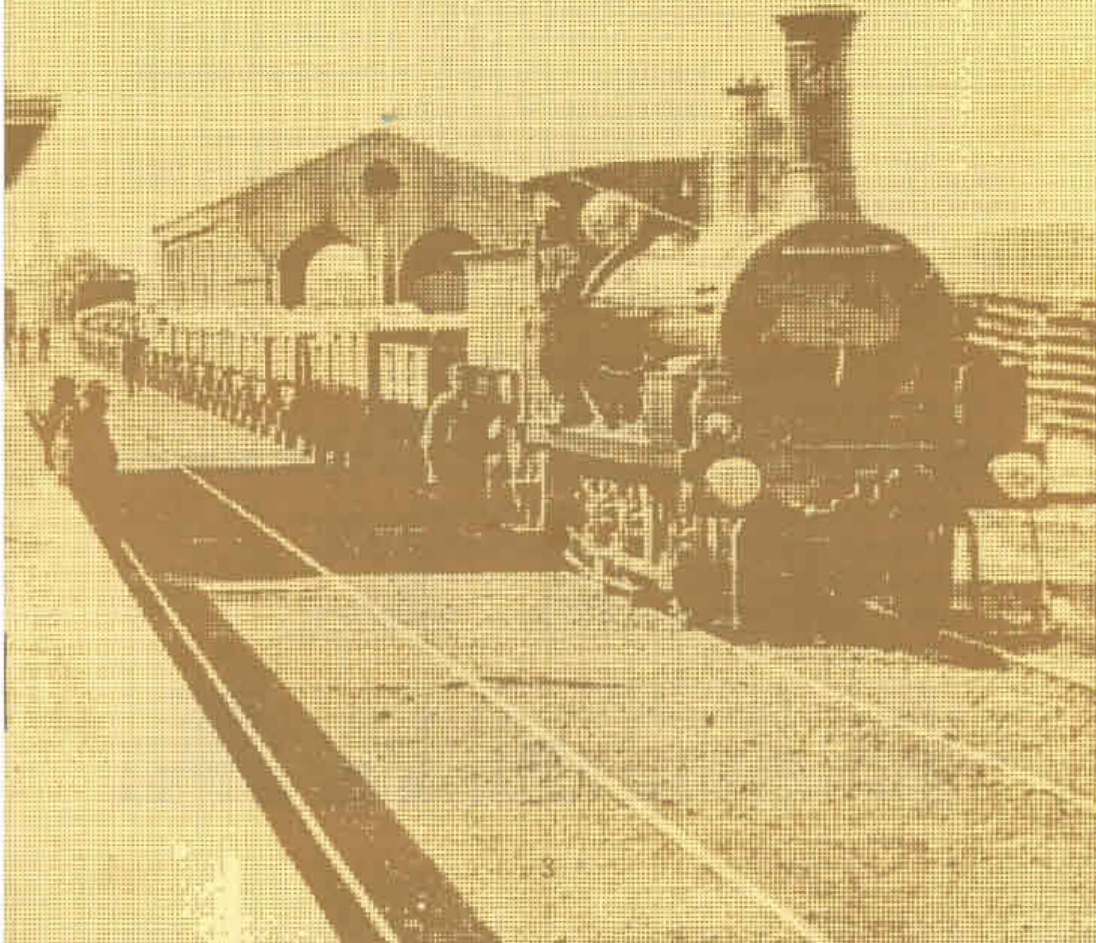


# The Railway Heritage Committee New South Wales





*Cover:  
Goulburn Railway Station  
in the early 1870s*

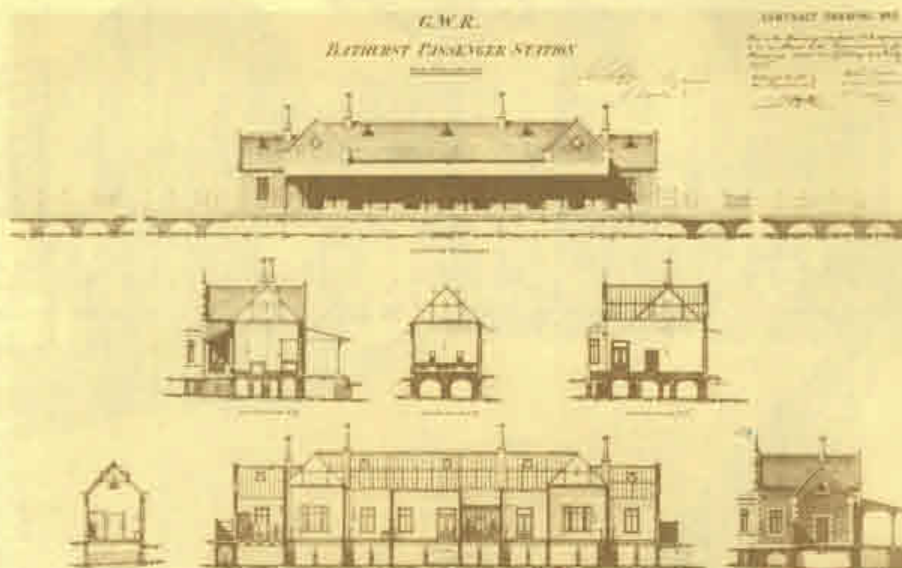
## The railway heritage of New South Wales

New South Wales has the largest and most complex railway system in Australia comprising many structures and relics built since its inception in 1855. In terms of historic buildings and works the NSW Government Railway has the largest heritage resource in one ownership in Australia.

Because much of the system was built in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a result of massive Government expenditure, it contains several thousand structures of various degrees of heritage significance including some 1,300 stations. The development of the system can be roughly divided into two eras:

- construction of main country lines and major branches to 1890, mostly by the great civil engineer John Whitton (1819-1898);
- construction of country branch lines and development of the Sydney suburban network 1890-1940.

*Bathurst Station,  
contract drawing 1875*



In addition to this there has been a process of modification of earlier work, reaching a peak at the present time when much of the post-1890 branch network is being closed and the nineteenth-century main lines and the suburban network are being radically modernised and reconstructed. Historic rolling stock and other traditional equipment are being rapidly withdrawn from service.

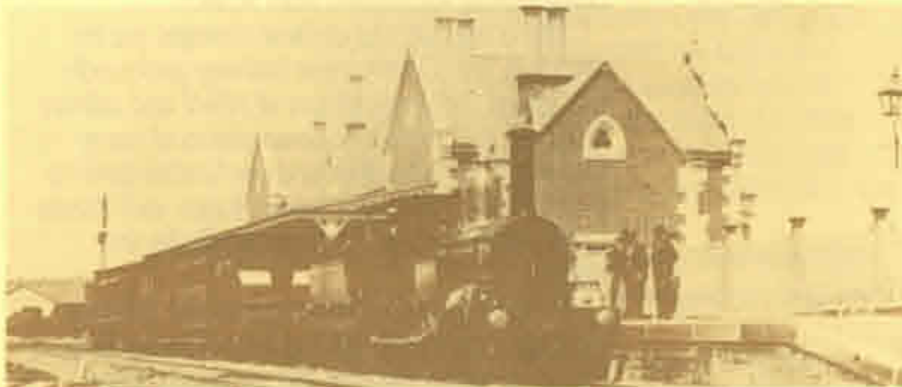
The consequences of these changes are far-reaching. The Government Railway profoundly influenced the development of NSW and railway buildings and works are centrepieces of many towns and communities and are fundamental to their history. Two major towns, Junee and Werris Creek, were even created specifically for the railway.

Reflecting community concern, the Railway Heritage Committee has the task of reconciling today's changes with the historic fabric of the railway. This fabric includes stations, residences, workshops, goods sheds, water tanks, signals, bridges, pump houses, stockyards, machinery and carriages - an extraordinarily diverse collection.

## The Railway Heritage Committee

The Railway Heritage Committee was formed on 12 February 1982 as a result of a recommendation of the Heritage Council of NSW (the Government advisory body on heritage). It is currently an autonomous committee comprising representatives of the State Rail Authority of NSW, the Heritage Council of NSW and the National Trust of Australia (NSW). Its recommendations are accepted by those three bodies as authoritative advice on railway heritage matters. The Committee is also assisted in its work by a representative of the Architectural Division of the NSW Public

Works Department. Members of the Committee have expertise in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and real estate management and the Secretariat is provided by the State Rail Authority. The Committee meets regularly at least six times annually with additional sub-committee meetings as required.



