



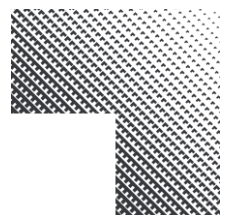
## Summary of Feedback Report

### Current State of Rolling Stock Approval processes

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National Transport Commission

21 November, 2025





# Report Outline

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<b>Title</b>	Summary of Feedback Report: Current State of Rolling Stock Approval processes
<b>Type of report</b>	Information paper
<b>Purpose</b>	To present the key themes from the stakeholder feedback
<b>Abstract</b>	This information paper provides a summary of feedback received from stakeholders to the NTC <i>Streamlining Rolling Stock Approval Processes Consultation Paper</i> released in May 2025.
<b>Attribution</b>	This work should be attributed as follows, Source: National Transport Commission (2025), Summary of Feedback Report on Consultation for Rolling Stock Approval Processes, NTC, Melbourne.
<b>Key words</b>	Rolling Stock, Rail Infrastructure Manager, Approval, Certification, Registration
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# 1 Summary

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## Key points

- NTC released a consultation paper seeking feedback from industry on ideas for improvements to how rolling stock can be approved within the current regulatory framework.
- Clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Rail Infrastructure Managers (RIMs) and Rolling Stock Operators (RSOs) relating to the certification and registration of rolling stock (safety assurance) may assist streamlining the approval process.
- The Office of National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) will develop a guideline on rolling stock approval processes and consult in early 2026.

## 1.1 Objectives

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The purpose of this paper is to:

- Summarise the key themes from stakeholder feedback to the NTC consultation paper.
- Provide a summary of what the National Pathway on rolling stock approvals is.
- Identify feedback that may inform other aspects of a National Pathway for streamlining rolling stock approvals.
- Advise next steps, which is that the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) will develop a guideline on rolling stock approval processes and consult industry in early 2026.

## 1.2 Background

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Rail operators currently experience major challenges in securing approval from Rail Infrastructure Managers (RIMs) to operate new and modified rollingstock on their networks.

The multiplicity of approval processes increases costs for operators and is a major deterrent to investment and innovation in new rolling stock, and a barrier to competition with road freight.

Streamlining and simplifying rolling stock approval processes has been identified as a key priority of the National Rail Action Plan (NRAP). Improvements to rolling stock approval processes nationally will support innovation and investment and reduce regulatory burden.



## National Rail Action Plan

The National Rail Action Plan (NRAP) aims to improve the interoperability of people, technology and standards to support rail competitiveness and create one integrated, modern Australian railway system. This is a National Cabinet priority.

Infrastructure and Transport Ministers (Ministers) have tasked the National Transport Commission with delivering these outcomes through a four-year work program with a focus on five key areas<sup>1</sup>:

- 1.Locking in national rail standards to advance interoperability
- 2.Aligning train control and signalling technology on the eastern seaboard
- 3.Reducing the burden on drivers, crew and maintenance workers
- 4.Streamlining rolling stock approval processes
- 5.Creating workplace solutions to meet future rail skills demand.

In alignment with priority 4 above, Ministers requested the NTC to lead three rolling stock approval reforms: (1) delivering guidance on safety assurance processes; (2) developing and piloting a single application form; and (3) investigating harmonising testing requirements and test locations for rolling stock.<sup>2</sup>

## National Pathway for Streamlining Rolling Stock Approvals

In August 2025, Infrastructure and Transport Ministers endorsed a National Pathway for streamlining rolling stock approvals in August 2025.<sup>3</sup> The National Pathway brings together existing rolling stock approval reform initiatives undertaken by various jurisdictions and stakeholders and builds on the NTC's work so there is opportunity for greater coordination. The intent of the National Pathway is to cooperatively and progressively build towards the long-term vision of having a common national approach to reduce the cost and regulatory burden of rolling stock approvals.

The National Pathway consolidates all existing NTC initiatives (i.e. safety assurance guidance, pilot of a single application form and harmonising testing arrangements) as well as jurisdiction-related projects including harmonising common interface standards, the NSW network acceptance process, and the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) National Rolling Stock Register (NRSR) and registration system.<sup>4</sup>

## Stages of the National Pathway

The National Pathway will be delivered over several stages to reduce the inherent complexity of delivering a 'national' solution from the outset. A staged approach enables the trialling and testing of solutions to identify learnings before mandating a standard for rolling stock approval processes. See Figure 1 below.

Stage 1 of the pathway involves working with a small core group of RIMs to develop and pilot a single application form for freight rolling stock. The core group of RIMs are: Transport for New South Wales (Metropolitan Rail Network); ARTC (interstate Network); Arc Infrastructure and UGL Regional Linx (Country Regional Network). Stage 1 also includes developing written safety assurance guidance,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/itmm-communique-9-december-2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/itmm-communique-7-june-2024.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/itmm-communique-11-august-2025.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rissb.com.au/news/national-rolling-stock-register-to-roll-into-production/> and <https://www.rissb.com.au/news/next-phase-of-the-national-rolling-stock-register-engagement-underway/>



identifying network interface standards to be harmonised, and standing up the RISSB rolling stock register.

