



21 March 2014

Dr. Jane Hendtlass
Coroner
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11
222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000



Dear Coroner Hendtlass,

**Re: Kerang Level Crossing Incident
Coronial Investigation of Twenty-six Rail Crossing Deaths in Victoria**

The purpose of this letter is to provide a response to the Kerang Level Crossing Collision Emergency Response recommendations 19, 20, 21, 22, 24 and 25 arising from the inquest into the deaths of Harold Long (Case No. 2110/07), Nicholas Parker (Case No. 2114/07), Stephanie Meredith (Case No. 2125/07), Jaeseok Lee (Case No. 2126/07), Danielle Meredith (Case No. 2127/07), Chantal Meredith (Case No. 2128/07), Geoffrey McMonnies (Case No. 2129/07), Matthew Stubbs (Case No. 2130/07), Margaret Wishart (Case No. 2131/07), Rosanne McMonnies (Case No. 2132/07) and Ercil Jean Webb (Case No. 2133/07).

V/Line confirms that the Coroner granted an extension to 21 March 2014 to respond.

V/Line thanks the Coroner for her recommendations and responds to each of the recommendations as follows:

Recommendation 19	That V/Line provide train drivers and conductors with formal instruction and scenario practice events to ensure they understand their role as Interim Site Controllers.
V/Line's Response	V/Line will implement this recommendation and to a large extent has already implemented this recommendation.

The role of Interim Site Controller as outlined in V/Line's Emergency & Crisis Management Plan, is undertaken by only one member of the train staff, whilst other staff assist that person. A member of the train crew assumes the role of 'interim site controller', in the following order: the train driver; second train driver; conductor; other operational staff on board the train. When considering this recommendation V/Line has reviewed its emergency management training in its entirety to support role clarity.

V/Line recognises that people are the most critical element in a successful response to an emergency incident. V/Line's training provides it staff with the skills they need to fulfil their roles and be familiar with their checklists and infrastructure to support the response.

All V/Line drivers and conductors receive training in emergency management.

Since the Kerang incident driver and conductor training course materials have been amended to highlight the role of Interim Site Controller and emergency management procedures. Changes to the course materials were last undertaken in June 2011 and implemented in July 2011. Since July 2011, 51 new drivers have been trained in the amended course materials.

The conductor continuation training is currently being developed and will include a module on emergency procedures. This module will be ready for rollout from May/June 2014 and will be delivered via a refresher course including assessment.

For existing drivers a driver continuation training module in emergency procedures has been developed and will be incorporated into the next 'block' of continuation training. This training will be commencing in 2014.

Recommendation 20	That V/Line provide the same equipment, formal instruction and scenario practice events for all trained conductors to enable them to assist the train driver and the conductor in their Interim Site Controller duties.
V/Line's Response	V/Line will implement this recommendation and to a large extent has already implemented this recommendation. See response to recommendation 19.

A conductor that operates in the 'Café Bar' (buffet) is a fully trained conductor, who has received all the emergency management training outlined under recommendation 19, but with the additional food handling skillset to operate in the Café Bar.

The buffet conductor is issued with the same equipment as any other conductor.

Recommendation 21	That V/Line provide first aid supplies on all regional trains including blankets and bandages appropriate for use in major emergencies.
V/Line's Response	V/Line will partly implement this recommendation.

All conductors carry a first aid kit. If there is a buffet service, this will include a second conductor with a first aid kit. Additional first aid kits are also carried on all regional trains as follows:

- Vlocity: One kit in the drivers cabin; one kit in conductors cupboard (outside cabin) at the driver's end of train and also one kit in centre of each car, e.g. if there is a 3 car set, there are 3 kits.
- Sprinter: Each sprinter car has a first aid kit.
- Loco-hauled: One kit in each loco driver's cabin No.1 end.

V/Line has considered the Coroner's recommendation in light of staff skill and training, logistics such as storage and input from St John's Ambulance of its first aid supplies on trains.

All first aid kits have one thermal / shock blanket in line with the St John National first aid kit. V/Line will increase the number of thermal/shock blankets to two in each kit on trains and carried by conductors.

V/Line will increase the current contents of its first aid kits to include a larger size crepe bandage, burn-aid gel and disposable splinter probes. V/Line will also introduce an annual review on the appropriateness of the contents of the First Aid kits, including for major emergencies.

V/Line also acknowledges that in a major emergency it will rely on the ambulance and other emergency services in providing additional first aid supplies as well as medical supplies and services.

Recommendation 22	That V/Line provide tools and gloves on all trains adequate for removing seats and freeing of passengers trapped in the debris in a major collision involving a heavy vehicle combination.
V/Line's Response	V/Line will implement the recommendation in relation to gloves. V/Line is unable to implement the recommendation in relation to tools due to the difficulty and risks associated with its implementation.

Tools: Each locomotive in the V/Line fleet is equipped with a practical toolkit that has been designed to provide the tools needed for a driver to affect basic repair to a train in the event of a breakdown. Drivers receive formal and practical training in the use of basic hand tools and their use. Among the various items contained in the tool kit are a hammer, shift spanner, cold chisel, wooden wedges, brushes for adapting air hoses, split pin remover and track circuit jumper cable.

