



National Railway Museum Incorporated
National Railway Museum

Strategic Plan 2026 - 2031



STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2031

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The Hon Mark Butler MP –
Federal Member for Hindmarsh.
Patron and advocate for the National
Railway Museum.

FOREWORD

"The National Railway Museum is a really special part of the Port Adelaide community. It's a vibrant hub of history, powered by passionate volunteers, and every year it welcomes thousands of visitors of all ages from across Australia and around the world.

The Museum gives people a chance to step back in time and see just how important railways were to Australia's early development. Our rail network helped build the nation, moving people, goods and communities across vast distances. And of course, railways are still just as important today, continuing to provide vital transport services right across the country.

I feel incredibly lucky to have the National Railway Museum in my electorate, preserving this history and sharing it with so many people."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governance	Collection	Financial	Marketing
Challenge Increased complexity on managing scarce resources. Increase in compliance requirements. Ageing volunteer base.	Challenge Overcrowded site, for display items. Insufficient area for archival records and artefacts.	Challenge Highly dependent on Museum visitation, Semaphore train rides, Membership income, and merchandising.	Challenge Competition for recreational especially family focused visits.
Strategy Maintain strategic outlook. Maintain strong competencies on the Board. Succession plan. Mentoring program.	Strategy Assess potential items that could be placed on loan to external accredited museums. Reorganize overall admin and office area – in association with proposed new archival area. Critically assess the historical significance of any potential new major exhibits.	Strategy Review of critical financial performance areas. Review Semaphore Railway operations.	Strategy Create a specific marketing plan, including key advertising and marketing direction to sell visits to NRM. Scope a position description for a part time paid resource.
Goals Annual strategic review. Six monthly finance budget reviews.	Goals Review potential loan items. Review historically significant rolling stock matrix. Improve and increase access to archives.	Goals Increase overall income by 5% p.a. Increase shop performance and net income by 5% p.a.	Goals More 'Museums in the Port' co-operative engagement and joint events. More proactivity with PAE. Form partnerships with suitable key industries. Run special event days aimed at different interests.

It is our ambition over the next five years to:

Maintain our reputation as one of the great railway museums of the world.

Increase visitor numbers and overall income by 5% per annum.

Grow membership numbers by 5% per annum.

Progress as far as practical, the expansion of the archival storage area.

Make our extensive archives more accessible for general and scholarly research.

Scope a potential reorganisation of the admin/office/shop areas to improve workplace and efficiency standards.

Complete the second cab simulator, which will provide physically impaired access.

Complete restoration and conduct a formal launch of 1924 Brill model 55 railcar No.8.

Rotate and/or reposition rolling stock exhibits on display in the two pavilions to generate visual changes and various themes for visitors.



The Museum is renowned for its extensive collection of exhibits on the main three railway gauges used throughout Australia. In this scene, from left to right are; SA Railways steam locomotive No.624 on broad (1600mm) gauge, SA Railways steam locomotive Y97 on narrow (1067mm) gauge, and Commonwealth Railways diesel electric locomotive GM2 on standard (1435mm) gauge.

The collection includes:

18 x steam locos
Including;

1914 USA built
BHP No.4

1952 French built
Garrett SAR No.409

11 x diesel electric
locos (3 operational)

8 x railcars
(3 operational)

15 x passenger cars including:

1914 built V&SAR joint stock
Overland sleeping car

1951 German built Wegmann
lounge car

1951 USA built Budd railcar

1934 built Commonwealth
Railways dining car

World renowned Tea & Sugar
Train

ABOUT OUR COLLECTION

Archive Collection

The Archives has a vast collection of corporate records and documents, annual reports, maps, timetables, mechanical and engineering drawings, oral histories, film, newspaper cuttings and ephemera from SA Railways and successor entities. Items in the archive collection date from the early 1880s.

Library Collection

The Library has a very large collection of journals and periodicals, note books and clippings covering a variety of topics that allow researchers to interpret the social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of Australian railway history with particular emphasis on South Australia. (Access to items held within these collections is presently available on a restricted basis.)

Artefact Collection

The Museum houses artefacts including textiles, uniforms, tools and personal items.

