



7 July 2005

Dear Member,

NSW rail heritage direction & strategy:

As you are no doubt aware from earlier reports in the RTM Mail, a Steering Committee established by RailCorp and State Rail has been working on a strategy for sustainable management of the state's rail heritage.

The Committee has finalised its deliberations, and has made proposals and recommendations to RailCorp's Chief Executive (and acting CEO of State Rail) Vince Graham. Consultation about the strategy with relevant Government stakeholders is under way.

The heritage review has recommended the formation of a separate entity which would have ownership of the core rail heritage asset collection currently owned by State Rail.

It is proposed that this entity would focus on sustainable management, and that its objectives include improving public access to moveable and non-operational fixed rail heritage assets, and supporting co-operative and collaborative relationships with stakeholders including rail heritage groups.

As part of the review, an expert committee has been assessing the moveable heritage collection owned by State Rail (much of which is in the NSWRTM's custody) to determine which items should remain in the core heritage asset collection.

Eveleigh – the need to re-house rail heritage assets:

A significant part of State Rail's moveable heritage collection is currently based in Sydney's Eveleigh precinct, either in the Heritage Store (North Eveleigh) or the Large Erecting Shop. RailCorp have advised that the vesting of the site to the Redfern Waterloo Authority means that State Rail's heritage assets, including 3801 and some carriages (and the Powerhouse Museum's steam locomotives) need to be re-housed elsewhere, starting in the next few years.

Consolidation of sites and activities – building on the Thirlmere Rail Heritage Centre:

In a competitive leisure market and with increasing costs and compliance issues, competition for external funding and a dependence on volunteer involvement, some consolidation of rail heritage assets, sites and activities is inevitable – and common sense.

The NSWRTM's Thirlmere base has its own heritage railway and extensive, publicly accessible site facilities with capacity for expansion – all without the extra costs and constraints of other 'greenfield' sites. We are also an established main line rail operator and NSW's largest membership-based rail heritage organisation.

Given the situation with Eveleigh, State Rail has been considering options for relocation of its heritage assets. Thirlmere has been nominated in the draft strategy as a likely option for a major rail heritage facility for NSW, where investment would be most cost-effective. We are now discussing options for development of the Thirlmere site with RailCorp and State Rail, with the aim of enhancing facilities and space for storage, display and operation of more rail heritage assets and improving the visitor experience.

Refreshing the NSWRTM – heritage journeys and experiences telling the NSW rail story:

For a sustainable future, and to provide the best outcome for our collection, the NSWRTM will continue to move toward its main markets. We'll develop a refreshed, contemporary edge in the NSWRTM's core products of heritage journeys and experiences to attract a new generation of visitors and travellers, supporters and volunteers.

The NSWRTM's new vision is to "tell the NSW rail story" in a social history context – refocussing our role on viability and worth through greater community relevance, whilst retaining the values of our origins, our members, and our existing and valued core activities.

A renewed focus on people – especially young people – will propel our new vision. This means encouraging and involving our volunteers and staff, providing opportunities for our members and supporters, and engaging our customers and the community.

Locomotive 3801:

Locomotive 3801 is in the formal custody of the NSW Rail Transport Museum in perpetuity, through a 1978 Deed from State Rail. The NSWRTM has a long-standing interest in, and commitment to, the locomotive and its welfare. Under a 1986 agreement between State Rail, the NSWRTM and 3801 Limited, the locomotive is in the custody of 3801 Limited (together with some carriages owned by State Rail) until November 2006.

Given the current directions of the state's rail heritage and NSWRTM's refreshed vision – together with the likely results of the heritage review, the apparently looming need for a costly major overhaul, a need for a fresh assessment of the locomotive's future and a sustainable level of operation, and the need for consolidation of sites and activities – the NSWRTM's Board has decided not to enter into a new agreement for custody of the locomotive by 3801 Limited.

Having now advised 3801 Limited of this decision, we intend to work collaboratively with 3801 Limited to manage the transition of the locomotive back into the collection in the custody of the NSWRTM by November 2006.

The NSWRTM pioneered NSW main line heritage steam and retains substantial steam operation and restoration capability. The NSWRTM is committed to ongoing public access, and while ever viable and achievable, to the sustainable operation, of locomotive 3801 for the benefit of the community. As part of the transition strategy, NSWRTM proposes to establish an advisory committee to review future options for the locomotive's overhaul, operation and management.

Where to now?

We're hopeful that a commitment to the future of our rail heritage will be formalised this year – appropriate timing in the 150th anniversary year of NSW railways. In the meantime, if you have any comments or questions, why not drop us a line? Send your feedback to:

Email : info@nswrtm.org (with 'Strategy Response' as the subject), or Fax: 02 9379 1063

We won't be able to respond to you individually – but we will consider the themes and matters raised and will then post responses to our website, and in a future mailout to NSWRTM members. We will also conduct Members' information forums as matters develop.

There is now the possibility of a more sustainable future for the state's rail heritage - and for the NSWRTM – harnessing the benefits of the NSWRTM's refreshed vision, activities, collection and site and our members, volunteers and staff in partnership with a new entity. We will keep you informed as plans progress.

Regards,

Peter Berriman
President