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Draft ONRSR Guideline

Freight Rolling Stock Approvals

safe railways for Australia

Document ID:	ONRSR-674920594-2564
Version number:	Draft for consultation
Approved by:	Approved for consultation by the ONRSR Executive Team
Date approved:	7 October 2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Guideline is to provide rail transport operators with guidance on the freight rolling stock approval process. It aims to promote a common understanding of the three stages of rolling stock approval. This Guideline also outlines ONRSR's expectations and the roles and responsibilities of rail infrastructure managers (RIM) and rolling stock operators (RSO) and others in the approval process.

In addition to maintaining and improving rail safety, there is an opportunity to seek improved efficiency and productivity through minimising duplication for RSOs seeking approval to access multiple rail networks.

1.2 Disclaimer

This is a guideline only and is intended to be read in conjunction with the legislation and relevant Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) policies. The contents of this guideline impose no legal duty, and where actions or requirements are described as mandatory these reflect requirements in the Rail Safety National Law (RSNL) or Rail Safety National Law National Regulations 2012 (the National Regulations).

It is not intended to replace the provisions of the RSNL or other relevant legislation or to limit or expand its scope. In the event of an inconsistency between this guideline and the legislation, the legislation will prevail. It is recommended that you obtain your own independent legal advice about the legislation or contact ONRSR for further information, if required.

1.3 Scope

This Guideline applies to the safety assurance processes associated with the introduction of new and modified freight rolling stock and the introduction of freight rolling stock to a network on which it has not previously been operated. This Guideline covers the certification and registration of rolling stock, and network approval of trains.

This Guideline relates only to freight rolling stock (locomotives and freight wagons). It does not apply to rolling stock for passenger movements, tourist and heritage or infrastructure maintenance rolling stock.

2 Overview: rolling stock approval

There are three steps in the process to approve rolling stock. Rolling stock vehicles need to be certified as compliant with nominated rolling stock standards and relevant network interface requirements so that when configured into a train, the train is capable of being operated safely on a network. The safety assurance undertaken at each step of the approval process collectively supports the safe operation of rolling stock.

Higher levels of efficiency for RSOs may be achieved when the assurance process at each step is relied on and built upon at each subsequent step.

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While rail transport operators may use different terms to describe this process, this Guideline is based on the following three steps:

Step	Description	Roles / Responsibilities
1. Certification of rail vehicles	Engineering safety assurance process to verify the rolling stock complies with nominated standards, including rolling stock and network interface standards.	The RSO certifies that a vehicle meets defined safety and network interface requirements. The certification documentation may be used to demonstrate how risks related to rolling stock are being managed by the RSO and RIM under accreditation requirements.
2. Registration of rail vehicles	Process to review and accept the certification of rolling stock and consequently register it on a rolling stock register.	The RIM accepts the rolling stock based on the Certification of Standards Compliance and supporting certification assurance evidence, if required. The register of compliant rolling stock should provide a reliable, robust and accurate record of vehicles accepted by RIMs. Registration ensures traceability and supports ongoing safety monitoring, especially when vehicles are transferred or modified.
3. Network approval for trains	Train design and safety assurance process to validate that a train can operate safely and efficiently on a rail network.	The expected outcome is that trains approved to operate on the network, if operated as designed, will be safe and compatible. Network approval authorises specific train configurations to operate on a RIM's infrastructure, considering route-specific risks and constraints. Network Approval is dynamic and may be revised if train configurations change or new risks emerge during operation.

3 RSNL requirements related to rolling stock approvals

This section provides an overview of the requirements of the RSNL that are relevant to the approval of freight rolling stock. ONRSR has published other guidance material to assist RTOs to understand these requirements in more detail[1].

3.1 Rail safety duties

Rail transport operators (RTO) and designers, manufacturers and suppliers have safety duties under the Rail Safety National Law (RSNL). RTOs must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable (SFAIRP) the safety of their railway operations. In addition to this general safety duty, RIMs must ensure, SFAIRP, that any use of their infrastructure is done in a way that ensures safety. RSOs must ensure, SFAIRP, compliance with the rules and procedures for the scheduling, control and monitoring of rolling stock that have been established by the RIM.

