White Paper: Streamlining the Rolling Stock Approval Processes

Improving standardisation and enhancing interoperability across multiple interstate and intrastate networks.

The rail freight industry is seeking to streamline vehicle approval processes to reduce the administrative burden with transparent timeframes that enhance rolling stock utilisation.

Registration and certification of rolling stock ensures both the safety and efficiency of train operations for the freight train operator and the infrastructure manager.

It is a regulated safety critical process to ensure and assure the safety of the rail interfaces between the rolling stock and the track infrastructure as well as between other rail operations on the network.

Registering a railway vehicle to operate across Australian railways involves multiple networks managed by different rail infrastructure managers (RIMs) and the freight train operators (RSOs).

The substantial issue raised by the industry within the broader vehicle approval processes is largely related to the certification of rail vehicles rather than the registration processes.

The approach is for industry to work collaboratively to deliver the following seven recommendations to address the concerns raised with rolling stock approval processes.

The recommendations for consideration are:

1 The forms and processes be digitised to reduce the duplication of effort. The National Rolling Stock Register (NRSR) project currently being undertaken by RISSB is the best way to deal with this in the short term.

2 Common requirements from the RIM can be rationalised and harmonised. They can then be more readily accessed through the NRSR system by the RSOs while allowing acknowledged differences in RIM interface requirements.

3 Reduce the requirements managed by RIMs to the interface performance requirements.

4 In effect, the Design & Construct requirements within the certification processes become self certification processes for RSOs, consistent with the co-regulation model. This is currently subject to ONRSR scrutiny.

5 Common interface standards for registration are to be incorporated into an Australian Standard to complement AS7501 for certification.

6 Network specific differences are to be addressed on a safety risk basis that identifies further controls as required by the RIM to demonstrate an So Far As Is Reasonably Practicable (SFAIRP) outcome.

7 Expand the use of and the mutual recognition of the Certification and Registration standards to provide impetus for change.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND ROLES

The safety of railways in a co-regulatory environment relies on the careful definition and management of the technical and operational interfaces. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved in this process is crucial to understanding the challenges associated with the rolling stock approval processes.

SIZE OF THE TASK

Rail freight is the backbone of the Australian economy. The need for rail to play a greater role meeting the nation's growing freight task and de-carbonisation efforts is significant and urgent. Complexities and delays in the rolling stock processes significantly affect industry outcomes, including the investment in new technologies. Streamlining the rolling stock approval process is a considerable task with significant engagement with the key players involved.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

It's important that all rolling stock operating on the rail network meet the technical requirements to be compatible with the network infrastructure. Understanding the various standards at play within the rolling stock approval process and the risks that it is intended to mitigate is essential to understanding the challenges associated with the rolling stock approval processes.

ROLLING STOCK APPROVAL PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

Registering a railway vehicle to operate across the Australian rail networks involves multiple networks, which are managed by different infrastructure managers.

DATA REQUIREMENTS

Rolling stock data exchange is core to the conversation and is considered critical to managing operational risks. Having a mechanism to clearly define the data requirements, efficiently exchange that data, and make it available for the industry is essential for improving the rolling stock approval process.

GOOD PRACTICE

Maintaining good practices is the foundation for the effective and safe operation of rolling stock. Identifying and incorporating key good practices available nationally and internationally to standardise approaches, promotes further effective management of freight and passenger rolling stock.

NRSR REGISTER PROJECT

RISSB in partnership with Commonwealth, state and territory governments, has developed a national rolling stock register that will provide a single data source on rolling stock across Australia. The national rolling stock registration system is a significant tool that can assist in resolving the identified challenges with rolling stock approval processes.

DISCUSSION

Achieving rolling stock approval harmonisation across Australia, requires cooperation, coordination and leadership by the industry. RISSB and Commonwealth and State transport agencies are required to deliver this work successfully, and it requires significant consultation and commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of this White Paper drew upon extensive stakeholder interviews, analysis of current practices, and consideration of emerging industry initiatives. The recommendations result from careful consideration of the findings from the collected data, industry roles, and potential future developments of the National Rolling Stock Register project.

We encourage you to read the full Recommendations chapter in the White Paper for more information.

Certification of Rail Vehicles → Registration of Rail Vehicles → Network approval of a Train