Bathurst Station 1876

The primary roles of the Committee are:-

- identifying railway heritage items;
- providing advice on the conservation and use of railway heritage items and encouraging the compilation of a complete register of Government-owned railway heritage items.

The register is also an obligation which the State Rail Authority has under Section 170 of the NSW Heritage Act 1977. The first register was published in December 1987 and has been under review and expansion since then. The register will ultimately become integral with the identification process.

The subjects of the Committee's work are, broadly, structures and relics created for the NSW Government Railway and still in the ownership of the State Rail Authority. However, as items are

increasingly sold by the Authority, the Committee has a responsibility to provide new owners with advice, when required, on their conservation. In special circumstances the expertise of the Committee is also available to advise on items originally created by the Government Railway, such as power and water supplies and tramway works, as well as on private railways.

### Protection of railway heritage items

The policy of the State Rail Authority is to refer to the Committee any item for which it is considering alteration, demolition or disposal. The Committee, assisted by the heritage register, determines:

- whether the item has heritage significance; and, if so, what alterations should be allowed; or
- whether it should be demolished and, if so, how it should be recorded; or
- whether it should be sold or leased and, if so, what legal protection should be placed on it prior to sale or lease.

Ultimately, it is proposed that the heritage register and associated procedural guidelines will provide this guidance.

Class 36 locomotives  
outside former Eveleigh  
running sheds





As a general principle, therefore, while items are in the ownership of the State Rail Authority, they are protected by procedures for referral to the Committee and the heritage register.

Legal protection of items is available under the terms of the Heritage Act, 1977, and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979. The Heritage Act (under which the Heritage Council provides advice to its Minister) provides for orders preventing destruction (section 130 and section 136) and interim and permanent conservation orders. Only under the Heritage Act is protection available for relics, which must be of 50 years of age or more.



Lattice girder bridge,  
Wagga Wagga, built in 1879

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act provides for demolition controls which are available to local councils in their planning schemes (Local Environmental Plans or Regional Environmental Plans). The possibility also exists under this Act of protecting railway heritage items through a State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP).

Legal protection is recommended by the Committee as a matter of policy for items of identified significance which are to be sold or leased. For various reasons, some items still owned by the

State Rail Authority already have conservation orders and many more are controlled under local planning schemes.

There is often confusion between conservation orders under the Heritage Act and the listings by other heritage organisations which have no legal effect in NSW. Many railway items are listed by:

- the Australian Heritage Commission, which identifies items of national heritage on the Register of the National Estate;
- the National Trust of Australia (NSW) which has a register of Classified items and an industrial sites list. (The Trust both advises and receives advice from the Railway Heritage Committee as part of its own Classification procedure).

In addition, the NSW Department of Planning is preparing a State Heritage Inventory which will be a computerised database of the State's environmental heritage and will include railway heritage items.

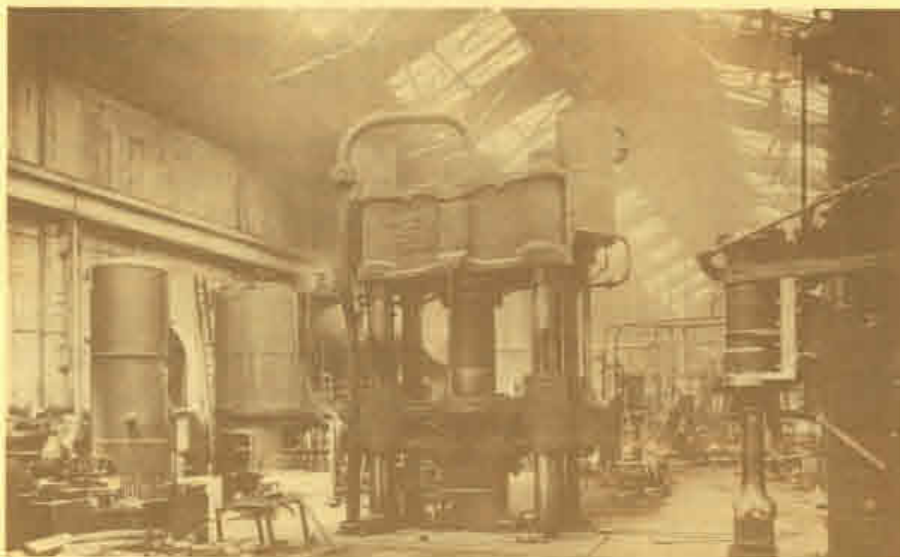
### **Procedures of the Railway Heritage Committee**