Stage 2 involves all RIMs and widens the rolling stock focus to include passenger and rail maintenance vehicles. Stage 3 will build upon the key lessons learnt from stage 1 and 2 so that a mandated rolling stock approval process standard can be developed with industry, RIMs and RSOs input. Figure 1 illustrates indicative timings for the National Pathway. These timings will be refined with the National Pathway partners as part of developing a work plan.

**Figure 1: Indicative Timings for the Stages of the National Pathway**

2025-26 (Stage 1) Small group RIMs	2026-27 (Stage 1 con't)	2027-28 (Stage 2) all RIMs	2028 (Stage 3) National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Safety assurance guidance</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Pilot single application form</b> (ARTC, TfNSW, Sydney Trains, UGL, Qube, PN)</li> <li>▪ Review RISSB register</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review and update RISSB registration and certification standards</li> <li>▪ NTC harmonise testing and locations</li> <li>▪ NTC pilot single application form (<b>all RIMs</b>)</li> <li>▪ RISSB register</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NTC continue pilot and trial for <b>all RIMs</b></li> <li>▪ Harmonise network interface standards</li> <li>▪ NTC develop detail of mandated standard (Tier 1) based on pilots and guidance</li> <li>▪ RISSB National Rolling Stock Registration System</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National approach backed by a mandatory standard on rolling stock approval process.</li> </ul>

## Safety Assurance Guidance

A key element of the National Pathway is the development of a safety assurance guideline on certification and registration processes, and associated roles and responsibilities. The NTC has identified that the greatest efficiency benefit is likely to be realised in streamlining approvals for freight wagons and locomotives that operate on multiple rail networks.

The learnings from freight wagons and locomotives can be applied to other rolling stock, such as passenger rolling stock or rail maintenance vehicles as applications for these are infrequent and the volume across multiple networks is much lower compared to freight.

## 1.3 Next steps on the safety assurance guideline

As requested by Infrastructure Transport Ministers, the National Transport Commission began working on developing a guideline to clarify roles and responsibilities in relation to the rolling stock approval process with the release a consultation paper in May 2025.

Since then, the national rail safety regulator, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) has indicated it will develop additional guidance (a guideline) on expectations for safety assurance for rolling stock approvals.

Given ONRSR will need to undertake its own public consultation process, the NTC will cease its consultation on this matter and collaborate and support ONRSR.

ONRSR will undertake broad consultation on a guideline, anticipated to be in early 2026.



## 2 Key findings from responses to the Streamlining Rolling Stock Approval Processes - consultation paper

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### Key points

- Sixteen stakeholders responded to the NTC's Streamlining Rolling Stock Approval Processes consultation paper.
- Submissions to the consultation paper are summarised in Table 1.
- Feedback that is relevant to other aspects of the National Pathway is identified in Table 2.

### 2.1 Streamlining Rolling Stock Approval Processes - consultation paper

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The consultation paper sought input from stakeholders on ideas for reforms and improvements to rolling stock approval processes that can be delivered within the current regulatory framework.

Sixteen responses were received with some provided confidentially to the NTC. Responses were received from State and Federal governments, RIMs, RSOs, Industry Bodies and from private organisations. Areas of agreement included:

- There is broad agreement across stakeholder groups on the need to streamline rolling stock approval processes.
- Most stakeholders support the clarification of the certification, registration, and network approval steps to reduce duplication and improve efficiency.
- The adoption of *AS7501:2019 Rolling Stock Compliance Certification* as a national standard is widely endorsed, with some respondents viewing it as a foundational framework for certification compliance.
- Stakeholders strongly stated that guidance issued from the national regulator ONRSR is critical to creating a shared understanding of and clarity on roles and responsibilities to meet safety duties SFAIRP in the rolling stock approval process.
- Stakeholders also support the creation of a single digital portal, such as the National Rolling Stock Register (NRSR), to centralise application forms, certification data, and approvals. This is seen as a way to enhance transparency, reduce administrative burden, and facilitate mutual recognition across networks.
- There is also strong support for harmonising approval forms, interface standards and technical parameters, and for clarifying roles and responsibilities between RSOs, RIMs, and ONRSR.

Despite general alignment on the need for reform, some areas of disagreement emerged. These included:



- The use of Independent Competent Persons (ICPs) drew mixed reactions: while some stakeholders support their broader use with accreditation, others raised concerns about cost, complexity, and inconsistent quality.
- Mutual recognition of certification also drew mixed reactions, particularly around the sharing of commercially sensitive information and the lack of harmonised rail interface standards.
- Some RIMs expressed caution about adopting AS7501, citing network-specific needs and the absence of a regulatory mandate.

Key themes from the feedback are summarised in this paper.