Designers, manufacturers and suppliers of rolling stock have a duty to ensure SFAIRP that the rolling stock is safe, that testing is carried out to demonstrate safety and that the results of the testing are made available.

Managing risks associated with rail infrastructure or rolling stock operations is the responsibility of the person best able to control those risks[2]. As such:

- managing risks associated with construction and commissioning of new or modified rolling stock is the responsibility of the RSO in their certification process.
- RIMs are expected to assure themselves that RSOs have managed risks associated with construction and commissioning of new or modified rolling stock before registering the rolling stock to operate on their network.

3.2 Interface agreements

RTOs must include in their safety management system (SMS) procedures for:

- the identification of interface risks to the safety of railway operations; and
- the development and implementation of interface agreements; and
- monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of and compliance with interface agreements.

The RSNL also requires RTOs to identify and assess, SFAIRP, risks to safety that may arise from their operations because of, or partly because of, railway operations carried out by any other RTO[3]. The RTO

[1] For example the Guideline: Meaning of duty to ensure safety SFAIRP, Safety Management System Guideline, Fact Sheet: Notifications of change versus variations of accreditation.

[2] This is a principle of shared responsibility, accountability, and integrated risk management under section 50(4) of the RSNL.

[3] Interface agreement requirements are established in subdivision 2 of Part 6 of the RSNL. RIMs also have responsibilities to seek to enter interface agreements with road managers.

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must determine measures to manage, SFAIRP, those risks. The RTO must seek to enter into an interface agreement with the other RTO for the purpose of managing identified risks.

ONRSR expects that where risks occur at, or arise from an interface, the responsibility for risk controls is appropriately assigned and understood by all those with a role in the implementation of the control. This includes the information required by and from each party to manage risks appropriately.

Interface agreements should be in place between RSOs accessing and operating on railway managed by a RIM. Other agreements can also be incorporated into an interface agreement such as an access agreement and network rules.

ONRSR's SMS Guideline provides more guidance on the requirements for interface agreements, available at ONRSR.com.au

3.3 Notification of change

RSOs must, as a condition of their accreditation[4], notify ONRSR in writing of a decision to design or construct, or to commission the design or construction of, rolling stock as soon as is reasonably practicable after the decision is made. RSOs must also notify ONRSR in writing at least 28 days before:

- a change to a safety critical element of existing rolling stock, or
- the introduction into service of rolling stock of a type not previously operated by the operator, or
- the re-introduction into service of rolling stock not currently operated by the operator,or
- a change to a safety standard of the design of rolling stock.

ONRSR expects operators to apply their management of change processes to the changes to rolling stock listed above. A notification of change should be submitted via the ONRSR Portal.

Before submitting a notification of change to ONRSR, RTOs whose railway operations are undertaken on, or form part of, the National Network for Interoperability (NNI), should consider if there are any interoperability matters that could result from the change[5].

3.4 Variation of accreditation

The introduction of a new type of rolling stock that has not been operated before by a RSO may be a change in scope of the RSO's accreditation. If a change in the nature or the scope of a RSO's accreditation is identified, the RSO must apply to vary their accreditation. RSOs can initiate the process to apply for a variation to accreditation by completing the expression of interest (EOI) application on ONRSR's website.

4 Australian Standard: Rolling stock compliance certification

ONRSR considers a RTO's use of standards to identify and assess safety risks, and to either eliminate of minimise those risks SFAIRP. In considering which standard or standards and whether they are used appropriately, ONRSR applies the following principles:

[4] Regulation 9 of the Rail Safety National Law National Regulations 2012 prescribe conditions and restrictions on a RTO's accreditation.

[5] ONRSR publishes a guideline on the interoperability of railway operations.

