

6.0 EDUCATING AUSTRALIANS

This theme group is concerned with the way society educates both its young and adult citizens. While it focuses on schools, technical colleges and universities, it also embraces libraries and other forms of self-education, and on training people for the workplace. The NSW railways link to this theme is outlined in the following sections.



The school train ready to depart from Werris Creek for Tamworth (Phil Pomoroy artist).

6.1 Education

This state theme covers activities related to teaching and learning by children and adults. The NSW railways have played, and continue to play, an important role in transporting students to and from schools and universities, but they have also been active in training people for the workplace and providing adult education services for people in remote places.

6.1.1 Apprenticeships and cadetships

As an industrial enterprise operating in a largely pastoral society, railway administrators in NSW were concerned with the development of a skilled workforce from its early days. Commissioner Charles Goodchap initiated the **Railway Institute** following his retirement in 1888, when he donated his donation of the £500 presented to him by employees to the establishment of a library for railway staff and he persuaded the government to donate an additional £500. Premises for the first Railway Institute were constructed by the Eddy administration in Sydney and were officially opened on 14 March 1891. The syllabus covered the supervision and training of apprentices, together with short courses for employees in a wide-range of technical, 'commercial and domestic subjects'. Institutes were established in centres with large numbers of railway employees and its membership reached 10,000 by 1921 (and 33,000 by 1955).

A special **instruction carriage** was then in service, visiting locomotive depots to teach locomotive management and the manipulation of the Westinghouse brake system. Particular attention was given to integrating former railwaymen and other servicemen into the railways following the two world wars, including the development of special refresher courses to be taught at Railway Institutes and to integrate disabled servicemen into the system and provide them with opportunities for advancement and promotion.¹

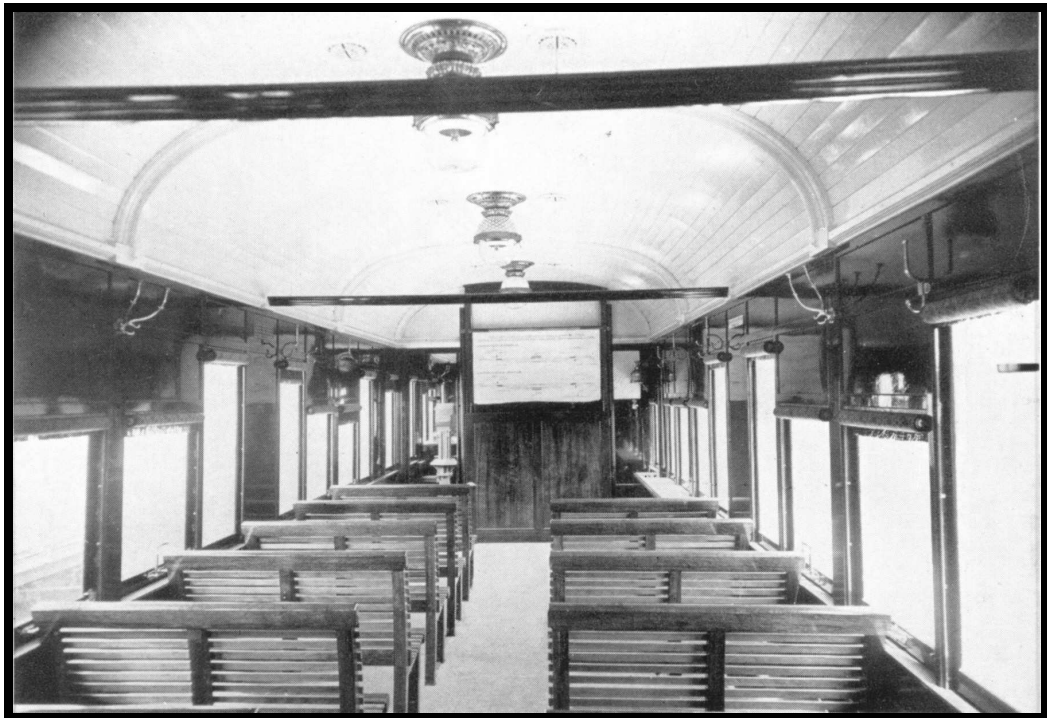
Structural changes in railway operations and the delivery of education and training

¹ Gunn, John, 1989, pp. 295, 378; Paddison, Leonie I, *The Railways of NSW 1855-1955*, Sydney, Weston Company, 1955, pp. 258-62; Forsyth, JH, 'Goodchap, Charles Augustus (1837 - 1896)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp 261-262.

programs have seen the demise of the Railway Institutes. Former institute buildings at **Werris Creek** and in the **Cooma Rail Heritage Precinct** have been restored for adaptive reuse and remain as a reminder of the contribution they and similar institutes made to the NSW railways over the years.

