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The 2015 International convention will be held this year in Australia. It is well known that when the Australian railways were being developed in the 19th Century there was no Country-wide body to lay down standards to be adopted. To start with this resulted in different States adopting different track gauges. Three different gauges resulted – 'standard' gauge, 4ft 8½ inches, 'broad gauge' 5ft 3inches (1600 mm) and 'narrow gauge' 3ft 6 inches (1067 mm). This of course resulted in huge problems with what would now be termed interoperability – through services between the States would be impossible. A lot of work has been carried out recently to overcome the problem by building new (standard Gauge) lines and introducing the complexities of dual-gauge track. However, this did not solve the other problem, of more interest to readers – the signalling systems installed. Some States adopted route signalling, whilst others settled for speed signalling. This was discussed in Issue 210 of the NEWS.

Obviously the whole of a country the size of Australia could not be covered by a Convention lasting less than a week, so we are concentrating on Queensland, on the East Coast of the country. The majority of the 7000 km of track are to 'narrow' gauge, with some dual gauge to allow through services to Sydney in New South Wales. It is claimed that Queensland is probably the only system in the world to build its main lines with this 'narrow' gauge (though Switzerland might disagree with its extensive metre-gauge networks?). Electrified lines use the 25kV 50 Hz system (electrification systems would be another interoperability problem between states).

The Convention is based on two centres, firstly Brisbane, the State capital, where the visit will be concentrated on the urban services. The Convention will then transfer to Rockhampton, uniquely by a 'narrow' gauge tilting train that has a maximum speed of 160 km/h. Topics involved in the Rockhampton visit include the Heavy Haul Coal Freight system.

As light relief there would be opportunities to visit the Great Barrier Reef, or perhaps Uluru?

Tony Rowbotham
Deputy Editor

Front Cover: This photograph shows a section of the new avoiding line including a turn-back siding that has been built for Victorian Regional Railways between Melbourne and Geelong. The turn-back siding sits between the Down Line to Geelong on the left and the Up line to Melbourne on the right. At the end of the turn back siding is short stretch of track that forms a separate stabling siding for tampers and suchlike machinery. This in turn is protected by a "Home" signal that shows red over red as the stop aspect and a miniature yellow below for the move into the stabling siding. The turn-back siding is protected from the stabling siding by a derailer and low speed ground signal.

Photo Tony Howker

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