## 2.2 Feedback: Key Themes

Table 1 Feedback: Key Themes

Topic	Feedback
<b>Defining separate steps in the approval process</b>	Submissions showed strong support for clearly defining and separating certification, registration, and network approval to reduce duplication and improve clarity.
<b>Use and Accreditation of Independent Competent Persons (ICPs)</b>	Mixed views on ICPs, but general support for their use if accredited and competent. Concerns included validating the competence of ICPs and the potential cost burden of engaging an ICP.
<b>Mandating AS7501:2019 (Rolling stock compliance for certification)<sup>5</sup> for the certification stage</b>	Broad support for using AS7501 as the foundation for certification.
<b>Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities</b>	Stakeholders requested clearer delineation between RSOs, RIMs, and ONRSR.
<b>Application of the So Far as is Reasonably Practicable (SFAIRP) Principle</b>	Need for clearer guidance on applying SFAIRP to this approval process

## 2.3 Feedback to be taken account of as part of the National Pathway

Table 2 Feedback to be taken account of as part of the National Pathway

Topic	Feedback	National Pathway
<b>Mutual Recognition and Information Sharing</b>	Support for mutual recognition to reduce duplication, with caution around commercial-in-confidence data.	Considerations for implementation of mutual recognition in practice will form part of a single application form pilot project.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rissb.com.au/products/as-75012019-rolling-stock-compliance-certification/>





**Centralised Data and National Rolling Stock Register (NRSR)**

Strong support for a centralised system to store certification and registration data

The rolling stock register and a proposed registration system (to be developed) are building blocks of the National Pathway.

Lessons learnt from Stage 1 of the National Pathway (ie development of a guideline and piloting a single application form) will feed into the development of the RISSB NRSR.

**Non-conformance handling before registration**

Multiple stakeholders highlighted the need for guidance on managing non-conformances before registration

The National Pathway includes a project to develop and pilot a single application form. A technical working group has been established by the NTC to inform the pilot. The pilot will involve assessing applications via a standardised process and applying mutual recognition of vehicle for Certification and Registration outcomes.

**Passenger, Heritage, and Maintenance Rolling Stock out of scope**

Questions raised about whether the guidance applies to other types of rolling stock outside those used for the movement of freight.

These vehicle types might form part of the future of the National Pathway which is being designed to build a foundation and then scale up.

**Digital Portal for Application Forms**

Strong support for a single online portal to manage applications and approvals

The National Pathway is looking at options for using the National Rolling Stock Register and developing a registration system.



<b>Accreditation schemes for Independent Competent Persons</b>	Calls for a national accreditation scheme to ensure consistency and trust in ICPs.	ICPs can play a key role in the certification process for a single application form pilot project. National consistency in ICP process may be addressed through future stages of the National Pathway.
<b>Dispute resolution mechanism</b>	Suggestions for Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) or RISSB to mediate disputes between RSOs and RIMs	Work is underway regarding governance arrangements, and consideration is being given to how this could work.
<b>Harmonisation of interface standards</b>	Support for harmonised interface standards, consistent technology standards and harmonised asset identifiers.	The NTC has established a technical working group (TWG) to firstly develop a single application form for registration of freight wagons and locomotives and will then pilot (test) this form. The TWG is also identifying common interface standards for harmonisation. Harmonising all network interface standards is a complex and significant task but is flagged as an important building block in the stages of the National Pathway.



## 3 Next Steps

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### 3.1 Next steps arising from feedback on the consultation paper

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ONRSR will develop the guideline on rolling stock approvals.

ONRSR will undertake broad consultation as part of the development of the guideline, anticipated to be in early 2026.

The NTC will continue to collaborate with ONRSR.



# Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Australian Standard AS7501:2019</b>	The Australian Standard for rolling stock compliance certification, which provides a structured process for assessing rolling stock compliance with relevant standards
<b>Consultation Paper</b>	A document developed to seek input from industry on ideas for reforms and improvements to rolling stock approval processes within the current regulatory framework.
<b>Independent Competent Person</b>	A competent, independent person who assesses vehicle compliance with standards, providing assurance that compliance checks are independent and robust
<b>National Rolling Stock Register</b>	A central database under development by the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) to store information on rail vehicles approved for use on the Australian rail network.
<b>Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator</b>	The national regulator of rail safety in Australia. ONRSR administers a national accreditation scheme and provides guidance on rail safety and compliance with the Rail Safety National Law.
<b>Rail Infrastructure Managers</b>	An entity responsible for the provision and maintenance of rail infrastructure, ensuring its safety and compliance with relevant standards.
<b>Rail Safety National Law</b>	Legislation that sets out the safety duties and responsibilities of parties involved in railway operations, including RIMs and RSOs.
<b>Rolling Stock Operators</b>	Entities responsible for operating rolling stock and managing associated safety and compliance tasks
<b>Safety Assurance</b>	The process of providing assurance that rolling stock meets safety standards and requirements, ensuring it can be safely introduced to the network.
<b>So Far As Is Reasonably Practicable (SFAIRP)</b>	A principle under the RSNL that requires parties to ensure safety by taking into account all relevant matters, including the likelihood of risks occurring, the degree of harm, and the availability of ways to eliminate or minimise risks.





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