



# **THE RAIL MOTOR SOCIETY**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2025 – 2030**

**JANUARY 2025**

## **The Rail Motor Society Incorporated**

ABN 23 599 077 581

**PHONE:** (02) 4954 4904

**POST:** 5 Webbers Creek Road, Paterson NSW 2421

**DEPOT:** 5 Webbers Creek Road, Paterson NSW 2421

**WEB:** [www.trms.org.au](http://www.trms.org.au)

Images courtesy of Bruce Gehrig and Bruce Agland

Copyright © 2024-2025 by The Rail Motor Society Incorporated.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced without the express permission of the copyright owner.

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2030

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rail Motor Society is an all-volunteer heritage rail operator based at Paterson, NSW. Established in 1984, the Society is accredited by the Office of National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) for standard gauge operations in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia.

The Society regularly operates heritage tourist trains across south-eastern Australia. In addition to these tourist operations, the Society frequently participates in rail-based events including local and regional celebrations, as well as charitable fund-raising activities. The Society also provides work trains for the various rail infrastructure owners for inspections, surveys and testing activities.

The Society's primary mission is to promote and preserve the railway history of New South Wales. To this end, the Society preserves, restores and operates a representative fleet of self-propelled rolling stock (rail motors) of the former NSW Government Railways dating from 1923 through to the 1960's. The Society specialises in the operation of these smaller items of self-propelled rolling stock and is uniquely placed as these units are capable of working over all main and branch lines within the scope of its accredited operations.

This plan sets out the Society's strategic goals for the five-year period from 2025 to 2030 in accordance with our stated Mission and Vision commitments. Our principal focus is on our tourist operations as this is our primary revenue source, while at all times maintaining appropriate work practices to ensure the safety of our volunteers, our customers and the general public, within the constraints of an ever increasingly regulated environment.



**Our rail motor fleet**

To fulfil these goals, the Society has developed a number of overarching strategies on which it will focus, including:

- maintaining our accreditation under the Rail Safety National Law.
- maintaining the operational safety and capability of our rolling stock.
- maintaining key working relationships with rail infrastructure owners, Government representatives, our local Paterson community and rail-based tourism operators.
- working closely with other heritage rail organisations to foster joint activities and joint participation in major heritage rail events.
- pursuing long term funding arrangements and grants for the ongoing development of our business.
- fulfilling our management obligations as owners of State-heritage listed items.
- transferring essential heritage skills from our older generation of volunteers and developing succession plans for key management and technical roles.

## OUR MISSION

- To promote the preservation of the State's (N.S.W.) railway history.
- To acquire, preserve, maintain and operate a representative collection of rail motors used on the railways of New South Wales.
- To showcase our museum and rolling stock to the local and wider community through our tourist operations and our regular Open Days.
- To provide an opportunity for present and future generations to enjoy the experience of heritage rail travel through high quality, value for money, main line tourist operations.

## OUR VISION

- To be regarded as a leading railway preservation and heritage rail tourist operator in New South Wales.
- To be the recognised authority for the restoration and operation of heritage rail motors.



**The Society's CPH Rail Motors**

## OUR HISTORY

The Rail Motor Society was established in 1984 as a not-for-profit organisation to acquire, preserve and operate a representative collection of the former New South Wales Government Railways' rail motors. The Society is one of the five major N.S.W. based main line heritage rail operators and is accredited by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) for standard gauge operations in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia. The Society operates on an all-volunteer basis and has no permanent or casual employees. Any work outside of the capacity of our volunteer workforce is contracted out to approved commercial businesses.

The Society regularly participates in special events including railway founding anniversaries and local and regional community celebrations, as well as charitable fund-raising activities. In addition to its regular tourist operations, the Society provides work trains for infrastructure inspections, signal sighting surveys and radio and mobile telephony testing. The network owners make use of these services as part of their regular maintenance and upgrade programs.

