

Ms Carole Trenberth
Productivity Commission
Progress in Rail Reform
LB2 Collins Street East
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Dear Ms Trenberth

Please find attached my submission in regard to Rail Reform
I hope it is of some value to the review board.

I presume that I will receive a copy of the findings when they are
eventually reached.

Once again, many thanks for allowing me to be a (small) part of this
very important process.

Yours sincerely.

Mr. L N Inglis

I wish first of all to introduce myself and railway interests. I am 58
years old belong to 24 railway preservation museum and running groups
in Australia I have contributed articles to seven books on railway
"happenings" in other words unofficial history, the things the bosses
did not know about. I also research local railway history in the
Albany area, and WA in general. My photograph collection of railway
locos, (steam and other means of propulsion) and have an extensive
research library and videos.

My father was express driver, my elder brother an acting driver, one
great uncle a railway carpenter, another a fettler, a nephew drivers
assist. On my mothers side, grandfather a stationmaster, uncle first
class driver, uncle guard, uncle per way inspector, uncle fitters
assistant, great uncle safe working porter, these all in Western
Australia. In NSW I had a great uncle a guard and a cousin a 1st class
driver.

I have made 25 return trips across the Nullabor on the Trans Australia
and the Indian pacific since the mid 1960s. I have travelled on the
new Chan, many times on the Overland, the Intercapital Daylight
Limited, the southern Aurora, the Sprit of progress and the Express,
the Brisbane Ltd and the Canberra Monaro. Many of these, unfortunately
no longer with us. In Queensland I have travelled on the Westlander
and the Sunlander, and in Tasmania, had the privilege of travelling on
the Tasman Limited.

I am familiar with the suburban systems in all Australia Capital cities
and in New Zealand. Overseas I have travelled on preserved rail and
mainline systems in New Zealand, Canada, Japan. I have travelled on
suburban systems in Hong Kong and Berlin.

The main problem in Australia for many years has been the split up
between states and within states. As my late father said, there just

should be Australian railways, where a man could transfer from Cairns to Albany etc.

Far too many unions, there should only be one workers safeguard, the Union of Australian Railwayment which should cover everyone from the commissioner to the junior porter seeping platforms, It would be much simpler.

Outsourcing to private firms is not cheaper. That is pure garbage. Maintain and care of specific locomotives and rolling stock is gained from years of experience by persons in one stable position. A case I can quote. A few years ago, one of the standard gauge L classes in Westrail had a total rebuild privately just after Midland Workshops were closed down. All done by an out sourced firm going by the makers text book. First time the unit was worked it got some 50k's and the compressor came undone, unit failed. Back to the firm, second time, it nearly got to Northam, same problem. Third Time, it got to Cunderdin on the line to Kalgoorlie. Same problem, In desperation, the firm concerned eventually spoke to one of the few remaining Westrail diesel fitters. He explained the original compressor fittings were not good and that Midland Workshops had adapted the whole lot of the L classes. This was not in the makers handbook, and the outsourced firms workmen did not have a clue. Another mixup. A small firm at Picton on the southwest line in WA, a few years ago, had a contract awarded for fitting triple valves in locomotives that would be hauling grain to port terminals. A few components were not fitted correctly, result each time the driver made a brake application, some grain was split as the bottom doors would open fractionally. You could follow progress of the trains by grain spilt on the tracks. It was one of the Albany mechanical staff then employed by Westrail who recognised and remedied the fault. These two instances are prime examples of shoddy work done by non railway orientated repair persons. A mechanic skilled in bulldozers is not necessarily a good choice to repair finicky problems on diesel electric locomotives.

Australia faces a plethora of small 'two bit' outfits as has happened in the USA and the UK in recent years. This is not necessarily good. One only has to read the magazines 'Railway' and 'Steam Railway' from the UK each month to find out the disasters in pathing, fares and general bewilderment for the passengers. Some centres having more than one service providers have a mad disarray of fares with all sorts of conditions attached to some of them. Any self respecting air line, if they acted in such a way would be out of action very smartly. I fell that there needs to be a far structure set on a national level. So many cents per kilometre, according to what level of service is offered. All day suburban fares, especially for interstate visits is one such example, with possibly NSW having the best deal on offer in Sydney. Costing of sleepers and rail travel on the main interstate trains appears to be similar, why not ares on country trips within each state be of similar costing, example, Perth to Kalgoorlie, and Brisbane to Rockhampton. Unless one is a seasoned rail traveller, it can be bedlam. Quite a few people I have spoken to desire to travel by train, but say it is such a hassle getting prices, that they end up going by air 'eating plastic food out of plastic containers!

Another item that urgently needs attention to, by all state systems, is the type of food/drink services offered on country trains. For small runs, such as Perth Bunbury or Melbourne Bendigo, perhaps going to a central buffet is OK, but by far the best service in Australia for saloon travel is on The Prospector, Perth, Northam, Meridian to Kalgoorlie in WA. The idea of a galley in each car, two passenger attendants, and each car isolated from the others means the attendants can get to know their passengers on along trip, anticipate their needs, and keep unruly elements from circulating through the train and upsetting other travellers. I find the Prospector service to be far superior to the XPT of NSW (which I regard as very inferior and the Xplorer of NSW. These cars are similar to the Australind of WA but whereas that is a short run, going back and forth from Sydney or Moree or Armidale is just not on. I hope that whatever Westrail (or its buyers) decide for the Kalgoorlie run, that they retain a galley in each car. The Japanese system, even on the most remote Diesel Mechanical Railcar service in rural areas has stewardesses taking trolleys regularly through each car serving everything from hot packaged meals to cold beer. This is a great way of encouraging travellers to 'call again'. As for the service on the famous Shinkansens (Bullet Trains) I cannot say enough.

