

# Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees

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28.06.2022

SafeWorking Team  
Queensland Rail

By email: [safeworking@qr.com.au](mailto:safeworking@qr.com.au)

## **RE: Long End Leading Procedure and MD-21-167 (locomotive Long End Recovery Plan)**

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees Queensland Rail Traincrew members and indeed all AFULE QLD members regarding consultation being undertaken by Queensland Rail in relation to the Long End Leading Procedure and MD-21-167 (Locomotive Long End Recovery Plan).

### **Long End Leading Procedure and MD-21-167 (Locomotive Long End Recovery Plan)**

Overall, the AFULE is mostly comfortable with the contents of the proposed procedure and the Locomotive Long End Leading – Recovery Plan. Where we do not agree relates to the designated maximum allowable speed identified at 2.2.1 of the procedure and 6.b/ 13.b of MD-21-167.

Since June 18, 2021, AFULE officials have spoken to hundreds of members across the state via depot meetings whereby (within confidentiality bounds) the Westwood tragedy and the associated risks of Long End Leading (LEL) have been discussed. The resounding and unanimous feedback we have received from Traincrew is that LEL should remain outlawed however in emergency situations (such as those outlined in the procedure), a maximum speed of 25km/h is where drivers feel comfortable. As a result of listening to our Traincrew members, 25km/h is the maximum speed we can endorse.

### **Queensland Rail Overarching Long End Leading Risk Assessments**

The AFULE has concerns in regard to how the September risk assessments were conducted and ultimately approved. Although we have concerns regarding the QR Regional *and* Citytrain risk assessments, for the purpose of this consultation piece, I will focus on QR Regional however, highlight that our concerns relate to both areas and all risk assessments completed as our concerns are mirrored for both.

The initial Long End Leading – Rollingstock Operator (RSO) risk assessment was completed in September 2021 where several controls relating to Long End Leading were not addressed. WHS committee members were involved in the first endorsed risk assessment however in the subsequent risk assessment dated merely a week later, additional risks had been assessed with controls including the speed of 40km/h for recovery activities implemented. From the risk assessments obtained by the AFULE, it is apparent there are no

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Traincrew HSR's that have authorised the subsequent risk assessment and inserted 40km/h control. If this is the case, we will be seeking an urgent pause of this process and a review conducted of the risk assessment.

### **QR Regional/ Citytrain and Aurizon Risk Assessments**

The Queensland Rail Travel and Tourism business finalised a risk assessment in May 2022 whereby a safety control was imposed of 25km/h for mainline recovery activities.

Queensland's second largest Rail Operator, Aurizon, also conducted risk assessments as a requirement imposed from the ONRSR. The risk assessments completed by the QLD Bulk business have concluded that no mainline Long End Leading activities are to be conducted under any circumstances. The QLD Coal business concluded that a maximum speed limit of 25km/h is imposed as a control measure whilst undertaking mainline recovery activities.

Whilst we agree and thank both the QR Regional business and Aurizon for their approach, we have received comments from members within Aurizon management that if the track owner (QR) land on a higher speed, a review will be conducted into their own implemented controls, with a view to potentially increase.

The only risk assessment the AFULE have been provided for LEL activities for the Citytrain network are dated September 2021 and have an endorsed maximum speed of 40km/h. Similar to the September 2021 QR Regional risk assessment, there does not appear to be a train driver HSR who has signed, approved/ endorsed the risk assessment with the 40km/h control in place. Again, if this is the case, we will be seeking a pause to this process and an urgent review of this risk assessment be undertaken.

We are shocked that Citytrain believe a control of 40km/h is suitable to control the risks associated with LEL combined with the significant increase of signals, level crossings, rollingstock and interaction with the general public when compared to those encountered by the Regional business who have deemed 25km/h a safe control speed.

This will be a point pressed by the AFULE in the future whereby the 40km/h speed is not reviewed.

### **Westwood Incident**

The preliminary report from the ATSB into the collision at Westwood states that the speed of impact was 44km/h.

What QR is proposing is a mere 4km/h reduction in speed.

We feel this is dangerous and an outright insult to your Traincrew workforce, the O'Brien family and everyone that knew Chris O'Brien. I have been informed by QR safety team members that "40km/h is a maximum speed" and that "individual drivers may operate at a slower speed". In reality, there will be pressures placed on Traincrew to the job as quickly as possible from the operational managers and network control therefor, essentially directing the crew drive in a Long End Leading configuration at the maximum allowable speed or risk facing disciplinary action. Additionally, in LEL configuration the driver does not have a static view of the speedometer, therefor increasing the risks of over speeding.

Queensland Rail had an employee, father and husband killed whilst on duty where the preliminary ATSB and QR internal investigation have both highlighted that the practice of

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Long End Leading was a major contributing factor to the death of Chris O'Brien and the serious injuries to both Andrew Rose and Jason Gurney.

## Conclusion

This consultation piece has identified that Queensland Rail as the overarching business and track owner puts the value of their employees lives and members of the public's lives incredibly low. Furthermore, it has identified that Queensland Rail is content to allow LEL at 40km/h within the Citytrain network whilst the Regional business and the other major rail player – Aurizon, have taken meaningful steps to avoid another Westwood tragedy.

The AFULE will condemn any approved control that allows LEL to be conducted for any purpose at a speed above 25km/h.

You can contact me by telephone on **0409 281 000** or by return email if you require any clarification.

Regards

Mick McKittrick  
**AFULE State Secretary**

**Traincrew Representing Traincrew**