## OUR CORE VALUES

We will support a safe and healthy workplace by providing:

- Safe systems of work
- A risk-based approach to achieve a safe workplace and safe behaviours
- Plant, equipment and rolling stock, including PPE that is fit for purpose
- A workforce that is safety focused and appropriately competent
- An environment that promotes a positive safety culture
- Measurable and achievable objectives and targets
- Regular monitoring of safety performance to promote continuous improvement
- A social environment that promotes friendliness and inclusivity



**The Society's Paterson Depot**

## OUR GOALS

To ensure the safety, availability and suitability of the Society's fleet of heritage listed rolling stock for mainline running, consisting of:

- CPH rail motors including the oldest surviving rail motor in N.S.W. (No.3)
- The only example of an operational 400 Class rail motor with dual passenger compartments (HPC 402)
- The only three surviving 600/700 Class rail cars in original condition.
- 620/720 class rail cars (621/721 and 629/729)
- Shunting locomotive 7344.

To adopt engineering and operational practices based on quality principles to ensure the safety of Society members, our customers and the general public.

No-one is harmed at work in our Depot or during our operations on the national rail network.



## OUR OBJECTIVES

- To acquire a representative collection of self-propelled rolling stock of the former New South Wales Government Railways and its successors.
- To acquire ancillary items associated with the collection.
- To preserve, maintain and operate selected items of the collection.
- To conduct rail operations for the benefit members and the public.
- To place items of the collection and ancillary items on display for the benefit of members and the public.
- To improve our skills with continued training where necessary
- To continue to encourage volunteers with likeminded interests.
- To improve productivity through leadership from specific areas of expertise.
- To carry out such other associated activities that may be decided by the Board from time to time.

## OUR ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

- Establishment as an organisation 1984.
- Depot site leased from the State Rail Authority 1985.
- Incorporation 1986.
- First Access Agreement with the State Rail Authority 1986.
- Restoration of first rail motor 1986.
- First main line tourist operation 1986.
- Old Paterson Station Masters cottage included in Depot site lease 1986.
- HPC 402 leased to State Rail Authority for radio testing 1986.
- Restoration of second rail motor 1987.
- First revenue main line operation 1987.
- Operations suspended following Cowan Bank accident May 1990.
- Construction of Rail Motor storage facility 1991-1992.
- Accreditation under the NSW Rail Safety Act 1995.



**HPC 402 fitted out for ballast testing**

- First Access Agreement under the NSW Rail Access Undertaking 1996.
- Resumption of operations following Cowan Bank accident 1996.
- Goods and Services Tax and Fuel Tax Rebate registration 2000.
- HPC 402 returned from State Rail Authority lease 2001.
- Society's Rail Motor Collection listed on the State Heritage Register 2001.
- Separate Access Agreements with the Australian Rail Track Corporation and RailCorp following lease of NSW regional network 2004.
- Accreditation for operations on Queensland Standard Gauge 2008.
- First operations in Queensland 2008.
- Custody agreement for operation of 620 Class set NPF 621 and NTC 721 from Office of Rail Heritage 2008.
- Restoration and return to service of Rail Motor No.3 2011.
- Accreditation for limited operations in Victoria 2012.
- First operations in Victoria 2012.
- Accreditation (in NSW, Qld & Vic) under the Rail Safety National Law 2013.
- Extension of Rail Motor storage facility 2014.
- Accreditation for operations in the Australian Capital Territory 2014.
- Heritage grant received for extension of Rail Motor storage facility 2016.
- Custody agreement for operation of 73 Class locomotive 7344 from Transport Heritage NSW 2018.
- Additional ARTC abandoned siding added to Depot site lease 2020.
- Accreditation for operations in South Australia and remainder of Victoria 2020.
- Limited operations due to COVID-19 pandemic 2020-2021.
- Major grant funded environmental project completes the depot underground drainage and enables the construction of additional storage facilities 2020.
- Sydney Trains 5-year contract for Overhead Wire Inspections 2021.
- First operations into South Australia and western Victoria 2022.
- Acquisition of 620 Class set 629/729 from Goodwin Alco 2023.
- Celebrations to mark CPH 3's centenary of service 2023.
- Completion of National Train Communications System 4G upgrade project 2024.