Photographic Collection

The Photographic Collection includes photographic prints, slides, digital images and films of railway development including valuable and extensive personal collections donated to the Museum.

Rolling Stock Collection

The Museum houses some of the Australia's most significant examples of locomotives and carriages operating over three mainline gauges, including steam and diesel electric locomotives, passenger carriages, dining cars, sleeping cars, and railcars. This includes imported locomotives, railcars and carriages from overseas – from countries such as Scotland, England, USA, France and Germany. Additionally, there are similar types of steam and diesel locomotives that were in operation interstate.

Site Description

5 Hectares, five gauges (457mm, 610mm, 1067mm, 1435mm and 1600mm). The SA Government opened a new suburban railway station at Port Dock in August 2024, and the Museum shares that island platform (known as Jacketts) from which the Museum operates its heritage trains during various events during the year.

Other structures on site include the original 1878 heritage listed goods shed, a signal cabin, plus two major display pavilions - Fitch and Fluck. These two display pavilions contain three gauges of commonwealth, state and private company owned rolling stock. The pavilions also house interpretive displays, the Adelaide Railway Station departures board, a large model railway, locomotive number and nameplates plus other memorabilia, and a train cab simulator. Additionally a 100 metre long Fischer Shed houses most of the Rail Safety Accredited rolling stock ie, three railcars; two Redhens, a Bluebird, and two diesel locomotives. A small train runs daily on a 457mm gauge track within the site.

Significance of the Collections

A formal significance assessment, using guidelines from the Collections Council of Australia is in place to better manage the preservation, conservation, interpretation and accessibility of the collection and to inform the collection management plan.

Curation of the Collection

The Museum has a full-time professional Curator.

Key facts

- 750 members
- 160 active volunteers
- 45,000 visitors per year
- Approximately \$650,000 spent each year to operate the Museum
- Recognising and acknowledging the volunteers – Quarterly Award, Volunteer of the Year Award, annual Mark Butler MP Volunteer Awards. Invitation to attend the annual Thank You Volunteers dinner.
- Commemorative and special event days
- 457mm gauge train running at Port Adelaide and at Semaphore
- 20,000 passengers p.a. carried on the Semaphore Railway
- Highly regarded bi-monthly magazine – Catch Point

ABOUT OUR GOVERNANCE

Our scope: The National Railway Museum at Port Adelaide, South Australia, is listed as one of the great railway Museums in the world ¹. It also has the largest operational triple gauge railway in the world. The Museum houses, conserves, curates and interprets a collection of locomotives, rolling stock, and railway artefacts of international standing and have an increasingly accessible archive of national significance.

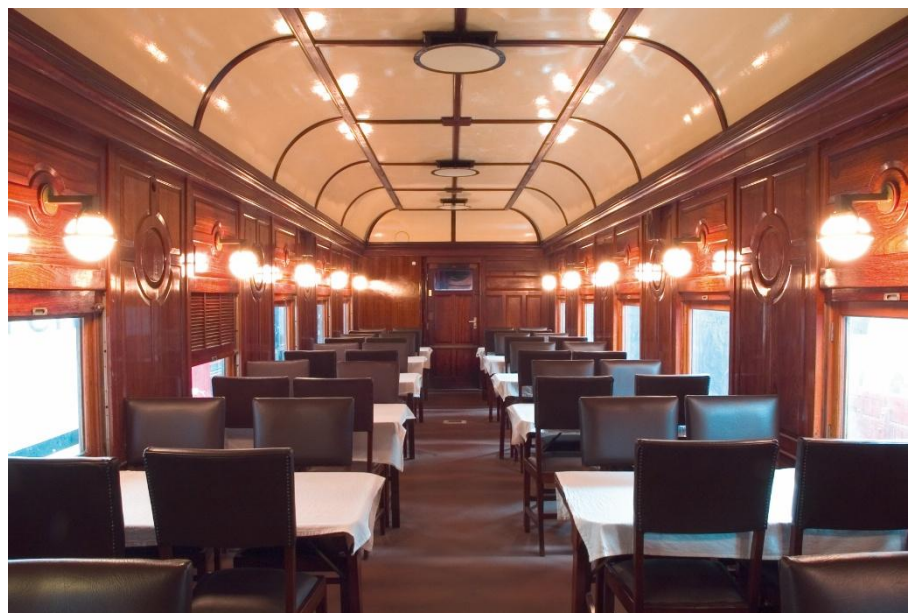
Our management: The Museum is an incorporated registered 'not-for-profit' self-funded organisation; managed, curated, interpreted and displayed according to evolving best practice. It is volunteer based with a full time Curator and Business Manager, a full-time Maintenance Manager, a part-time Bookkeeper, and a part-time Executive Officer. It is governed by a skilled eight member Board with a strategic perspective; six elected by the membership and two appointed by the South Australian Government. Some of the exhibits, displays, artefacts and rolling stock are owned by the South Australian Government via a loan through the History Trust of SA. Many other exhibits are owned legally by the Port Dock Station Railway Trust, and are on loan to the NRM to maintain and display. However the Collection is curated as a whole, without reference to ownership.