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- Standards which ensure or provide a higher level of safety are to be used in preference to those that offer a lower level of safety.
- The most relevant and applicable standard is to be used, i.e. railway standards are to take precedence over standards from other industries or generic standards.
- The latest or current version of a standard is to be used in preference to a superseded version of a standard.
- Standards that are widely accepted in industry are to be used in preference to those that have limited acceptance.
- Standards from Australia are to be used in preference to standards from overseas. If Australian standards are not available or not applicable, standards from other industry, regulatory or country standards-setting bodies, associations, committees, groups or institutions are to be used instead.
- Entire standards are to be used in preference to only specific clauses, sections or parts of standards.

In respect of rolling stock approvals specifically, ONRSR encourages the adoption of *Australian Standard 7501: Rolling stock compliance certification*, (Standard) as updated from time to time. This Standard provides a method for certifying rolling stock and facilitating network registration of rolling stock.

The Standard applies to new, modified and existing rolling stock being proposed for operation on a network on which the class of rolling stock has not previously operated. The scope of the Standard covers the design, construction and testing of rolling stock. Certification of individual units of rolling stock or those which are coupled to operate is included, but not certification of trains.

In circumstances where an RTO has not adopted the standard, ONRSR will expect that it is able to provide a rationale as to why not. ONRSR will consider whether the justification provides a clear, robust and convincing argument that:

- the risks have been thoroughly assessed in accordance with the SMS of the RTO; and
- the costs associated with complying with the standard is disproportionate to the benefits.

If an RTO is to deviate from the Standard, ONRSR will consider whether the rationale provide by the RTO covers the following:

- what the deviation is
- how long the deviation will be expected to last. i.e. will the deviation be over an unknown period, over the lifetime of the system, subsystem or component it is applied to, or a definite period
- any proposal for future compliance, if relevant
- a comparison of the risks associated with the deviation versus compliance with the standard
- consideration of options or other alternatives to control the risk
- any guidance within the standard which describes the process of how deviation from that standard is to be undertaken.

5.1 What is certification?

Certification refers to the engineering and safety assurance process that confirms that the rolling stock:

- has been designed, constructed and tested to meet the minimum necessary defined performance, safety, technical and operational requirements such that it is capable of being safely operated on a network.
- has been verified and independently validated against applicable rolling stock and network interface standards[6] and safety requirements.
- is suitable for operation on the intended network under normal and degraded modes.

A RSO has completed the certification process when they are able to provide the RIM with a certificate of standards compliance building on the design compliance certificate, construction conformance certificate, the acceptance for on-track testing certificate and type test compliance certificate. The overall certification process is illustrated in Appendix A2 of AS 7501: *Rolling stock compliance certification*.

This certification process must also identify if there are non-compliances with standards, otherwise known as derogations, and require risk identification and risk controls to be agreed by the relevant RTOs. The risk assessment should be documented in the interface agreement between the RSO and the RIM.

Certification is carried out at the individual rolling stock level, not train consist level. Certification is generally performed once during the life of a rolling stock, when it is new. However, certification may also be required when rolling stock is modified[7] to confirm compliance with the relevant standards or to ensure derogation risks have been identified, assessed and controlled.

An assessment of the validity of the certification may also be required for existing rolling stock proposed for operation on a network on which the type or class of rolling stock has not previously operated.

5.2 ONRSR's expectations for certification

ONRSR expects that the certification of rolling stock will be undertaken in a manner that demonstrates robust safety assurance and compliance with the RSNL. The certification process should, at a minimum:

- demonstrate that safety risks have been identified, assessed, and mitigated SFAIRP, consistent with RSNL. This includes documentation of hazard identification through to safety requirements and final validation.

[6] Applicable rolling stock standards may include the ARISO series of Rolling Stock Australian Standards or applicable RSO standards. Applicable infrastructure or interface standards may also include ARISO Rail Infrastructure Australian Standards or applicable RIM infrastructure standards.

[7] Australian Standard 7501 defines 'modified rolling stock' as rolling stock altered in such a way that the declared compliance status for one or more requirement or recommendation clauses in the standards compliance register is as a consequence affected.