The Silver Fern railcar services in the North Island of New Zealand are also renowned for their 'in seat' service during the trip. Very well done. I remember the old Tasman Limited in first class also extended this style of catering to their patrols. I view the removal of passenger services from Tasmanian Rail as one of the stupidest things politicians ever did, and that is saying something. Excellent scenery like that is best enjoyed from the comfort and safety of a train seat.

In Western Australia, I would welcome the removal of road coach services where there is a railway available. For anyone over 12 stone and over 5'8" tall, road coach seats are jolly uncomfortable over 2 hours. An some trips are literally all day. Perth Kalbarri, Perth Ravensthorpe, Perth Esperance, Perth Meekatharra, just a few I can think of quickly.

It is interesting to note that in WA where the Hotham Valley Tourist Railway which now utilises its own volunteer staff in all positions of train running driver, fireman, guards, conductor, buffet persons, dining car staff, etc. And the Company enjoys the status of third party running on all the 3'6" lines in the State, that people keep coming back for more trips. Each trip I go on, I hear people say 'if a train went from A to B, I'd certainly take it instead of driving, or taking a bus'. The powers that be, need to get out of their customised office chairs sometimes, and talk to the real people the pensioners who need to travel for health, legal or family reasons, not just converse amongst themselves, people with esoteric University degree but absolutely NO PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE.

I deplore wholeheartedly, the system of contracting jobs for a period of time, and getting people with no railway experience. Jobs were done a far sight more efficiently when a boy started out as a porter and ended up as a chief traffic manager, or as a callboy and ended up as Superintendent of Locomotive Running. The railways in each State,

promised job security, which in turn bred loyalty and efficient performance of jobs. The railways were a great 'family' and workmates assisted each other in times of need. These days many don't want to know the next chap, and all camaraderie has died out. Just a job to take home dollars.

IN REGARD TO FREIGHT OPERATIONS

The worst thing that ever happened was allowing road to compete directly with rail on the same route and worse still different road companies, with each one ending up forcing drivers to do impossible distances in short times, turning a blind eye to drivers on drugs to stay awake, and not allowing the men to have decent rest times. If there is a decent rail system, for goodness sake utilise it, don't let it run to rack and ruin like the present Govt of Western Australia has done with many 3'6" country lines. Refuse to maintain them, let them go to near total rebuilding status, then say 'its too costly let us give the services to road'. An just who owns all the shares in the various companies. Perhaps not the politicians, but perhaps relations and friends. The whole situation in WA is very suspicious to say the least in my humble opinion.

There should not be semitrailers between major cities and country centres each night. All trailers should be towed onto flat tops and a fast train deliver them. Dropping off flat tops at various centres en route. Take Perth to Albany I hazard a guess that each night (or 6 nights a week) a train could leave Perth with at least 20 semis on it. Dropping off at major centres en route and still arriving at Albany with 2 or 15 on board. Prime mover drivers would then only be needed as "tug" operators, taking the loaded or empty trailers to the rail loading centre, and retrieving them as they arrive at their destinations. That would mean so many semitrailers, B Doubles, B Triples and Road Trains off the weak country roads, and revenue to the rail system. It is interesting that so few of the 'bosses' who make the decisions have never had to fight for road space in heavy fog, or howling wind and torrentous rain on a narrow country road at night whilst driving their car to work. For a number of years I drove each Monday to the Lakes District of WA and returned on a Friday. To say I was worn out when I reached my destination, many times would be an understatement. Or having 5 or 6 road trains driving in convoy at you, all doing at least 39 kpm over the limit, you have to fight to keep the car on the road, and a couple of times I lost radio serials in the vicious slipstream generated by the heavy road transport.

Recently spending some time in Merredin halfway between Perth & Kalgoorlie, was pleased to see more traffic on interstate rail freight, but still far too many semitrailers and road trains roaring down the road, amongst residential areas. I lived there for 7 years and I well remember that the sound of the trains never kept me awake, but the that of the road trains certainly did.

Then there were the children who were hurt by them in accidents, or the road drivers on 'bennies' who ran into the ends of trains and killed themselves. This usually happened at level crossings, where with warning bells and booms with flashing red lights, the truck drivers

would not be able to focus on reality and literally did not know just where they were.

The founding fathers of Australia, and of each state, when rail links were constructed, intended them to haul the necessities of the general populace at a fair rate for all concerned. They had the right idea.

Take a train of 3,500 tonnes of grain coming into Albany 2 locos and one handle it perfectly in safety, on the roads, that amount would require at least 50 road lashups if each one carried 70 tonnes, and more labour intensity with a driver for each truck. An all doing incredible damage to the roads. The country shires these days just cannot keep their heads above water with the terrific costs of repairs to many of the roads in their boundaries. This applies particularly where there are main industries such as grain growing, livestock breeding or mining.

I feel that the whole ethos of road and rail haulage needs to be very closely investigated. Open forums need to be held in each state, particularly in the regional areas, advertised well in advance in order to allow any persons who may have something to contribute, to formulate their views. And there needs to be practical persons running them, not theoretical persons. Or beancounters.

Yours sincerely

Mr Leslie Noel Inglis.