# OUR OVERARCHING STRATEGIES

## Safety

- Maintain a safe working environment and depot facilities for our rolling stock, our volunteers and the general public.
- Maintain our accreditation as a Rolling Stock Operator under the Rail Safety National Law.

## Rolling Stock

- Maintain our fleet of rolling stock and other key assets to enable our main line heritage train operations to be maintained.
- Acquire additional items of rolling stock in line with our stated mission of preserving retired (heritage) rail motors of NSW railways.

## Business Relationships

- Maintain key working relationships with infrastructure owners on networks over which we operate.
- Maintain key working relationships with Federal, State and Local Government representatives and respective departments and organisations.
- Maintain key working relationships with Transport Heritage NSW and other heritage rail organisations to foster joint activities and participation in major heritage rail events.
- Maintain relationships with our local Paterson community by purchasing locally where possible and supporting local community events.
- Maintain and promote working relationships with tourism operators that work in a niche marketplace with a rail transport component.

## Funding

- Establish long term funding arrangements from benefactors and organisations.
- Pursue grant funding in applicable categories for the development of our business operations.

## Heritage

- Ensure we fulfil our obligations as owners of items listed on the NSW State Heritage Register
- Ensure the transfer of essential skills from the older generation of volunteers to later generations.
- Develop succession plans for key management and technical positions.



Shunting locomotive 7344



# OUR PLANS

## Short Term Plans for 2025-2026 (Next 12 Months)

- Complete major bogie overhauls for rail motors CPH 1, CPH 3 and HPC 402.
- Construct lunchroom for members and visitors at Paterson Depot.
- Construct toilet block for members and visitors at Paterson Depot.
- Construct protective roof over supplementary vehicles FZ 663 and MHO 2639.
- Change out NPF 621 Bogies.
- Major overhaul of draw gear on NPF 621 and NTC 721.
- Develop an updated internet web site.

## Medium Term Plans for 2025-2028 (Next 30 Months)

- Complete the return to service of 620 Class set NPF 629 and NTC 729.
- Complete the restoration of Rail Motor Trailer CTC 51.
- Extend concrete flooring in Rail Motor storage facility to enhance the visitor experience to our museum.
- Complete extension to rail motor storage shed.

## Long Term Plans for 2025-2030 (Next 60 Months)

- Complete the restoration of 600 Class set FPH 602 and CT 707.
- Explore interest in the acquisition of an Xplorer rail car set when they are retired.
- Further develop our Depot and Museum site to facilitate the visitor experience and volunteer comfort.



NTC 721 and NPF 621

## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### Our Stakeholders

Our stakeholders are many and varied and have differing needs, expectations and requirements for our organisation to deliver for them. All are united, however, by a strong recognition of the value of our transport heritage and the strong desire to preserve the past and share it with current and future generations. We are united in our vision to keep the State's rail heritage alive.

Our primary stakeholders are our members. They annually vest the administration and operation of the Society in the Board of Management. Our members are passionate and support and advocate for our cause while seeking a sense of belonging, the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with other like-minded people and the public, and to engage in fulfilling experiences that range from restoring a heritage item to participating in the unique rail activities that we offer.

As custodians of State Heritage-listed items, Heritage NSW and the people of New South Wales are also key stakeholders in the Society's operational capability and viability.

Transport Heritage NSW, being the designated manager of RailCorp's Heritage Fleet, has a significant interest in the Society's continued viability as custodians and operators of key items of the RailCorp Heritage Fleet.

Our customers and the community seek unique experiences they can share with each other, that are enjoyable, engaging and promote learning and understanding about the role and impact of transport on the development of NSW as we know it today.

Other Heritage Transport Organisations share our passion for bringing transport heritage to life and undertake their work in preserving and presenting our transport heritage.



