

Rail Heritage Centre Upgrade, September 2010

The winter edition of *Rail Heritage Update* details progress in the work that has been going on since 2007 to deliver the upgrade of the Rail Heritage centre at Thirlmere, a key project of the State Government's Sustainable Rail Heritage Strategy. The Office of Rail Heritage and NSW Rail Transport Museum (RTM) have been working in partnership throughout.

Since the August publication of the *Update*, there have been some developments relating to establishing a new agreed business model.

The business modelling work began in late 2009, with RTM contributing substantially to shaping the overall direction; including the vision and potential new products and services to be offered from early in 2011, after the upgraded Centre is launched. The new model builds on the experience of RTM and a range of other cultural attractions, as well as on recent market research indicating what would attract visitors to the site.

RTM President, Peter Berriman, has kept members, volunteers and staff informed throughout the process, and his most recent report in the August edition of *Roundhouse* described the staged approach to implementing the proposed business model for the upgraded Centre.

In early September, the Minister for Transport, the Hon. John Robertson, endorsed the proposed business model. This means establishing a private, not-for-profit company with the specific responsibility of managing the Centre, pending NSW RTM demonstrating the governance and capability to become the management entity in its own right.

RTM is integral to the success of the new business model. It is the ongoing custodian of rolling stock and objects and the accredited operator on the site, drawing on the skills and dedication of volunteers for a wide range of activities.

Negotiations are underway on the way things will work as the new company comes on line. Representatives of RTM and the Office of Rail Heritage, with the assistance of an independent facilitator, are working together to ensure the best possible management arrangements, supportive of RTM stepping up to overall management in the future.

To meet anticipated increases in both visitor numbers and public expectations of a higher profile visitor attraction, there must be a focus on positioning the Centre to operate effectively as a cultural attraction and tourism destination, and on generating new income streams.

For this reason, board members with relevant expertise and a professional management team are being recruited to the new company for this period of transition and organisational development for NSW RTM.

The search has begun for the CEO of the new company, the first of five specialist appointments to be made to the new company in the coming weeks.

Working in partnership with RTM, the new company will give the upgraded Centre the best possible start as a new family and tourism destination for the region and beyond.