

We returned from our annual visit to the Hong Kong Toy Fair and factory visits to our manufacturers in China mid January. Generally the news from our factories has been good and positive. There are some down sides however so we'll start with them. After that the news only gets better.

Price rises: Both of our Chinese contractors have advised that, because of government mandated wage rises for lower paid workers, (that is the girls who assemble the goodies) there will be an almost across the board price rise of around 20% for both product and new tooling. This is on top of other similar hits we have taken over the past three years. We will do our best to absorb some price rises but this will not be possible on all products.

While we cannot speak for others in the industry we can only assume that they will have similar price rises from their suppliers. Unfortunately some major price rises are inevitable. The only thing that is keeping the industry stable at the moment is the strong A\$. If it falls for any reason then things become seriously difficult. Fortunately for Austrains at least most of our new tooling is already paid for or will be very soon so at the moment we are only bothered by product price rises.

Delayed product: An interesting meeting transpired in Hong Kong on 6th January. For some time we have been having trouble communicating with and getting product from our former major supplier in China. This delayed the delivery of four projects for which the tooling was either complete or almost finished. Over the last year communication with this company was at times non existent and many times the answers to questions asked bordered on either total rubbish (putting it politely) or gobbledygook. The situation could not continue and apparently the hierarchy of the company also knew that something was drastically wrong. In November a new CEO was appointed. I demanded a meeting with him and so found myself on that Friday sitting at a boardroom table facing five executives and a squirming engineer who was being asked to explain why many Austrains projects were, despite numerous promises, running up to five years late. The upshot of the meeting was that new reporting systems have been put into place and a production schedule has been agreed upon which will see all outstanding Austrains projects with this company now made to a strict schedule which will see them all produced during 2012. We have no reason to distrust the word of the new management and believe that this schedule will be adhered to allowing for the usual factory problems which occur everywhere.

The projects affected are:

American End Platform Cars:

81/ G / BL Diesel locos.

SOC Ore wagons.

Y class rerun.

As this is being written we have just taken delivery of the PMX 'Out of Gauge' Steel Wagons and GME Container wagons. The only new Austrains product to be shipped from that factory during 2011.

More troubles in China.

As this is being written news has just come through that a major contractor to some of the biggest names in the model railway and diecast model industry has just filed for bankruptcy. While no Aussie model railway manufacturers seem to be affected at least two of the big names in Australian diecast cars are listed as clients of the now kaput company. This will put further pressure on the availability of tooling and production time as the American and European companies who have projects with the now defunct company seek new manufacturers.

So: Here is the good news.

American End Platform Passenger Cars. First production under the new arrangements will be the American End Platform Passenger Cars, generically known as the FO's. These have been signed off and production will begin immediately after the factory returns from Chinese New Year holidays. That will get them here some time in June, probably late June rather than early. We are almost 100% certain of this delivery schedule. Because of the delay we have extended the Advance Order price until the end of March, 2012. A six car set of FO's will cost \$595.00 on Advance Order. This price can be held by a deposit of \$100.00. After that the price will rise to a level as listed below. A premium applies to the price of FO two car sets ordered separately to six car sets. This premium does not apply to two car sets containing CCA cars. **From 1st April, 2012** the price of the FO cars will be \$640.00 per set of six. Two car sets and CCA sets will be \$220.00 per pack. Two car packs ordered separately will be \$260.00. [<link to order page>](#) Instead of restricting purchasers to one or two particular sets the coaches in each set will be un numbered but each set will be supplied with a booklet with a history of the cars and a list of coaches which made up each set. A decal sheet covering all possible cars will be provided with each set of cars for the purchaser to make up a set as they choose. These are really neat little coaches. A train of six is around four feet long (suitable for almost every layout) and they were hauled at some time or place by almost every steam locomotive on the NSWGR and most first generation diesels.

A complete history of these coaches is contained in the book Coaching Stock of the NSWGR volume 2. (Still in print from Eveleigh Press and a must read for everyone modeling the railways of NSW).

The production run of the American End Platform Cars will be limited to 720 six car sets only plus CCA sets and add ons. No rerun is likely in the near future.

