Read below as Bob Newham, RTBU Rail Divisional Secretary explores some of the incredible history behind rail in New South Wales. As you will discover, the month of October has many stories to tell…
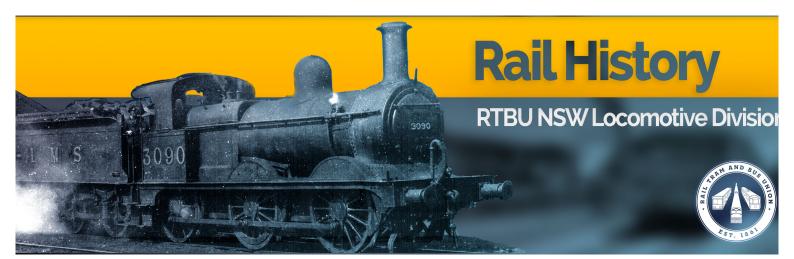
October 1898

Cheltenham station opened on 10 October 1898. It was established mainly due to pressure from William Chorley, whose home was located near the station. Chorley prevented commercial development near the station by placing covenants on the surrounding land, which he owned, and so Cheltenham is one of the few stations in Sydney with no shops nearby.

As part of the North Sydney Freight Corridor project, an electrified passing loop was built with the western platform becoming an island. The works included the construction of a new concourse with lifts, which opened on 31 August 2015. The new platform opened on 14 June 2016.

Cheltenham station in the 1890s
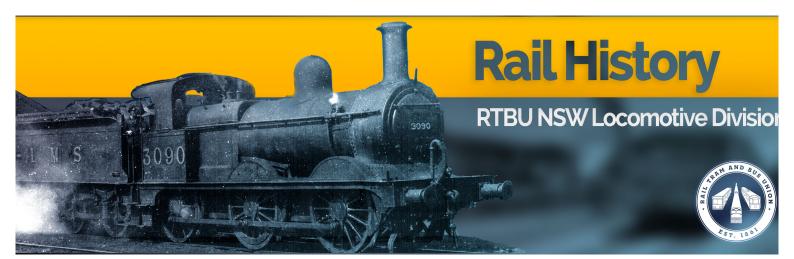
Modernised station in 2016

October 1917

Trans Australian Railway

In 1907, surveyors and engineers began marking a route across the Nullarbor Plain. Four years later, the Australian Government authorised construction of the railway. In 1912, Commonwealth Railways was established to oversee the planning and implementation of the Trans-Australian Railway. On 14 September 1912, Governor-General Lord Denman turned the first sod at a ceremony in Port Augusta to officially begin construction of the railway from the eastern end.

Tracks were built simultaneously in both directions, east from Port Augusta and west from Kalgoorlie. The outbreak of war in 1914 made it difficult for Commonwealth Railways to source labour and materials, but by 1916 more than 3400 workers were employed on the project.

Maintenance crews lived along the line at intervals, and were supplied by the weekly Tea and Sugar train, which later serviced railway workers and their families.

From left: Workers tents pitched by the railway tracks, about 1915; workers on the Trans-Australian Railway, about 1915.

It took five years for teams of rail workers to lay the 2.5 million hardwood sleepers and 140,000 tonnes of rail needed to finish the 1693-kilometre job. The last railway spike was hammered into place outside the tiny settlement of Ooldea in remote South Australia on 17
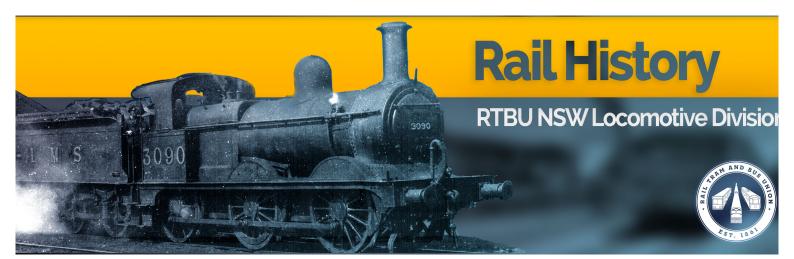
October 1917

Five days later the first passenger train set off from Port Augusta, arriving at Kalgoorlie 42 hours and 48 minutes later.

