

7 Berringa Close
Glen Eden
Gladstone 4680
16th June 1999

MR Paul Neville MP

RE MANAGING FATIGUE IN TRANSPORT

Dear Sir,

My name is Bill Malcolm and I am a Train Driver in Gladstone. I have been in the Railway since November 1953 was classified as a Driver in 1973 and came to Gladstone as a Driver at the beginning of 1974. I have always been concerned about fatigue and more particularly since the Two Driver Operations Agreement (T.D.O.) between the unions and Q Rail was signed and began in January 1995. In this agreement we were forced by Commissioner Dempsey (Industrial Commission) to work eleven (11) hour shifts which could be extended to twelve (12) hours. Twelve-hour shifts are rarely worked in Gladstone. Although we objected strongly to having to work these long shifts, on the whole, at that point in time, we had time off between shifts to rest and recuperate. QR and the unions both benefited out of T.D.O and the eleven-hour shifts. Although we didn't want them it did benefit train crews by not having to stay in Quarters as we returned home on each job.

We then went on to a train crew agreement (T.C.A.), which was part of our enterprise agreement. The T.C.A. commenced on the 28/10/96 and was to be for a period of two (2) years, but was extended for another twelve (12) months to the 28/10/99. In the T.C.A. one part of the agreement qualified how many block leisure periods (B.L.P.) (Days Off) you would receive for the average amount of hours you worked per eight (8) week cycle. In Gladstone in an eight- (8) week period we receive eighteen (18) days off for working three hundred and twenty (320) hours. This is where the problem begins. To work three hundred and twenty hours, which QR is quite entitled to work us for, and have eighteen days off (we are, according to the T.C.A. entitled to more) which we are entitled to, we have to work eleven hour shifts night after night. Gladstone depot is 80% nightwork.

I have read many reports over the years regarding fatigue and its effects on the human body and know the way we are working now is dangerous, and it amazes me that we haven't had a major accident because of fatigue. As it stated in one article I read "Lack of sleep can make us clumsy, stupid, unhappy and dead". Professor Drew Dawson and Adam Fletcher from the Center for Sleep Research University of South Australia have done a study of fatigue on some Locomotive Drivers in all states of Australia. It is very interesting and his findings on how many hours you need off between shifts so you won't be fatigued when you return for your next shift make a joke of what we are doing.

He also wrote a computer program which comes up with scores after you input what you have worked, a score over eighty means you could be fatigued. In an inquiry into a train smash at Beresfield in N.S.W. by the Bureau of Air Safety investigations revealed that the Drivers on board had scores of 83 and 84 and that they were tired. Gladstone Depot is constantly working with scores of over a hundred and sometimes up to 117! The shifts the crew on the Beresfield Train had worked before the smash were a dream to what we work.

CAUSES OF FATIGUE

EXAMPLE 1:

Start work Mon a/noon 2 PM Finish Tues Morn 1am

Back to work Tues night at 6 PM Finish Wed Morn 6 am

Back to work Wed night at 10 PM Finish Thurs Morn 6 am

Back to work Fri morn at 1 am Finish Fri at noon

Back at work Sat morn at 2 am Finish 1 PM Sat Afternoon
This resulted in a score of 104!

EXAMPLE 2:

Start Sunday 8 PM Finish 6 am Monday
Back on Monday 10 PM Finish 6 am Tuesday
Back on Tuesday 8 PM Finish 7 am Wednesday
Back on Wednesday 10 PM Finish 5 am Thursday

This resulted in a score of 107!

EXAMPLE 3:

Start Sat 12 Midnight Finish 8 am Sunday
Start Mon 1 is Finish noon Monday
Start Tues 3 is Finish 2 PM Tuesday
Start Wed 5 am Finish 1 PM Wednesday
Start Thurs 1 is Finish 9 is Thursday
Start Fri 4 am Finish noon Friday
Start Sat 1 is Finish noon Saturday

This resulted in a score of 116!

I can assure you that these are not exceptions but are normal working most of the time. If you ring up the roster and say you are fatigued and would be a danger if you came to work, you get various answers but still have to go to work. The threat is always there of punishment if you don't come to work even though you know you won't be able to stay awake.

It is about 286 km to Bluff and we go there and back or change trains this side of Bluff and return to Gladstone and can do this night after night. A round trip like this is over 550km. We have two drivers on these trains, who relieve each other throughout the trip but quite often both of you can't keep your eyes open. Q.R. and the Unions are both aware of this problem and don't seem to be able to come up with a solution. I sincerely hope until they do, no one gets killed. Could you imagine yourself sitting on a locomotive night after night in a comfortable chair with the heater or the air conditioner going and not being able to get up and walk around and only being able to stare along the track as far as the headlight reaches and trying to stay awake? Our locos have an alerting system (V.C.S) on board that we have to acknowledge every 90 seconds. You can travel a long way in 90 seconds when you are doing up to 80 km/h and it will take you a kilometer at this speed and over 7,000 tonnes trailing, to stop. Recently I was on a train to Bluff that ran past a red signal because both of us dozed off. It could have been a disaster if another train had been in the vicinity.

Gladstone has a high incident of signals passed at danger (S.P.A.D.) and I believe it is because of fatigue. One of the comments made by the investigators into the Beresfield smash was "The investigators found it difficult to accept that a simple, low cost, electronic device could not be found or designed to provide some form of warning to train crews of signals at caution or danger". In the Coroners inquiry into the two deaths that occurred in a train smash at Hines Hill in Western Australia, the Coroner said "Westrail and National Rail should adopt a strict policy of separating trains by two red lights." Also "The system would involve the installation of an automatic mechanism to apply the brakes if the train passed through a red signal" This is not the answer to fatigue but it would be an

answer to stop a smash and possibly a death but no one wants to do anything. Systems like this are in use now in Queensland but not on our big coal trains.

The only way to reduce the high incidence of fatigue in this depot would be to have more time off between shifts to try and gain enough sleep to spend the next night out of bed and to limit the number of all nights out of bed to no more than three. Q.R. bought a Fatigue Management Program to use to set up our rosters but for some reason unknown to me never used it.

I hope this is of some help to your inquiry and if I can be of any further assistance, please contact me.

Yours Sincerely
Bill Malcolm