Other New Products:

The 81 / G / BL: We have received the first tooling test shot for this model. As usual there are modifications to be made especially around the window area but the test shots at least look like what they are supposed to represent and the modifications are relatively minor compared to many previous models. The factory has agreed to prioritise this project and we are confident that they will deliver now as promised around October this year. We are holding the price of the 81 / G / BL at \$295.00 until the models arrive. If we were to start the project now they would be around \$350.00 or more. If anyone doesn't want to wait we will refund your deposits or swap for other product.

SOC Ore wagon and variants: This project consists of basically two types of wagons, as originally built and as running today as ROQF between Cobar and Port Pirie with fiberglass Eco tops. Many original SOC wagons also operated along the East Coast of NSW and we are told also in WA so the model has a wide range of uses. The SOC will be sold in packs of eight units. A special pack of SOC wagons numbered for those that ran in NSW will be part of the range. So, all you SA modelers who always bemoan the fact that nobody makes anything for you. Here is your chance to prove us all wrong.

The SOC will be the last of the new tooling models at Sanda Kan to go into production. This will be late in the year. There will be no shortage of wagons so at the moment we are not taking advance orders. Final costings on the project are still being calculated. Prices will be announced when we open the order book.

Re Runs:

Y class: At last we can announce that the long awaited rerun of the Y class is underway. The factory has promised us delivery around July, 2012. Despite massive production price rises since we last ran the Y class the price will be held to \$295.00. The loco will be the standard version only in VR & V/Line colours. There will be no sound.

Advance orders will open in March.

New Arrivals:

GME Original Container wagon. [< link to GME photo >](#)

When the first dedicated container ships arrived in Sydney in early 1969 they discharged at the new container terminal at White Bay. In their wisdom the powers that be decreed that containers would be stuffed and unstuffed (that's packed and unpacked to you non shipping types) at a new depot at Chullora, some 20 miles distant. To transport these shiny new boxes the NSWGR converted 16 UME type Flat wagons to GME Container wagons each carrying two of the 20' variants. The usual load was MHG / 16 container wagons / MHG hauled by a single 44 class.

As containerisation progressed and more suitable wagons were developed the GME's were used as individual wagons for general container transport. A regular use was to transport 2 x 20' containers to any of the regional freight depots set up around the state. Some of the wagons were still in use in the mid / late 1980's.

Our MLE wagon was originally designed with a conversion to these two wagons in mind. Each GME will be fitted with two 20' containers of the original design with appropriate logos. ACT, OCL and ANL. The containers will also be available separately.

PMX 'Out of Gauge' Steel wagon. [< link to PMX photo >](#)

With an increase in the early 1960's of the maximum sheet width coming out of the Pt Kembla Steelworks to 10'6" the railways needed a wagon to carry this width sheet without resorting to expensive well type wagons or difficult to schedule 'Out of Gauge' trains.

Perway Workshops were given the task of converting 13 wagons from HME type Flat wagons. Originally coded PME, they were later recoded PMX for bogie exchange. The support frame was designed to be removable, the load braces attached to the deck by clips. The support frame is set at an angle of 26.6 degrees. Some of these wagons are still operational under Pac. Nat. ownership.

Opening price for the PMX will be \$160.00 for a pack of three. For the GME \$150.00. This will be a promotional price only and will last for sales up to the end of 2012. After that the price will rise by at least 10%.

LHO Passenger Brake Van and KP Mail Sorting Van. Both of these items have been designed to complement the FS / BS cars in the composition of mail trains. The LHO can also be used wherever a Passenger Brake Van is required for trains from the early 1960's onwards. The new vans are being sold in a three pack with an FS coach. **Retail price is \$330.00 per pack.** Unfortunately Pack KL 1 is already **Sold Out.**

Oil Tankers: The new four wheel Oil Tankers arrived in June. **Pack OT5 is already Sold Out.** Pack OT3 is in very short supply. We expect that all will be gone by the middle of the year.

