V/Line accepts reports on heat speed management

ANDREW ROSE

V/Line has accepted all the recommendations in two reports commissioned to examine the management of high-speed restrictions on the state’s freight lines.

V/Line engaged Monash University’s Institute of Transport Sustainability and Central Queensland University (CQU) to carry out two independent reviews into the operation of these restrictions. Both provided recommendations on how V/Line could improve its freight network.

V/Line chief executive James Pinder said the corporation had accepted all the recommendations.

“V/Line has undertaken a detailed assessment to identify which ones could be addressed through routine and corrective maintenance and which ones would need to be addressed through the Murray Basin Rail Project.

“We know how important the freight network is for Victorian farmers and industry so we’re working hard to make sure it operates as efficiently and as safely as possible,” Mr Pinder said.

“We’ve already started work on the recommendations for technology and will have more improvements to come so farmers and operators can move more produce more often by rail.

“We will keep working with our Rail Freight Advisory Council to deliver a more customer-focused, safe and efficient rail network.”

In response to industry concerns, regular rail speed restrictions on the current timetable means much of the remaining running time is spent at maximum speed, which would be inefficient.

During the 2016-17 summer period, restrictive V/Line rail speed restrictions coincided with an unprecedented length of time, leading to a “dramatic” level of freight trains and rail travel services, which is significantly higher than those of previous years.

“We conducted a site investigation of the KVBV and KEKVIL rail corridors and used the Transport for NSW V/Line Track Safety Assessment (VTSA) process in the assessment. V/Line engineers were justified in suspending rail operations during periods of high temperature (30°C or above) and high-speed restrictions could be implemented to avoid the track condition.

“CQU also evaluated appropriate WOLO speed and temperature trigger points that would reasonably and objectively have applied for the 2016-17 summer period.

“CQU also found V/Line’s track and maintenance management was responsible for imposing restrictive WOLOs.

“A track condition determined by temperature trigger points would be reduced or whether or not to stop train operations to mitigate the assessed risk of track instability.

Interviews with the local V/Line track maintenance staff showed they followed industry standard practices and conducted maintenance on the highest-priority track defects first.

“This was conducted in compliance with the V/Line rail maintenance framework, which includes reducing the risk of fire, damage, and the assessment and maintenance of impediment (Reasonably Practicable) (SRAP),” the report found.

“The use of restrictive WOLOs incurred public criticism from rail freight providers and their customers.

“The V/Line track condition during the 2016-17 summer period was in a deteriorated state that did not permit reliable train operations. Additional track maintenance was required to improve track availability, which has been restricted due to high-speed travel.

“The V/Line investigation has identified locations on the KVBV and KEKVIL rail corridors and documented evi...

Millimetric welded rail and concrete sleepers to improve lateral track stability. V/Line reported similar findings to those of the CRE.

An inspection of the Mildura and Toowoomba lines in mid-June 2017 found the V/Line truck was trackgeometry related.

Four groups of three high-speed rail services were suspended due to high-speed rail services.

The CRE recommendations included:
- Rail joints to be maintained and lubricated in accordance with V/Line’s standard, which was not done.
- Rail gaps to be monitored between known rail gaps, which was not done.
- Inspections of rail gaps and rail gaps, which was not done.
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End

To the hot-weather months, potential high-risk areas should be assessed individually to determine the estimated stability loss and the corresponding temperature threshold.

“High-risk areas requiring earlier (lower) intervention should be assessed individually to determine the local speed restrictions applied. Once these are determined, the current temperature threshold that had been exceeded is exceeded.

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