Supply of specialist tools adequate for removing seats and freeing of passengers trapped in debris transported on the trains has been considered following the Coroner's recommendation. The supply of specialised tools on V/Line fleet will provide challenges such as storage, maintenance and the type of tools that would be suitable to cover every scenario. The carriage of gas cutting equipment on trains is not permitted as the gas bottles pose a significant risk in their own right in a collision. The tools would need to be selected with the user's personal safety also in mind, as their use could introduce many associated hazards such as manual handling injuries.

The supply of specialised tools on V/Line's fleet will not be implemented at this time as it is considered that emergency recovery is best suited to organisations such as the State Emergency Service that have the highly specialist equipment and are rigorously trained in its use.

Gloves: Drivers are currently issued leather gloves as part of their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). V/Line will continue to issue leather gloves to drivers. Following consideration of this recommendation, a pair of leather gloves is now issued to all conductors and conductors will be required to carry them in their kit bag.

Recommendation 24	That V/Line review their management arrangements to ensure that trained V/Line Rail Incident Controllers are within access to all level crossings in regional Victoria in a timely manner to support train crews and Victoria Police in the case of an emergency.
V/Line's Response	V/Line will as far as reasonably possible implement this recommendation and has already to a large extent implemented this recommendation.

V/Line has to a large extent has already implemented this recommendation with the introduction of its Emergency Management Team training program on 17 April 2013.

V/Line has implemented an Emergency Management Team training program which develops the participants' understanding of:

- emergency management of level crossing accidents
- roles and responsibilities of V/Line staff at level crossing accidents

- Victoria's Emergency Management Arrangements
- plans, protocols and templates for managing level crossing incidents

This program increases the availability of trained site controllers and Emergency Management Teams around the state. There are currently sixteen trained V/Line Rail Incident Controllers throughout the network. More training is scheduled to occur in 2014.

V/Line will continue with its Emergency Management Training program on an annual basis.

However, V/Line cannot guarantee that its V/Line Rail Incident Controllers will not be delayed in reaching a train in an emergency situation due to such issues as road closures or natural disasters such as fire and flood.

Recommendation 25	V/Line involve train crews & management staff in local desk top & scenario emergency service training so that inadequacies in communication & management can be identified & corrected.
V/Line's Response	V/Line has already implemented this recommendation.

V/Line has already implemented this recommendation with its:

- Emergency Services Training initiative for Emergency Services;
- V/Line Crisis Management Team and Emergency Management Teams training and annual exercises; and
- Train crews and Conductors Emergency Management training.

Emergency Services Training Initiative: V/Line currently has an Emergency Services Training initiative for Emergency Services staff to be familiarised with V/Line rolling stock and associated emergency procedures relating to access points, diagrams, fuel loads and emergency equipment.

The training sessions are scheduled for after hours to allow the volunteer associations to attend as well as ensuring availability of the different rolling stock in V/Line maintenance facility.

The session is facilitated by V/Line Safety and Engineering departments who actively participate in training sessions. Sessions run for approximately 1.5hrs.

Training sessions are an ongoing commitment scheduled quarterly and able to handle up to 30 participants.

Training sessions have already been undertaken since January 2009 and a number of CFA, SES, MFB and Victoria Police Units have been trained and provided with relevant emergency documentation including an overview of the Emergency and Crisis Management Plan and processes. The most recent of these sessions took place on the 19th August 2013. Units from the Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Service Board attend the session as part of their on-going commitment to train operational units at each session.

The Emergency Services Training initiative training program is communicated to multiple agencies including their senior management with a recurring invitation accompanied by an explanatory paper.

Crisis Management Team and Emergency Management Teams training and exercises: In addition to the Emergency Services Training initiative, V/Line has a robust training regime. V/Line's Crisis Management Team and Emergency Management

Teams conduct a trial response exercise on an annual basis as part of its compliance activities.

This exercise regime is subject to compliance reports from representatives from Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure – Security & Emergency Management Division as well as Victoria Police Critical Infrastructure Protection Unit.

V/Line maintains a Crisis Control Centre supported by a Media Centre in a state of ongoing readiness in preparation for Crisis and Emergency events.

V/Line has also implemented an Emergency Management Team training program which develops the participants' understanding of:

- emergency management of level crossing accidents
- roles and responsibilities of V/Line staff at level crossing accidents
- Victoria's Emergency Management Arrangements
- plans, protocols and templates for managing level crossing incidents

This program also increases the availability of trained site controllers and Emergency Management Teams around the State.

In addition to this V/Line participates in a number of state and local level Emergency Management forums and exercises on a regular basis.

Train crews and Conductors Emergency Management training: Train crews and Conductors undergo Emergency Management training as part of their training course (see Recommendation 19 above).

Spatial Vision Mapping Services initiative: V/Line's Security and Emergency Management department has also engaged with Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Spatial Vision Mapping Services to include the Victorian Rail network into the Victorian Map books which are used by all Police and Emergency Services for Emergency Management.

Spatial Vision's VICMAP Book is divided into 5 regions: South West, North West, Central, North East, South East.

The data included in the updated map books will provide Kilometre Post references and access points to the rail reserve. Estimated completion time for this project is 8 -12 months as maps books are updated on an annual basis by geographical area

This project will assist all emergency services to locate and access a V/Line train involved in an emergency, particularly if that emergency does not occur at a level crossing.

Queries or further information

I trust this information is of assistance and please feel free to contact me if you have any queries on V/Line's response to the recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



Theo Taifalos
Chief Executive Officer