The Committee's recommendations are generally intended to guide the State Rail Authority but may also be directed to the Heritage Council, the National Trust or other parties as appropriate. As part of its work, the Committee considers significance and seeks the advice of its Assets Subcommittee (or any other sub-committee formed to consider specific items).

### **Significance Criteria**

Like the Heritage Council and the National Trust, the Committee evaluates items by the standards of the Burra Charter (the conservation standard of Australia ICOMOS) and the Heritage

Act. Thus, items (buildings, works, relics and places) are considered by all the criteria for cultural significance, including historical, social, scientific and aesthetic significance. Since its formation, the Committee has only progressively acquired an overview of the complex railway system and until recently has considered its assessments tentative, pending a proper heritage study of the railway. A limited study is being undertaken in 1990 which, combined with previous research, should enable a high standard of assessment.



*Eveleigh Locomotive Workshops, built in 1886*

Items are considered first and foremost as railway items, categorised by type (e.g. "first class stations") and by context (e.g. groupings, as in railway towns). Secondly, consideration is given, where knowledge allows, to any broader historical environment.

For practical purposes, the following categories of significance are given to railway heritage items:

- of outstanding heritage significance;
- of high heritage significance;
- of heritage significance;
- of little or no heritage significance.

## **B. Assets Sub-committee**

This permanent sub-committee handles the routine work of the Committee - the processing of referrals by the State Rail Authority of items proposed for alteration, sale/lease or demolition. The referrals include an information sheet, photographs and plans.

The Sub-committee allocates one of the above categories of significance and makes a recommendation.

Controversial or complex matters are generally deferred for consideration by the main Committee.

*Railway Refreshment Rooms, Junee, built in 1883*



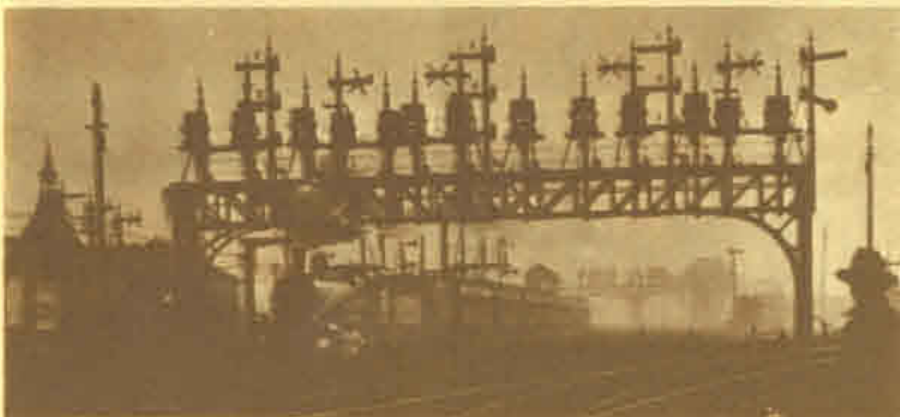




*Bowring Railway Station, built in 1875*

Items of significance proposed for demolition are recommended for sale or lease if their circumstances favour this action. If an item is to be demolished it is recorded according to the Committee's Recording Standard (which specifies different levels of recording for items in categories 1, 2, 3 and 4). Copies of the Recording Standard may be obtained from the Secretary of the Committee. Where an item of significance is recommended for sale or lease, appropriate protective action is also recommended (e.g. a conservation order).

*Sydney Station yard and the Mortuary Station*



The minutes of the Assets Sub-committee are ratified by the main Committee.

The Railway Heritage Committee can be contacted by writing to:

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SYDNEY NSW 2001

or by telephoning the Secretary:

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