- be based on a recognised standard such as *AS7501: Rolling Stock Compliance Certification* (as updated from time to time). Where an alternative standard is used, justification must be documented and equivalence in safety outcomes must be demonstrated.
- be overseen by an Independent Competent Person (ICP) competent in rolling stock engineering. The ICP must be appointed by the RSO, approved by the relevant RIM and must operate independently of parties responsible for designing and constructing the rolling stock.
- be supported by clear, auditable documentation that provides evidence of compliance with safety and performance requirements. This includes a design specification, standards compliance register, derogations risk assessment, test results, validation reports, and ICP certification.
- address network-specific interface requirements established by the RIM, including compatibility with infrastructure, to demonstrate that the certified rolling stock can operate safely on its network.
- be consistent with the accredited RSO's SMS and support the ongoing safe operation of rolling stock. This means that the RSO's SMS needs to ensure that vehicles are certified and used within scope of the certification.

5.3 Roles and responsibilities for certification

The certification of rolling stock should be undertaken in a manner that demonstrates effective safety assurance and compliance with the RSNL. The roles and responsibilities of involved parties is outlined below.

5.3.1 Rolling stock operator

The RSO is best placed to identify, manage and control safety risks associated with the construction and commissioning of rolling stock that they operate on a network. The RSO is accountable for:

- compliance of all operated rolling stock with appropriate rolling stock standards and with interface standards for the network on which they operate.
- determining a schedule of standards, consisting of rolling stock and network standards, and providing them to the manufacturer of new or modified rolling stock
- appointing the ICP and gaining the RIM's approval of the appointment. This appointment and RIM approval should be formally documented.
- providing assurance to the RIM through compliance certification that rolling stock is compliant with the rolling stock and network standards.
    - In the case of new or modified rolling stock, this includes the Certificate of Standards Compliance issued by the ICP in accordance with AS7501: *Rolling stock compliance certification*, as a minimum, and any supporting evidence that the RIM might request to assure themself of compliance.
    - In the case of existing rolling stock to be operated for the first time on a RIM's network, the RSO must conduct renewed hazard identification and risk assessment to ensure that unacceptable safety risks are not introduced by the rolling stock on the network.
- demonstrating that safety risks have been managed SFAIRP, consistent with RSNL obligations.

Where there are non-compliances or deviations from the existing standards, a derogation risk register must be developed that includes risk assessments and controls.

The RSO's SMS needs to ensure that vehicles are certified and used within scope of the certification. The RSO must keep current records in relation to managing and controlling safety risks associated with construction and commissioning of rolling stock that they operate on a network, for audit purposes.

5.3.2 Rail infrastructure manager

The RIM is expected to assure themselves that only certified rolling stock operates on their network, meaning rolling stock that complies with the relevant rolling stock standards and rolling stock network interface standards. The RIM is accountable for:

- assessing and approving the ICP appointed by the RSO to undertake certification of the rolling stock.
- gaining assurance that the RSO's rolling stock certification process is documented and implemented. This should not require the RIM to duplicate verification work or conduct re-analysis of test and inspection data and reports produced by the RSO. Instead, RIMs should:
  - Review the certification process and, if required, obtain supporting assurance evidence from the RSO, and if satisfied;
  - Accept the ICPs Certificate of Standards Compliance
  - periodically assess RSOs' rolling stock certification processes and procedures, which could be by means of risk-based audits.
- providing RSOs with clear and transparent network interface standards to be included in the Standards Compliance Register as early as possible in the certification process. The RIM should be satisfied that the certification and supporting assurance evidence regarding rolling stock provided by the RSO adequately addresses the operational and safety interface requirements of the network.

Where rolling stock has already been certified and registered, RIMs are strongly encouraged to consider prior approvals and shared assurance evidence as part of their registration process. This approach potentially reduces duplication and inefficiency.

Recognising prior approvals is consistent with the RSNL requirement to manage safety risks SFAIRP. If a rolling stock configuration has already undergone rigorous safety assurance and has been accepted on another network, it is reasonable and practicable to leverage that evidence, provided it remains valid and relevant to the new context and all risks unique to the new context have been identified and controlled. This reinforces a risk-based, collaborative approach to safety assurance and promotes consistency, transparency, and interoperability across the national rail system.

