

ASCIANO PTY LTD
REPRESENTING BOTH
PACIFIC NATIONAL PTY LTD & PATRICK CORPORATION
SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA
ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Subject - Railway Level Crossing Safety

Purpose

To provide the Parliament of Victoria Road Safety Committee with information on Asciano's strategic position on level crossing safety, the safety risk in relation to heavy road trucks at level crossings, and an overview of the current safety actions and initiatives being taken by the company in relation to improving level crossing safety across Australia.

Background

Asciano (inclusive of its operating companies Pacific National and Patrick) is currently involved in a number of level crossing safety projects involving rail industry partners, rail safety regulators, and State and Northern Territory Governments. This work has been on-going for a considerable period of time, however, specifically dates back to the 24/10/02 Salisbury bus and train level crossing accident in Adelaide SA.

The criticality of the need to achieve improved road user level crossing safety and reduced safety risk to rail employees and members of the community has been highlighted in the recent Victorian Kerang level crossing accident (05/06/07), with prior recent major accidents at Trawalla (28/04/06) and Lismore (25/05/06) in Victoria.

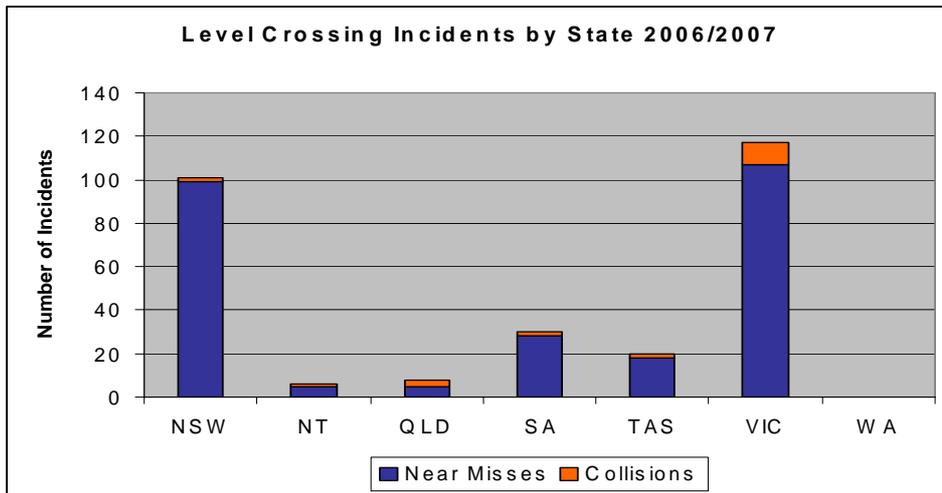
A number of additional recent major level crossing accidents involving Asciano's rail operations have occurred in NSW at Back Creek (10/03/07), NT at Ban Ban Springs (12/12/06), and SA at Two Wells (06/08/07).

Major Safety Risk

The risk of collision at a railway level crossing is one of the major risks being faced by Asciano today.

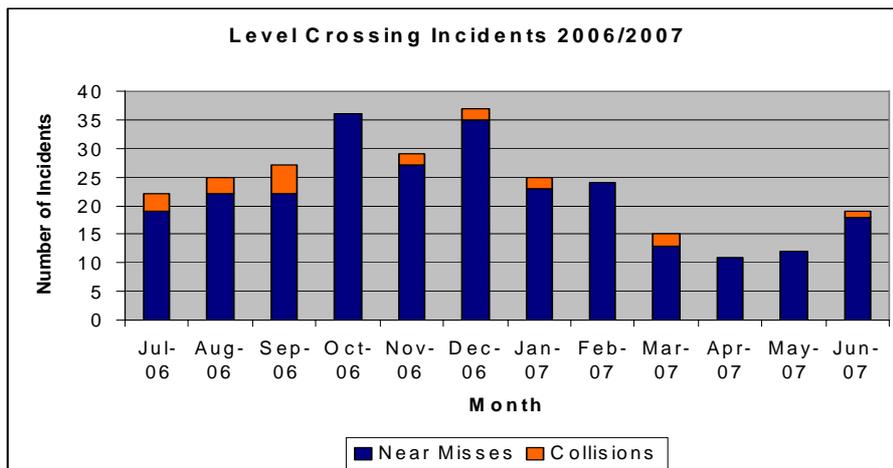
In the financial year 2006/2007, Asciano's Pacific National Australia wide rail operations were involved in 282 level crossing incidents, of which 20 resulted in major collisions.

Of all the States and Territories in which Asciano operates trains, the State of Victoria consistently records the highest rate of level crossing incidents, accidents, and deaths resulting from level crossing collisions involving Asciano trains.



State	Near Misses	Collisions
NSW	99	2
NT	5	1
QLD	5	3
SA	28	2
TAS	18	2
VIC	107	10
WA	0	0

2006/2007 Year by State – Pacific National Level Crossing Incidents



2006/2007 Year by Month – Pacific National Level Crossing Incidents

Level Crossing Accident Causation

Road vehicle drivers, and in particular, drivers of heavy haul road trucks in disobeying the existing road rules are the primary accident causation factors in all railway level crossing accidents.

Analysis of the Asciano Pacific National level crossing accidents over the past five years has shown that the frequency rate and increase in damage caused has a direct correlation with the increasing size and capacity of heavy road transport.

