RISSB
RAIL INDUSTRY SAFETY AND STANDARDS BOARD

NATIONAL OPERATIONS PUBLICATIONS

Operational Concept for the Australian Rail Network

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Document history

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Preface

This National Operations Publication was prepared by a development group overseen by RISSB Safety & Operations Standing Committee.

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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of Operational Concept for the Australian Railway Network (i.e. operational concept) is to provide a methodology for testing whether a proposal for rules development and/or change is within the scope of the RISSB National Rules and other National Operations Publications.

It achieves this by providing a link between the seven Fundamental Operating Principles (principles), as listed in Section 1.8 of this document, and:

(a) the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) Standards;

(b) the Rail Transport Operators (RTOs) operating rules; and

(c) the RTO's safety management systems processes requirements.

The operational concept determines what should be included in the National Operations Publications, and it should also be used to:

(d) review the relevance and effectiveness of existing controls and identify the need for any changes;

(e) provide a scope that can guide proposals for changes to the way in which the railway is operated, and facilitate the identification of consequential changes to RISSB standards or operating rules;

(f) support justification of change proposals;

(g) determine the priorities of change proposals; and

(h) assist the RTOs in reviewing their standards and procedures.

For the purpose of this document, the use of the term Signalling System is intended to cover all systems or systems of safeworking that give authority for rail traffic and work on track occupation of a block, with defined limits, while managing the safe separation of rail traffic and workers. The term "signalling" may also be used to describe a method of communicating an authority for movement or the occupation of a block.

1.2 Defined terms and abbreviations

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply:

1.2.1
core rule
either an action that is always required or a statement that it is always necessary to act, but such actions may vary according to circumstances

1.2.2
fundamental operating principle
fundamental objective that describes the foundation of a system for achieving a safe outcome

1.2.3
national operations publications
suite of documents that include concept of operations, national rules and guidance documents

1.2.4
National Rules
set of RISSB National Rules structured to meet the requirements of the fundamental operating principles, applicable to rail operations on the Australian rail network

National Operational Publication terms and definitions are maintained in the RISSB ANRP Glossary. General rail industry terms and definitions are maintained in the RISSB Glossary.

1.3 Background

1.3.1 Operational concept

The operation of railways within Australia is based on principles, developed by collective experience of the rail industry and endorsed by the National Rules Industry Advisory Group.

The primary aim of the principles is the safe and timely delivery of people and goods to their destination. The Operational Concept describes what is necessary to implement the principles and deliver this primary aim.

Operation of the railway takes place within the framework and requirements of the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) which includes legislation under the Rail Safety National Law (RSNL).

Operating rules and procedures provide an administrative basis for human interaction with the sub-systems.

The ONRSR and RSNL impose a duty equally on all RTOs to ensure the safety of the railway.

1.4 Scope

1.4.1 In scope

The scope of this document is aligned to:

(a) rail traffic operation and management on the railway network, including shunting movements;

(b) warning and protection requirements for people who need to work within the rail corridor including sidings and depots.

This Operational Concept is not specifically intended to cover light rail networks, but items from this document may be applied to such systems as deemed appropriate by the relevant Rail Infrastructure Manager (RIM).

1.4.2 Not in scope

The technical details of engineering systems, processes and infrastructure supporting the operation of the railway system.

1.5 Assumptions

As only the operational processes and procedures that control risks are referred to, it is assumed that staff are competent to apply the controls. Australian safety legislation (general and rail specific) places responsibilities on employers in respect of the competence and fitness of staff to carry out what is required of them.

Rolling stock, infrastructure, and signalling equipment, has been provided in a way that is fit for purpose, and that it is functioning as designed (unless the control measure is specifically one to be applied when rollingstock or infrastructure is defective or has failed).

The principles do not explicitly reference accident investigation. However, the need for review of and (potentially) changes to operating practice, controls, or RTO's procedures, may be identified because of effective investigation of accidents, near miss incidents, and other dangerous occurrences. There are statutory requirements at a national level adopted within Australian that require cooperation in such investigations. The duty of cooperation applies to RTOs, which interface with another RTO's rail infrastructure. Procedures for managing the interfaces between RTO's, therefore, must be within the common framework for cooperation set by national and state safety and interoperability legislation.