At present there is no plan to rerun the Oil Tankers. The wagon packs of three are \$99.00. [< link to photos. >](#) Those with even the slightest knowledge of Oil Tankers will know that we have entered a minefield here and no matter what we do it is impossible to do a range that covers everything. There was just no standardisation of four wheel Oil Tankers. So, we have done a tank car based on a real wagon, in this case the ex Shell version preserved at the RTM Thirlmere and wear the flack for the multitude of not quite correct models which derive from it. Early sales show that the bulk of our customers are happy with this arrangement. To placate the purists the models will be marketed in the Basix range.

[< link to order page >](#)

New Releases: The FS / BS / BSR Coaches. The NSWGR Steel Bodied country passenger cars the FS (second class) and BS (first class) cars along with the later Buffet Car conversion the BSR are now in stock. These coaches were the backbone of the NSW Mail Trains and other country services from the 1930's when they were introduced until the 1980's when the NSWGR went mad and got rid of loco hauled passenger services. These cars are the first of a series to be released over the next eighteen months covering coaches which would have been used on NSW Mail and Country passenger trains during the 1930's through to the 1980's.

Three different packs were offered. Only two remain. We now have no sets containing the BSR Buffet Car. The interior of the cars has been moulded in a neutral colour. Those wishing to repaint the interior and add passengers will find the body very easy to remove. A small switch under the cars operates the lights.

The introductory price of three for \$300.00 per pack has now finished. The new price is \$330.00 until sold out. Order forms are now available. [< link to order page >](#).

Packs SC-1 and SC-2 are now Sold Out. Only about 40 packs of SC-3 Tuscan & Russet are left as at mid January.

More Coaches: 2013 will also see the release of two LFX 49'3" Dog Box coaches. These will come with two different roof styles, Mansard and Semi elliptical.

And for our Victorian customers; work has also commenced on a set of VR coaches. We can now announce that these will be the PL cars: APL, BPL & BCPL. These will be released without fanfare at the first Victorian exhibition we attend after they are finished but because of numerous other commitments it is unlikely that they will arrive before early 2013. No advance orders will be taken. Expected price will be around \$350.00 for a three car pack.

Flat Top T / P class: KCR 51 class.

Design drawings for the Flat Top T class and the P class are now complete and tool making will commence immediately after the factory returns from CNY holidays. Priority will be given to the T and P class. The KCR version will follow a few months behind. The factory has advised that initial tooling test shots will be available in April. It would be nice to have some samples available for inspection at the HBMRC exhibition at Easter but this is a real long shot. Orders for the Flat Top T and P class are now open [< link to order page >](#). **The VR Blue Flat Top T class production run will be limited to 720 pieces only over six different numbers.** (Yes, that's right. 720 pcs.) No rerun is planned. If you do not pre order there is a very good chance that you will not get what you want. **As at mid January we are around Half Sold on the Flat Top T.** There will be no limitation on P class or KCR numbers. Under pressure from certain parties we will do the Pink Oz Ride T class if we can rustle up 144 expressions of interest. (At the moment the orders stand at 9 pieces.) That is the absolute minimum the factory will do if I beg and grovel. If you want one let us know.. There will be two prices for the Flat Top T and P class. For fully paid orders the price will be \$300.00. A \$100.00 per unit deposit will hold your order but the price will be \$330.00. Both types of orders will be treated equally. Fully paid orders will not be given any priority but we will stop taking orders once the figure of 720 pieces is reached. **Please note that fully paid orders without delivery charges will not be accepted.**

Austrains goes international. In conjunction with the Flat Top T class project, we will be making the Kowloon – Canton Railway 51 class diesel electric loco. The first two of these locomotives were built by Clyde Engineering in 1955. They were based largely on the T class locomotives then under construction for the Victorian Railways. A further three units followed in 1957. The Hong Kong locomotives were basically the same design as the VR T class but fitted with a 12 cylinder engine. No. 51 is preserved in the Hong Kong Railway Museum but with modifications which appeared only late in the locos lives. The other four have been returned to Australia to become the CFCLA TL class. There are some dimensional differences in the length but these can be compensated for during the design phase.