5.3.3 Independent competent person

An ICP, appointed by the RSO and approved by the RIM, is expected to endorse nominated standards and issue compliance certificates. Refer to Section 8 for further information on expectations regarding ICPs.

5.3.4 Manufacturers

Manufacturers are expected to:

- design new or modified rolling stock in accordance with the schedule of standards provided to them by the RSO
- construct new or modified rolling stock in accordance with the design
- issue design compliance and construction conformance certificates to the RSO and ICP

- collaborate with RSOs and ICPs to gain approval for on-track testing and conduct on-track testing and commissioning of the rolling stock they have manufactured
- collaborate with the ICP to complete the rolling stock compliance certification process including issuance of the Certificate of Standards Compliance

Sometimes manufacturers, rather than an RSO, may seek to certify rolling stock for operation on a RIM's network. In such instances, the manufacturer must either be an accredited RSO for construction and commissioning or must work in partnership with an appropriately accredited RSO who holds accountability for the certification process, including appointing an ICP (see Section 8) that is independent from the manufacturer or supplier. Without this arrangement, the responsibility for certification risks is inappropriately passed to the RIM.

6 Registration of rolling stock

6.1 What is registration?

Registration is the process by which rolling stock that has been certified as complying with relevant rolling stock and interface standards by the RSO is reviewed and accepted by the RIM and recorded in a register. Only rolling stock that is certified to standards required to operate safely on a RIM network is registered by the RIM.

A Register is used to record the certification and key characteristics of rolling stock so that this information can be shared with appropriate parties. Vehicle characteristics typically include type, class, physical characteristics and equipment arrangements, performance characteristics, modification state, limitations on use, ownership details, and insurance. In addition, it includes whether the rolling stock is registered to a network and the associated operator.

When rolling stock is modified such that recorded characteristics change, the rolling stock registration must be updated.

6.2 ONRSR's expectations for registration

- Registration should be linked to the rolling stock itself.
- Registration processes should enable recognition of approvals of rolling stock by other RIMs, including certification and operational history, by de-linking vehicle data from individual RSOs.
- Rolling stock registration data should be sufficient to fully inform the processes of train service design, train compilation and network approval.

ONRSR supports national registration of certified rolling stock to aid transparency, consistency, and interoperability across networks. Wherever possible, ONRSR encourages RIMs to align registration data fields to promote consistency and enable interoperability. Harmonised data structures support efficient information exchange and reduce the risk of misinterpretation.

6.3 Roles and responsibilities for registration

The following roles and responsibilities apply:

6.3.1 Rolling stock operator

- RSOs are expected to submit registration applications to relevant RIMs, including the Certificate of Standards Compliance issued by the ICP in accordance with AS7501: *Rolling stock compliance*

certification, as a minimum, and any supporting evidence that the RIM might request to assure themself of compliance.

> If applicable, documentation on non-conforming aspects including risks and risk controls must be provided to relevant RIMs for acceptance.

> RSOs must ensure vehicle data is accurate, complete, and reflects current configuration, ownership, and operational status.

> RSOs should disclose RIM prior approvals and certification evidence, including ICP reports and compliance certificates to support mutual recognition and reduce duplication.

6.3.2 Rail infrastructure manager

> RIMs are responsible for authorising rolling stock to operate on their network.

> RIMs are expected to satisfy themselves that certified rolling stock submitted by RSOs meet network-specific operational and safety interface requirements prior to registration.

> RIMs should maintain a register or have access to a centrally managed register of approved rolling stock, including specifications, limitations, and conditions of use.

> RIMs may rely on the Certificate of Standards Compliance issued by the approved ICP as evidence of completed certification against the nominated standards, requesting additional evidence only where further risks are identified.

7 Network approval

7.1 What is network approval?

While certification and registration deal with individual items of rolling stock, network approval is the process of designing and approving trains consisting of multiple items of rolling stock. It is expected that RSOs and RIMs collaborate to design trains, but network approval of a train is conducted by the RIM to validate that a train can operate safely and effectively on their infrastructure. This process results in the train being approved to run on specific routes under defined operating conditions.