**HPC 402 fitted out for overhead wiring inspections**

## **Our Environment**

Our traditional customers have been rail enthusiasts. However, this is a limited marketplace and for our long-term financial viability and sustainability, our operations need to be focussed on the tourist market. Customers generally appreciate the value of our heritage and authentic heritage experiences. Our target market now includes families with young children, and domestic and international tourists. Our customers want more from their interactions with us and our customers continue to expect more and better customer service. The maintenance and presentation of our heritage rolling stock requires the continual vigilance and attention to detail and safety from all our volunteer workforce.

The regulatory standards (safety, compliance and environmental) continue to rise and penalties for non-compliance are increasing. Our previous practices need to be regularly reviewed and adapted to meet current community expectations and to fulfill our regulatory and legal obligations.

The technology deployed on the modern railway network, where there is increasing traffic levels, is evolving and changing. We continue to face the challenges of operating heritage equipment on the national rail network.

Our collection is relatively small and focussed on rail motor type equipment. Our challenge is to maintain that focus on our core objectives and collect today for tomorrow, while bearing in mind our storage capacity and our human resources are limited. We must make sensible and careful choices about what we collect and preserve in terms of our financial, technical and volunteer capacity.

**Our People**

Our volunteer workforce comes from many and varied occupations, with a significant proportion from a railway operating or maintenance background. This trend has continued from the early days of our organisation, which initially placed the Society of a firm operational footing from the outset. Many of these people were long time railway employees and are clearly looking to continue the camaraderie experienced during their working life.

Our volunteers regularly contribute their time and their skills to the maintenance and operation of our heritage listed rolling stock. Many also possess now obsolete skills that importantly relate to the technology used on our veteran rolling stock types. It is important that these obsolescent skills are now passed from generation to generation.

Despite growing numbers of volunteers, the nature of volunteering is changing. People have less time to give through other personal commitments and more leisure and entertainment options. Our challenge is to ensure that we can retain those who still want to participate and volunteer, given they now also have more leisure choices than ever before.



**Our CPH Rail Motors on tour**

**Our Finances**

The Society is fortunate that from the early days of its existence, the management approach which was taken was that the organisation must be run on a firm business footing. Apart from occasional grant funding received from Government or the private sector for specific projects, the Society is almost completely funded by revenue from its own rail operations.



Relationships with rail-oriented tourist operators have assisted the Society to expand its operational horizons from simple one or two-day trips in the early days to current operations extending along interstate routes up to ten days in duration with a resultant increase in revenue.

The Society has also pursued utilisation of its unique rolling stock capability to assist network owners to perform maintenance tasks in support of the rail infrastructure. Such operations include executive inspections, train crew training, signal sighting inspections, train communications testing, overhead wiring inspections and ground penetrating radar surveys of track infrastructure. These operations can extend from one or two days up to six weeks in duration and prove to be excellent revenue earning opportunities, as well as bolstering ties with these network infrastructure organisations.

Fiscal responsibility is a key requirement to ensure the Society remains in a viable financial position. The Board, and particularly the Treasurer, is responsible for continually monitoring the Society’s finances and ensure that major expenditure complies with approved budgets in our Business Plan.



**Our Site Museum – the former Paterson Station Master’s Cottage**

**Our Capacity**

As an all-volunteer organisation, the capacity of the organisation to deliver on our strategic goals is always subject to the availability and contribution of its volunteer workforce. In recent years, the number of our regular volunteers has grown significantly by over 50%. This increase has substantially improved our skill base as well as bolstering our volunteer numbers and capacity.

As amply demonstrated by our achievements over recent years and to ensure projects can be completed practically, on time and on budget, the Society generally employs a blended approach with a proportion of project tasks outsourced to approved contractors for work that cannot be timely, practically or economically undertaken by our volunteers.

Operating heritage equipment requires specific knowledge, skills and capabilities not readily available amongst the modern workforce. Our challenge is recruiting, training and retaining a skilled volunteer workforce with the right capabilities who can then pass that knowledge on to future generations.