The adoption of new technologies, such as the electrification of the Sydney suburban network in the 1920s, generated new challenges to upgrade the skills of railway employees. During the 1950s, the Railway Department recruited around 500 **apprentices** each year, who were provided with technical training through NSW technical colleges and the railway institutes, functioning as a branch of the Sydney Technical College. Instructional Workshops were established at Homebush to provide practical and theoretical training for boilermakers, blacksmiths, car and wagon builders, fitters and machinists, electrical fitters and mechanics, and signal electricians.²

Items generated by this program include fine **scale models** of NSWGR locomotives and rolling stock that were displayed at various public events, such as Sydney's annual Royal Easter Show. While technological change has greatly altered the scope and structure of the apprenticeship program, in recent years RailCorp apprentices have been involved with the restoration of **rolling stock** including **rail motor** CPH 18, which was officially handed over to the **NSW Rail Transport Museum** during celebrations to mark the Centenary of Central Railway Station.



Interior of the safe working instruction carriage, circa 1950s (The Railways of NSW, 1955).

6.1.2 Educating people in regional locations

In addition the role of the Railway Institutes and railway instruction carriages in providing training to employees in regional centres, the NSW railways have also contributed to education and training for isolated rural communities across the state. Two carriages were converted into **travelling schools** to assist the education of children in the outback, while special charter trains have provided promotion and education in specific fields for the general public. The first of these was the 'Australian Made Preference Train' that toured country areas in 1925 and 1926 promoting Australian products. Widely known as the 'Great White Train' its louvre wagons were fitted out for the various firms promoting their products and a cinema showed films in the evenings. It was followed by the 'Better Farming Train' in 1927, which demonstrated and promoted the results of agricultural research to farmers and graziers across the state, then the 'Reso' train provided a base for Victorian dairy farmers and representative to tour dairy farms and associated industries on the North Coast in 1929.³

² Paddison, Leonie I, 1955, p. 262.

³ Paddison, Leonie I, 1955, pp. 286-88.

More regular extension and training services were provided to rural communities by specialist organisations using railway vehicles. One such example was the mobile baby clinics operated by the **Far West Children's Health Scheme** to service the needs of families in isolated areas. The scheme was originally conceived by the Reverend Stanley Gillick Drummond in December 1924 to bring children from the Far West to the seaside to escape the heat and dust during the worst part of summer, while at the same time providing them with the educational experience of urban life. It was soon realised that medical, surgical and dental attention were also key needs of the children and the Department of Railways converted two railway carriages into clinics for the Scheme in 1931. Based at **Cobar**, the carriages were attached to mixed trains serving outback centres on a regular schedule so that parents could bring their children to the clinics for instruction and services as required. In 1938 two other carriages were converted to extend services to the **North-west line**.⁴



Parents bring their children to the Far West Children's Health Service carriage attached to a mixed train at an outback location in 1953 (National Library of Australia, A1200s L16143).

3.8.5 Making railway journeys

As noted above, a high proportion of rail journeys have been, and continue to be, made by students travelling to and from school. In the major cities, regular suburban trains enable students to travel to and from their schools and universities on a daily basis. In rural areas, a high proportion of students boarded in cities with established education facilities and made their journeys to that centre and back home again for holidays by the mail trains.

In some rural areas the railways operated special **school trains** that enabled students in smaller towns to attend high schools in regional cities. One such train was the daily school train from **Werris Creek to Tamworth**, which commenced on 30 June 1926. It was initially operated by a CPH rail motor, but the demand soon outstripped its capacity and it was replaced by a steam-hauled train in 1932. Two carriages initially sufficed, but it was built up to four cars in 1944. Former suburban end-platform carriages were introduced in the late 1950s and the train continued to run until its replacement by road coaches in 1969.⁵

4 Bruce Mitchell, 'Drummond, Stanley Gillick (1884 - 1943)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 8, Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp 345-346; McKillop, Robert F, 'Rails to the Copper City: Part 3 Decline and the Occidental revival', Article submitted to *Australian Railway History* (forthcoming).

5 Court, Joe, 'Off to school in the Tin Hare', copy of article from *Northern Daily Leader* (no date) held by the Railway Journeys Museum at Werris Creek.