Key elements of network approval include:

> **Route approval.** This is confirmation that the train is compatible with the characteristics of the route that it is operating. Typical considerations may include route-specific limitations such as axle load and bridge load, signal spacing, loop lengths, vehicle outline restrictions and environmental risks. For routine train trips this may be performed once, using the information in the Register. For less routine flows it could be performed on a case-by-case basis.

> **Train approval**. This is to confirm that the train configuration, or combination of rolling stock in a train, is suitable for operation on the network. Typical considerations are trailing load limitations, stopping distances and requirements for locomotive multiple unit traction and braking forces. Such standards are often embedded in the network rules.

A prerequisite of network approval is that all rolling stock is certified and registered and that the rolling stock is operated on the train within its design limits, and there is an arrangement in place to maintain them in that condition.

The RIM will check that the train can operate safely and efficiently on the routes. This step in the approval process relies on previous steps that ensure that the rolling stock that makes up the train has been certified

and registered. However, certain configurations of certified and registered vehicles may not be compatible with a network when formed into a train, such as:

> Trailing configurations of approved wagons being too heavy for the tractive effort and/or ruling gradient.

> Combinations of locomotives (the locomotive consist) applying too much dynamic brake.

7.2 ONRSR's expectations for network approval

RIMs are responsible for authorising trains to operate safely and efficiently on their networks.

> The RIM is expected to have evidence that a train that is granted network approval is suitable for safe and efficient operation on its infrastructure, considering rolling stock standards and network-specific conditions and operational constraints. Assessment of suitability should consider factors including, but not limited to:
  - Track gradients and loop lengths
  - Axle loads and bridge integrity
  - Stopping distance requirements
  - Track speed versus speed limitations on rolling stock
  - Longitudinal strength restrictions and other compilation restrictions on rolling stock
  - Environmental and climatic risks
  - Operational restrictions and minimum operating standards
  - Longitudinal forces, coupler swing and wheel lateral to vertical force (L/V) ratios
  - Other operational factors such as maintenance of scheduled section running times and locomotive provisioning

> RIMs need to maintain up-to-date information on their networks. Inaccurate network information potentially undermines the safety of the certification, registration and network approval process.

> Any approval conditions should be clearly documented and communicated to relevant parties. Where feasible, ONRSR encourages harmonisation of approval conditions across networks to support consistency and reduce duplication of effort.

> Where network waivers have been issued, RIMs must retain evidence of the engineering safety assurance supporting the decision to issue a waiver/s.

7.3 Roles and responsibilities for network approval

ONRSR expects that train design and network approval of trains will be undertaken in a manner that ensures safe and efficient operation on rail infrastructure. The following roles and responsibilities apply:

7.3.1 Rolling stock operator

> RSOs must comply with train configurations authorised by the RIM.

> RSOs must ensure that rolling stock is safe to operate within train configurations authorised by the RIM.

> RSOs must disclose any modifications to or operational constraints on rolling stock that may affect train design or network approval.

7.3.2 Rail infrastructure manager

> RIMs are responsible for authorising train configurations to operate on their network.

> RIMs are expected to validate that train configurations meet network-specific operational and safety interface requirements.

> RIMs should document approval conditions and communicate them to RSOs and other relevant parties that may require visibility of approval conditions.

ONRSR encourages RIMs to harmonise approval conditions across networks managed by other RIMs where feasible to promote consistency and to reduce duplication.

8 Independent Competent Persons

The ICP plays a key technical role in completing certification documentation during the compliance certification process. ICPs should be engaged by RSOs to verify compliance with rolling stock and relevant network interface standards. In *AS7501: Rolling stock compliance certification*, the ICP:

> reviews and endorses standards compliance register and derogations

> reviews and endorses the manufacturer's interim design compliance certificate and interim construction conformance certificate

> issues compliance certificate for completed static tests

> issues certificate for acceptance for on-track tests

> issues rolling stock class type test compliance certificate

> issues Certificate of Standards Compliance

ONRSR adopts the description and requirements of an ICP as outlined in *AS7501: Rolling stock compliance certification.* Key relevant points from this standard are provided below for reference. RTOs and ICPs are encouraged to consult the standard for more detailed guidance.

