



## SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

AN announced closure of Victor Harbor line at end of April 1984

This article includes discussion on traffic statistics  
and the 1983 ARHS proposal to operate tourist services.

See also update in June issue, ARU action in July issue & SA Govt objection in Nov issue

### RAIL REPORT - VICTOR HARBOR LINE

ARHS Recorder Vol 21 No 8 May 1984 pgs 116, 117

On 23/3/84 the General Manager of Australian National Railways, Dr. D. G. Williams, announced that all rail passenger services to Victor Harbor would cease at the end of April. The announcement followed a meeting with the Federal Minister for Transport, Mr. Morris and the SA Minister of Transport, Mr. Abbott. Dr. Williams said the line was a "significant drain" on AN's finances compared with the number of passengers carried.

It is believed AN's loss on passenger operations on the line was about \$250,000 last year. Dr. Williams also said that the service carried 16,000 passengers in 1983 with about half of these being in the three summer months. With an average payment of \$5.00 a passenger AN claim losses of more than \$15.00 for every person carried. The current Adult return fare to Victor Harbor is \$12.00. Despite the cessation of train services on 30/4/84 AN will continue to maintain the track until September while the SA Government examines the feasibility of establishing a tourist railway.

A section of the Victor Harbor line includes the first railway venture in the State in 1854.

Three railway unions have expressed concern at the proposed cancellation of the passenger service by AN. The Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, Australian Transport Officers Federation and the Australian Railways Union have all expressed dismay and the State Secretary of the ARU, Mr. J. K. Crossing, has said that the Unions may run the passenger service after 30/4/84.

In January 1983 the Australian Railway Historical Society made a detailed submission to the State Government regarding the tourist potential of the Victor Harbor line and following the announcement by AN on 23/3/84 the Society's SteamRanger Tours made another submission to the Government. Basically SteamRanger would be interested in running steam trains between Victor Harbor, Goolwa and Strathalbyn at weekends, public and school holidays if certain conditions can be met. The first of these is concern about the state of the track. The Society suggests that \$1 'A million would be required to upgrade the track between Victor Harbor and Strathalbyn to a satisfactory condition for efficient operation of steam trains. Another requirement is that the present Victor Harbor station be retained in its entirety.

There have been proposals in past years for the land on which the station stands to be developed for other purposes. The station site is one of the prime pieces of real estate in Victor Harbor. A new depot for SteamRanger would need to be built at Victor Harbor at a cost which the Society could not afford at present. It must be remembered that the Society has a substantial investment in a depot at Dry Creek and the future of that site and its operation must be taken into account when considering the Victor Harbor question. As AN statistics show the best passenger figures occur in the summer months, a time when steam operations are subject to fire ban considerations.

One can only hope that the Federal and State Governments and AN are aware of their social responsibility and retain the service at least until September.



Victor Harbor station in 1980.  
Engine 908 has just arrived with the morning passenger service Photo: J Rogers