D-type car of reasonable condition for restoration was offered to the AETM but was declined; it went to the Canberra Tradesmen's Club instead. The first C-type car obtained was later sacrificed when a second C-type body was acquired. After being stripped of all useable parts the remains were quietly burned.

6. RESTORATION

Operation of the AETM trams is regulated by the criteria in section 3. The more ornate trams (invariably the older ones) tend to be used less due to the risk of weathering by rain or sunshine of the external paintwork and artwork. Our original restoration of A-type car 1 in 1966 was repeated in 1981-4. Our second restoration (E1 car 111) dating

back to 1972 is now undergoing its second restoration mainly due to a deteriorating subframe which we did not feel confident or competent to deal with 20 years ago. Required tools were lacking then too. Our standards of restoration are becoming higher with new expensive materials being used and a professional standard of painting being undertaken.

7. SHED DESIGN AND DISPOSITION

AETM policy is to house all vehicles under cover and further acquisitions are determined and mandated on this premise. It is now general policy for each new large shed to be physically separate to minimise the destruction of the fleet by fire.

7.1 Fire precautions

Sheds have fire extinguishers placed near the doors for both general and electrical fires. A new mains-pressure standpipe which can be used by the fire brigade is now being installed in a strategic and accessible position. If possible, sheds should be free of any inflammable stores such as paper, deal, rags, petrol, oil, lubricants, paints or anything else likely to be used as a fire accelerant.

All AETM sheds have been built high enough for trolley-wires to be installed. Single-pole cars are 'reversed' in to enable a quick exit if necessary, but poles on bogie cars are hooked down. However, in our opinion, realistically, an electrical or deliberately lit fire in the absence of any museum members would be catastrophic. Thus the emphasis is on protection and care in housing the cars. The operating fan is sufficiently large to accommodate cars driven out if a fire broke out on a work or operations day. Set procedures and regular fire-drills are desirable for such an eventuality.

7.2 Security

Doors and cladding should be burglar and vandal resistant as far as possible and have security protection with audible and visual alarms, the visual alarm being a blue light in a prominent position. These should be sufficient to scare off intruders. Laser-triggered alarms along straight wall-lengths should also be considered.

7.3 Conservation

Sheds should be weather-proof including the exclusion of outside run-off from the shed itself. Fungus spores can develop in the damp ground near doors. For this reason it is preferable for sheds not to have any wood (including sleepers) embedded in the ground. Fungus is likely to pose a bigger threat to wood in cars than white ants!

Sheds should be clad to prevent entry by birds which foul cars with nesting materials and droppings.

7.4 Utility

The practicality of manoeuvring vehicles for any purpose is simplified by more and smaller sheds. Sheds for housing cars, trolley buses, etc., are designed to be long enough to economically use optimum space. Templates of car lengths are used to judge which vehicles can be housed on which tracks — useful in shunting manoeuvres. A couple of feet between vehicles should be allowed for the convenience of personal movement and to avoid collisions when parking the cars.

Two vehicles under restoration can be housed in the new Body Shop. Hulks are kept, basically, on two tracks in the old main shed. Operating cars also have two tracks in the old main shed, plus one track in the mechanical workshop. [The latter was the first extension to our depot in the early 1970s.]

8. MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

A pit long enough to serve both bogies on our longest trams exists in the mechanical workshop. Electrical, brake and other mechanical underfloor servicing requirements can be performed in some degree of comfort. Lighting, power and compressed air ancillaries are located in the pit; also a wandering lead is available nearby for traction power if required. All maintenance areas have concrete floors for cleanliness, convenience and comfort. A couple of wheeled platforms and various ladders are available for cleaning and maintenance work on cars.

9. SUMMARY

Our overall policy in regard to rollingstock has aimed to preserve, restore and operate the cars and trolley buses in good order to ensure that South Australians and other visitors may be aware of the important place these vehicles had in the life of Adelaide in their era. This is being achieved by:

1. providing lock-up covered accommodation;
2. having a continuing restoration and refurbishment programme;
3. displaying and operating the available cars regularly;
4. judiciously operating individual cars when conditions are satisfactory, and being selective in using older, more fragile cars;
5. keeping careful operating and maintenance records;
6. paying attention to the security of the fleet; and
7. providing adequate facilities for restoration and maintenance.

It is by the diligence and dedication of museum members that these aims are being achieved.