The ICP is defined as a person accepted by RTOs as having practical and theoretical knowledge and experience in specified areas to critically and capably examine, determine and record compliance of new or modified rolling stock against reference standards.

ONRSR expects that ICPs will be engaged in a manner that supports objective, technically sound certification of rolling stock. The following principles apply:

> The RSO is expected to appoint an ICP and to obtain approval of RIMs for this appointment. This ensures that the ICP is appropriately recognised by both parties and that their role is clearly defined within the certification process.

> The RSO is accountable for ICP advice, endorsements and certificate issuances.

> The ICP may be employed internally and need not be an external third party, though they are expected to operate independently of the design, construction and verification functions.

> The ICP is expected to possess the necessary competence—both practical and theoretical—to critically assess compliance with the standards. The RIM may rely on the ICP's Certificate of Standards Compliance as evidence of compliance. If additional risks are identified, the RIM may request supplementary assurance or documentation to satisfy safety requirements.

This Guideline adopts the requirements for an ICP as described in *AS7501: Rolling stock compliance certification*. Key elements of these requirements include that an ICP is experienced in assessing rolling stock against standards and has experience and knowledge of referenced standards, the RSNL, relevant rail safety legislation and AS4292 *Railway Safety Management*. Other mandatory and recommended requirements from ICPs are outlined in *AS7501: Rolling stock compliance certification*.

9 Benefits of mutual recognition and information sharing

Sharing information between RTOs and mutual recognition of certification, registration and network approvals are central to streamlining rolling stock approval processes. Mutual recognition of rolling stock approvals potentially reduces administrative burden and duplication and promotes consistent safety assurance across RIMs. Productivity benefits may include reducing costs for existing and new RSOs and manufacturers, efficiency gains from faster implementation of new technologies and processes and the potential for increased competition amongst RSOs.

ONRSR supports mutual recognition of rolling stock certification, registration and approvals across RSOs and RIMs, provided that the configuration of the rolling stock remains unchanged and the safety assurance evidence is robust and traceable. Mutual recognition must be implemented without compromising safety SFAIRP.

RIMs may assist mutual recognition by undertaking a documented assessment of their network-specific conditions. This includes identifying any exceptional or non-standard features—such as steep gradients, rolling stock interfaces, or legacy infrastructure and ensuring these are addressed through additional assurance measures where necessary.

ONRSR encourages RIMs to coordinate to support consistent and efficient rolling stock approval processes across networks, without introducing or eliminating processes that result in increased risk to safety.

> RIMs are encouraged to harmonise registration and approval processes to reduce duplication and promote consistency. This includes aligning data requirements and approval criteria where feasible.

> RIMs recognise registrations by other RIMs, provided the registered rolling stock configuration remains unchanged, and network-specific conditions have been assessed and met. This supports continuity of assurance and avoids unnecessary revalidation.

> Application processes should include provisions for RSOs to disclose prior approvals and provide relevant standards compliance evidence and ICP certificates. This enables informed decision-making and supports transparency.

> RIMs are expected to coordinate on the acceptance of shared RSO test data and certification outcomes. This collaboration is expected to reduce cost, avoid delay, and promote efficient use of industry resources.

RIMs are expected to:

> Understand and document the characteristics of their network that may affect rolling stock performance or safety, and to communicate this information to RSOs seeking access to the RIM's network.

> Assess compatibility risks introduced by new or modified rolling stock, particularly where prior approvals exist but network conditions differ.

> Coordinate with other RIMs and with RSOs to ensure that rolling stock certification outcomes are shared across all applicable RIMs' approval processes.

> Use objective evidence to determine whether prior approvals can be accepted or require supplementary information, assessment or validation.