October 1953

41 Class Locomotives

In 1950 the New South Wales Government Railways ordered 10 diesel locomotives from Australian General Electric.[1] The construction was sublet to British Thomson-Houston of Rugby in the United Kingdom with the body built by Metro Cammell, Birmingham. The first entered service in December 1953 with 4102 entering service in **October 1953**. All were delivered painted in verdant green, in the 1960s all were repainted Indian red.

From their earliest days the locomotives suffered failures including overheating and fires. To try and overcome this, the radiators were relocated further to the ends of all ten of the locomotives and air ducting was modified. The locomotives were equipped to operate in multiple however the cooling system layout saw radiator heat passing from the leading locomotive to the trailing one, resulting in the equipment being removed.

In December 1976, 4102 was placed by the Public Transport Commission in the custody of the New South Wales Rail Transport Museum and is now a designated NSW heritage item.

After it arrived at Thirlmere in January 1977, the seized engine that led to its demise was temporarily repaired by members of the Illawarra Group. In 1982 an engine failed whilst returning from a trip to Picton and as a consequence 4102 was then used as a one-engine shunter until the batteries finally wore out in 1987.
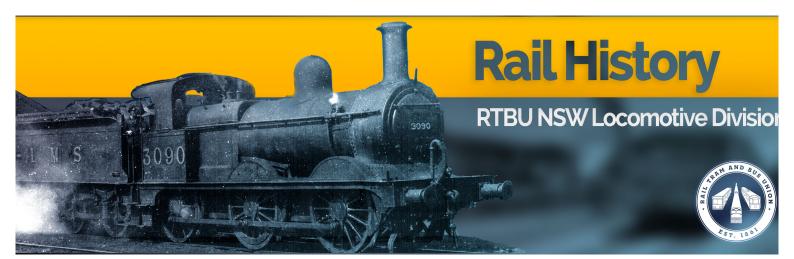
By July 1991 it had moved to CountryLink's XPT Service Centre in Sydenham (where the Paxman engined XPTs are maintained), where a spare engine was installed. It returned to Thirlmere in November 1992, but was not restored to service. In April 2009 4102 was moved for further storage at the Broadmeadow Locomotive Depot.

4102 in storage at Thirlmere

October 1977

In July 1968 the New South Wales Government Railways placed an order for the first batch 16 cars with Commonwealth Engineering. The first 4 cars debuted on

the Sydney to Gosford route on 22 June 1970, targeted as F111. All 16 cars were in operation by September 1970.

These cars had many similar features to the later-built cars, including the one-piece moulded glass reinforced plastic end in royal blue & grey livery (earning them the *Blue Goose* nickname. From **October 1977** the second batch began to enter service, with many differences from the first batch. The electrical equipment was all mounted on the power car, using Mitsubishi Electric equipment; they had stainless steel underframes; were fitted with vacuum retention toilets, and had gold as opposed to green tinted windows. These cars were the first of the *V sets*, with the V showing that they were installed with vacuum retention toilets. They operated separately from the 1970 cars, as the two types were not compatible with each other.

The cars built were:

> Power Cars - DCM 8021–8036
>
> Driving Trailer Cars - DCT 9031–9044

The driving trailers were not used that much, due to driver complaints about an uncomfortable "kick" when the power car started to push the trailer. The controls in the DCTs were gradually stripped and replaced defective ones on the DCMs. At the same time the DCMs were refurbished, receiving destination indicators and ditch lights. The refurbishment also saw the installation of air-conditioning in the driver's cabs of the DCMs, their lack of air-conditioning had a union ban preventing them being used as leading cars since 1995. DCM 8032–8036 were modified to have wheelchair seating, and recoded as DTMs. Class leader DCM 8021 was retired on **20 October 2011** after being removed from set V 65.

Set V65