Traditionally over many years in the rail industry, level crossing accidents would very rarely cause the locomotive or train to derail as a result of a collision with a road truck. However, with the increase in size and weight of the road trucks operating in more recent years, there is now a greater potential for a locomotive and/or train to be derailed in a level crossing collision. Clearly, this change in the potential outcome of a level crossing collision translates into a much greater risk of injury or death of train drivers and train passengers.

The risk profile of railway level crossings has changed, however, the road infrastructure and vehicle driver bad behaviour has not been addressed in order to manage safety.

Road/Rail Interface Infrastructure

A very specific safety risk has emerged in relation to the introduction of B-Double semi-trailers where roads and intersections are in very close proximity to a railway level crossing. This risk is highlighted in two ways, first, the blocking back across a level crossing when due to traffic build up the road vehicle cannot clear the rail crossing danger area, and second, when a road intersection is close to the railway crossing and the long road vehicle has passed through the crossing to arrive at an intersection “stop” or “give way” sign, however, the back of the road truck trailer remains foul of the rail line.

Locomotive Visibility

The Asciano Group has implemented a range of continuous improvement measures in order to reduce the risk of level crossing accidents and to further improve the visibility of its locomotives and trains.

In addition, the Asciano operating procedures require that its locomotive drivers operate with the headlights, ditch lights, and marker lights illuminated at all times day and night, unless as required in the local network safeworking rules.

Locomotive horns must be sounded on distant approach and on short approach to all level crossings.

All Asciano Group locomotives have high visibility colours to the front face of the locomotives, with reflective signage, and visibility material in accordance with Australian Standards to all locomotives and rolling stock.

Government Responsibility

Asciano through Pacific National is an active member and supporter of the various level crossing safety committees established in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Northern Territory.

These strategic committees are focused on the assessment and prioritisation of level crossing safety risk and the implementation of Government sponsored improvement plans.

Pacific National believes that the funding for the upgrade of the railway level crossings is the responsibility of both the various State and Commonwealth Governments, and is strongly of the view that more needs to be done to provide an adequate level of safety protection to rail employees and the community.

Australian Transport Council

Asciano endorses and supports the Australian Transport Council (ATC) safety initiative where Ministers have agreed (02/06/06) to improve level crossing management and commence innovative work on implementing a national level crossing behavioural strategy.

The behavioural strategy will form a part of the ATC's National Railway Level Crossing Safety Strategy and build on the work of the National Road Safety Strategy. Asciano will monitor ATC progress in achieving tangible improved safety outcomes resulting from this strategy.

Asciano Strategic Position

In addition to the current level crossing safety improvement programs, Asciano calls on the Victorian Government to urgently develop a strategy to fund the upgrade of all existing passive protection level crossings to active protection (lights & bells as a minimum standard) on the defined Interstate rail network, and other regional rail corridors with a route speed of 100 km/h or greater.

In addition, Asciano calls for the urgent upgrade of all existing passive protection level crossings equipped with a "give way" sign to be upgraded to a "stop" sign as a minimum standard.

Action in Victoria

As a part of the Victorian Regional Fast Rail Project (RFR), Pacific National (as network manager at that time) worked with and supported the Victorian Government's strategy to upgrade previously "passive" protection to "active" protection on all broad gauge RFR corridor level crossings with a track speed of 130 kph or greater. Asciano recommends that the Victorian Government now give further consideration to increasing the coverage of "active" protection to all level crossings on RFR corridors.

Track Network Managers

Notwithstanding the various road traffic authority responsibilities, Asciano acknowledges the important role and responsibility of the track network managers (V/Line Pass, Connex, & ARTC) in leading the rail industry drive to achieve improved level crossing infrastructure, and calls upon other track network managers to join with Asciano in achieving this common safety improvement objective.

ARA Level Crossing Behavioural Strategy

The rail industry through the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has been developing an Australian level crossing safety behavioural strategy in conjunction with other Government stakeholders for implementation across Australia.

This program requires the strong support and funding of the various State Governments, road transport industry, and the community if it is to achieve success. Pacific National supports this proposed program and is actively involved with the ARA in lobbying for Government and community support for what is fundamentally a road safety issue.

Operation Lifesaver Principles

Asciano supports the North American Operation Lifesaver key principles of reducing level crossing safety risk by **education** (schools, general community, & road users), **engineering** (upgrade of level crossing protection), **enforcement** (Policing of road users at level crossings), and (where possible) **eradication** of the level crossing safety risk.

Media Release

Asciano through its Pacific National CEO Mr Don Telford, has adopted a pro-active media approach in promoting level crossing safety and has released a media statement calling for Government and industry stakeholder support to improve level crossing safety. In particular, the media release calls for the urgent upgrade of all existing passive protection level crossings equipped with “give way” signs to “stop” signs.

The Asciano Group in cooperation with the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has also recently worked with the Channel Nine Sunday Program on level crossing safety in an attempt to raise community and road user awareness of the dangers at level crossings if road users do not display appropriate safety behaviour. Feedback from this program has been very positive, however, much more needs to be done.

Public Hearings

On behalf of the Asciano Group, I would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee in order to provide further detailed information and take questions from Committee Members.

Recommendation

That this Position Paper be noted and support given by all involved stakeholders to increase level crossing safety awareness in road vehicle users, and improve level crossing protection in Victoria and across the Australian rail industry.

**David Edwards**

Group General Manager
Safety Health Environment & Security
Asciano Pty Ltd

27 September 2007