As the primary beneficiaries of increased mutual recognition of rolling stock approvals, RSOs are encouraged to establish systems for recording a time series of information which could be used to help measure the realisation of these benefits. This could include recording information about the duration of time it takes for rolling stock approvals to be processed, the administrative cost of securing rolling stock approvals, and the average age of rolling stock fleet in operation.

While this information does not form part of an RSO's mandatory reporting requirements, RSO's willingness to collect such information and make it available to ONRSR on request, will assist ONRSR in being able to monitor improvements in rolling stock approval times and identify any other potential productivity barriers.

Definitions

AS7501: *Rolling stock compliance certification*	The Australian Standard for rolling stock compliance certification, which provides a structured process for assessing rolling stock compliance with relevant standards, as updated from time to time.
Certification	Engineering safety assurance process to verify the design, construction and performance of rolling stock against a suite of rolling stock and network interface standards as per RIM requirements and RSO requirements. The signing of certification documents by qualified, competent person attesting that the design, product, or installation is in accordance with the specification requirements as verified by appropriate inspections and/or tests.
Independent Competent Person (ICP)	The ICP is defined as a person accepted by rail transport operators as having practical and theoretical knowledge and experience in specified areas to critically and capably examine, determine and record compliance of new or modified rolling stock against reference standards.
Interface requirements	Interface requirements define rolling stock compatibility with the network, for example, physical clearances to fixed infrastructure and electromagnetic compatibility with signalling systems.
Locomotive Consist	A group or arrangement of locomotives that are coupled together to power a train
Modified rolling stock	Rolling stock that has been altered in such a way that it has materially affected its compliance with safety, performance, or interface standards.
Network approval	Safety and efficiency assurance process by the RIM to validate that a train can operate safely and efficiently on the infrastructure.
New rolling stock	Rolling stock which is being designed and constructed and has not previously been registered or operated in Australia.
Rail Infrastructure Manager (RIM)	In relation to rail infrastructure of a railway, means the person who has effective control and management of the rail infrastructure, whether or not the person-

	(a) owns the rail infrastructure; or (b) has a statutory or contractual right to use the rail infrastructure or to control, or provide, access to it.
Rail Safety National Law (RSNL)	Means the Rail Safety National Law which has been enacted as a Schedule to the *Rail Safety National Law (South Australia) Act 2012* as it applies in each state and territory.
Rail Transport Operator (RTO)	A rail infrastructure manager or rolling stock operator, or a person or organisation which is both.
Registration	Safety assurance process whereby the RIM reviews the vehicle compliance information supplied by the RSO and validates that a vehicle can operate safely on the infrastructure. The vehicle information is recorded on a Rolling Stock 'Register'.
Rolling Stock	A vehicle that operates on, or uses, a railway. It includes a locomotive, carriage, rail car, rail motor, light rail vehicle, train, tram, light inspection vehicle, self-propelled infrastructure maintenance vehicle, trolley, wagon, or monorail vehicle. It does not include a vehicle designed to operate both on and off a railway when it is not operating on a railway.
Rolling Stock Operator	A person who has effective control and management of the operation or movement of rolling stock on rail infrastructure for a railway but does not include a person by reason only that the person drives the rolling stock or controls the network or the network signals.
Rolling Stock Standards	Rolling Stock Operators' and Rail Infrastructure Managers' specified requirements for rail traffic to operate on the Network.
Safety Management System (SMS)	Any system whose primary objective is to achieve safe rail operations. Under co-regulation the Accreditation Authority has the role of defining the minimum requirement for what must be included in a specific safety management system. Rail Transport Operators, Rail Infrastructure Managers and Rolling Stock Operators are free to nominate equivalent or superior standards for their safety management system.
Safety Assurance	The process of providing assurance that rolling stock meets safety standards and requirements, ensuring it can be safely introduced to the network.
So far as is Reasonably Practicable (SFAIRP)	In relation to a duty to ensure safety it means that which was reasonably able to be done, taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters (see *RSNL s47* and ONRSR's Meaning of duty to ensure safety so far as is reasonably practicable).

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