Report outline

Title: National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers 2014 Review

Type of report: Issues Paper

Purpose: For public consultation

Abstract: The National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers (2012) (the Standard) is about to be reviewed to assess its currency of medical information. The NTC is seeking targeted advice from key stakeholders including the medical community, industry groups and associations, rail operators and their employees, coroners, unions, regulators and transport departments. This will form the basis for discussion and inform any changes that may be required to the next edition of the Standard.

Submission details: Submissions will be accepted until 9 January 2015 online at www.ntc.gov.au or by mail to:

Att: Rail Medical Standards Review 2014
National Transport Commission
L15/628 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Key milestones: For Council approval May 2016

Key words: Standard, Rail Safety Workers, medical criteria, issues

Contact: National Transport Commission
L 15/ 628 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Ph: (03) 9236 5000
Email: enquiries@ntc.gov.au
www.ntc.gov.au
How to make a submission to the NTC

Who can make a submission?
Any individual or organisation can make a submission to the NTC.

How to submit
To make an online submission please visit the NTC homepage (www.ntc.gov.au) and select ‘Submissions’ from top navigational menu.

Alternatively, you can mail your comments to: Att: Rail Medical Standards Review 2014, National Transport Commission, Level 15/628 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000.

Where possible, you should provide evidence, such as data and documentation, to support your views.

Publication of submissions
Unless submissions clearly request otherwise, all submissions will be published online. Submissions that contain defamatory or offensive content will not be published. The Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cwlth) applies to the NTC.
Executive summary

The National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers (2012) (the Standard) is about to be reviewed to assess its currency of medical information. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the medical criteria contained the Standard are current and up to date, and reflect the needs for the safe working environment of the rail industry. The medical standards are prescribed after extensive consultation with medical experts and industry stakeholders, to ensure a consistent level of safety across Australia.

It is intended that this current review will follow a similar format to the previous review, and that Assessing Fitness to Drive will also be reviewed in parallel with the rail Standard. As with the previous review, the changes to Assessing Fitness to Drive will form a basis for updates to the Standard. This is important for ensuring consistency between standards for commercial road drivers and rail safety workers.

The NTC is seeking targeted advice from key stakeholders including the medical community, industry groups and associations, rail operators and their employees, coroners, unions, regulators and transport departments.

Additionally, the review is open to submissions from any interested party for the NTC to consider within the scope of the project.

This feedback will form the basis for discussion and inform any changes that may be required for the next edition of the Standard.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Standard

The National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers (the Standard) first came into effect in 2004 and was developed in consultation with industry, rail unions, rail safety regulators and health professionals. It underpins a national system that ensures the consistent application of health standards across the Australian rail industry. The Standard applies to all government, commercial and tourist and heritage rail operators. Medical professionals must be authorised by rail employers in order to conduct health assessments for rail safety workers.

A revised edition of the Standard was released in 2012 and took effect in January 2013. The last review of the Standard was predominantly focused on updating the medical aspects, including clinical assessment procedures and medical criteria. Some administrative issues are inextricably linked to these medical aspects and were also considered in the review. Issues around the usability and clarity of the document were also considered and largely contributed to restructuring the Standard.

1.2 Current revision of the Standard

The NTC has an on-going responsibility to develop, monitor and maintain uniform or nationally consistent regulatory and operational reforms relating to road, rail and inter-modal transport.

The last review of the Standard began in 2008, and was finalised in 2012. The medical standards were updated to reflect the best available evidence and specialist medical opinion. Where possible, information was translated from the commercial vehicle driver standards contained in the revised standards for driver licensing, Assessing Fitness to Drive.

It is intended that this current review will follow a similar format to the previous review, and that Assessing Fitness to Drive will also be reviewed in parallel with the rail Standard. As with the previous review, the changes to Assessing Fitness to Drive will form a basis for updates to the National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers. This is important for ensuring consistency between standards for commercial road drivers and rail safety workers.

As with the previous review, the current project will focus on:

- Key chronic conditions likely to affect fitness for rail safety work
- A condition’s effect on functionality rather than diagnosis itself
- Clarity and decision support.

1.3 Scope of review

The project will review the medical criteria contained in the National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers to ensure currency and accuracy. The NTC will take into account:

- any advances in medical knowledge
- any new issues affecting medical standards for rail workers
- changes to the rail operating environments
- stakeholder feedback on the operation of the current rail standards (including significant problems that have been encountered by medical professionals undertaking testing to date)
- findings of recent enquiries
- corrections needed to any of the text where mistakes are identified, or where information is out of date (and requires updating).