Our vision: To retain and build on recognition by customers and peers as the premier and largest undercover railway Museum in Australia; evidenced in the scope of its locomotive and rolling stock collection, its outstanding archives, the superior facilities it offers for referencing Australia's railway heritage and for the visitor overall experience.

Our mission: To continue to develop and operate the NRM as a successful, financially sustainable organisation that co-operates with kindred organisations, participates as a corporate citizen, contributes to the local economy and provides first rate facilities for the wider education, tourism and rail heritage markets.

Our values are expressed in a commitment to the members and 160 plus like-minded active volunteers, who gain personal fulfilment and satisfaction through their commitment to conserving and interpreting railway heritage for the community-at-large, to operate in a professionally and financially responsible way by striving for excellence, best practice and continuous improvement through openness, teamwork, collaboration and respect.

¹See Fischer T. A., Trains Unlimited (2011). Harper Collins, p. 265 for a listing.



Our overarching goal is to conserve and portray Australian railway history through active and professional management of an outstanding and evolving collection.

GOALS

NRM will pursue specific goals and functions over the life of this plan.

For corporate governance our goals are to:

- Continue our role as steward for the South Australian Government and the Australian nation in its management and operation of the National Railway Museum and continue to perform the museum management role to the highest levels of professional expertise, which will include well-established corporate governance for its mixture of paid employees, members and volunteers.
- Maintain the Museum's museological excellence.
- Ensure that its constitution is kept relevant to the environment in which it operates and to the needs of its stakeholders.
- Develop, implement, adhere to and regularly review policies and procedures for all critical areas of the Museum's operations (eg finance, collection management, legislative compliance, shop).
- Provide staff and volunteers with a working environment and office accommodation that best serves their needs and contributes to the efficient running of the Museum.
- Effectively review existing and future paid resources to enable alignment with the business and scoping for growth.
- Grow membership and volunteer numbers overall, understand its composition and encourage an increasing number of regular volunteers, including for train operations.
- Actively highlight the 'historical significance matrix' (HS) to ensure any potential new rolling stock exhibits meet the criteria, with the knowledge that six HS items already are not under cover.
- Pursue and undertake succession planning in all key roles.

Our direction and projects are to:

- Protect full Museum Accreditation through the History Trust of SA by having regard to the National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries, published by the Collections Australia Network.
- Co-operate and highlight the potential need for a 'new' museum to be created to collect, conserve and preserve a long list of post 1970s type rolling stock.
- Meet the legal obligations for Accreditation as a Train Operator and a Rail Infrastructure Maintainer under the Rail Safety National Law Act (2012).
- Meet the legal obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act (2012) for the operation of the Museum and the 'amusement devices' (the 457mm gauge railways at Pt Adelaide and Semaphore are under this Act).
- Retain and fully utilise the Shop Committee and its resources.
- Pursue all opportunities to expand the archival storage area.
- Scope and compile a total examination of the entire administration and shop areas, to enable future use opportunities.
- Retain and increase the number of volunteers engaged with train operations (WHS and ONRSR), to ensure, as a minimum, a continued operation of the 457mm gauge as a critical revenue priority.
- Investigate partnership with external companies and organisations.
- Wherever possible seek skilled volunteers for specific and/or ad-hoc office based or workshop based roles.