Where specific issues have been raised the NTC will address each individually.
1.4 Out of Scope

This review only intends to address (and correct where necessary) the medical criteria contained in the Standard. It is not proposed to review the administrative arrangements relating to the application of the standards in the document. In particular:

- any inconsistencies, particularly with the implementation criteria between jurisdictions
- commissioning new primary research into gaps in knowledge about medical conditions
- any significant shifts in the application of the Standard.
2. Issues for consideration

When providing feedback to the NTC on the rail medical standards, please use the template provided in APPENDIX A.

The NTC is seeking feedback on any corrections or modifications required to the following:

Operational and procedural requirements

- Any comments about the information on operational requirements of the Standard, including practicality of application, clarity, or any additional information needed. Please clearly identify the text relating to your comments (including page numbers), and if appropriate, a proposed course of action.

Medical criteria

- Any comments about the medical criteria set out in the Standards for rail safety workers. This can include technical accuracy, clarity, and additional information needed. Please clearly identify the text (and page number/s) relating to your comments, the proposed changes or an appropriate course of action.

2.1 Specific issues previously raised

The following issues have been raised with the NTC since the application of the 2012 edition of the Standard. Each of these will be considered addressed where appropriate in the current review. The NTC is also seeking any additional feedback on these issues.

- Revision of the Hearing Chapter – in particular reference points for figures in Decibels (dB)
- Substance misuse – wording will be revised to ensure clarity of interpretation of the medical criteria for substance abuse
- Consideration of an approved drug/medication list for Category 1 and 2 Rail Safety Workers
- Authorised Health Professionals – consideration of training information for health professionals and a listing of authorised practitioners to be included on the NTC website
- BMI and sleep disorders – wording to be revised to improve clarity around interpretation
- Forms – ability to fully complete forms electronically

2.2 Outside the scope of the project

- Changes to the National Rail Safety Law
- Education for health professionals
- Management of workers found temporarily unfit for duty
- Legal matters for assessed rail safety workers.
3. Consultation and next steps

The NTC is seeking targeted advice from key stakeholders including the medical community, industry groups and associations, rail operators and their employees, unions, regulators and transport departments. Coroners reports will also be assessed for relevant findings.

Additionally, the review is open to submissions from any interested party for the NTC to consider within the scope of the project.

All feedback received will be collated into an issues log and potential amendments to the Standards will be considered by the relevant Reference Groups. If required, targeted consultation may be undertaken to resolve specific issues.

The project will be split into three phases

**Phase one – Identifying issues**

- Seek feedback from stakeholders on any issues they may have encountered since the last revision of the Standard
- Compile issues
- Undertake consultation with appropriate stakeholders (reference groups) to resolve complex issues

**Phase two – discussion paper/draft revised Standard**

- Draft amendments to the Standard in accordance with issues raised from stakeholders
- Draft accompanying project report
- Public consultation of report and draft Standard

**Phase three – approvals process**

- Seek approval from the Transport and Infrastructure Senior Officials Committee
- Seek approval from Ministers of the Transport and Infrastructure Council
4. Providing feedback

Your feedback can be submitted electronically through our website (http://www.ntc.gov.au), or posted in hard copy to the NTC:

    Att: Rail Medical Standards Review 2014
    National Transport Commission
    L15/628 Bourke Street
    Melbourne VIC 3000

When providing feedback to the NTC on the rail medical standards, please use the template provided in APPENDIX A.

Please provide the following information in your submission:

1. Your details – name, organisation and contact information
2. The section/s, page number etc. to which your feedback applies
3. Details of the issue and why the problem needs to be addressed
4. Your description of a potential solution to the problem.

Please provide all submissions no later than: **9 January 2015**
5. APPENDIX A

NATIONAL STANDARD FOR HEALTH ASSESSMENT OF RAIL SAFETY WORKERS
ISSUES PAPER FEEDBACK

Stakeholder details
Organisation:

Section of standard:

What is the current provision?

- What is in the current edition of the rail standard for the specified section?

What is the issue or problem with the current provision?

- Overview/background

What is the proposed course of action?

- What options have been considered to address the issue?
- What is the preferred approach and why?

Supporting information:

- Any research or information which supports the merits of the proposal.

Likely impact of the change:
For example

- What affect is the proposed action likely to have on rail safety workers and the rail industry?
- Will there be any additional costs to the rail industry as a result of the proposed actions?