The Austrains model will feature the locos as they were in various stages of their careers. This mainly involves colour schemes, various exhaust stacks. After discussions with some Hong Kong railway enthusiasts it has been decided not to do the later version with handrails. Sound will now not be an option but the facility will be there for those who like such toys. The model is being made with the cooperation of the KCR which is gratefully acknowledged.

Expected delivery last quarter 2012.

Orders for the KCR version (see below) will open until mid year. Three shops in Hong Kong will also be handling the product.

Coming Releases:

Future Product:

Fifteen new items of four wheeled goods rolling stock are currently under design or tooling. These will be released in three groups over the next fifteen or so months. Two batches will be NSW and one VR.

Test shots of the first of these wagons were returned from the factory with us in January. They are the NSW 10' wheelbase:

CW Cattle Wagon.

CV Covered Van.

PV Powder / Explosives Van.

These comprise the first of the 10' wheelbase batch. Following about six weeks behind will be something really special: The **GSV 4 wheel Sheep Van**. For many years we have wanted to do this wagon but found the technology lacking. Etching, by its nature, does not form round bars. You can only etch flat. Now a very clever engineer in China has developed a way to mould round metal bars into the plastic sides of a Sheep Van. The same process is being used on the Eureka Models BSV Bogie Sheep Wagon so the two models will look compatible when running together. This is possibly a world first in model manufacture. Already we have used the process to mould a single metal rod into the side of the CW Cattle wagon.

And check out the second roof on the CW, CV and GSV. Just like the real thing the models have two roofs, one built into the body and a second of corrugated iron with an insulating air gap between.

Production of the first batch of four wheelers will begin immediately after Chinese New Year holidays. Orders will open April.

The CW Cattle Wagon will be available in packs of six. Three different packs totaling eighteen wagons.

The CV and PV will be in a pack of four comprising 3 x CV and 1 x PV. Two different packs.

Prices will be set when we receive final costings from the factory.

The second batch of wagons will be made up of 11' wheelbase NSW 4 wheelers comprising:

LV Louvred Van in four versions.

And because the former four footed passengers of your CW's, GSV's and BCW's require transport on their posthumous journey from the abattoirs there will be three variations of NSW meat carrying wagons.

MV Meat Van.

ICV Insulated Covered Van

SRC Refrigerator Van.

For the historically minded there is a great restored MV complete with original meat hooks hanging from the internal roof in the small museum at Tenterfield station in Northern NSW. OK, the roof hasn't quite been restored correctly (too much overhang) but the rest of the wagon has been beautifully looked after.

Now if that lot of four wheelers doesn't look good behind the newly announced Eureka Models 50 class Standard Goods engine you are beyond hope.

The new **Victorian** four wheelers will be announced in the next newsletter. We won't say what they are at the moment but if you look at the above list and apply it to Victoria you are getting pretty close.

Stock NR class:

In the last run we ordered enough NR's in all first run liveries to last some time however we have no 'Ghan' or 'Indian Pacific' models in the old livery left. Those who still want these items, sorry, you have procrastinated too long. NR's in 'Southern Spirit' livery are in stock but these stocks are very low.

NR 84 'Southern Cross'

NR 85 'Southern Spirit'

Price of all NR models is \$275.00.

And again The NR: Just as we were planning on putting the NR tooling away for a long holiday the phone rang from GSR to tell us that six more locos are being repainted in new liveries. These will be two new liveries for the 'Indian Pacific' and 'Ghan' and now one also for 'Overland'. NR18 is in Chullora workshops in Sydney has been

repainted in the new IP colours however nothing further has occurred. Six locos were scheduled to be painted by the end of last year but we will not start design or production of the new liveries until all locos have been repainted. This is to avoid the likelihood of the final paint jobs and decoration not matching the original design specs. It has happened before and we were almost caught so best to play it safe.

Stock Items:

C class: In stock available in **VR – V/Line** colours in the ‘Basix’ range.

Price \$195.00

[< link to photo >](#) [< link to order page >](#)

NSWR 80 class: In stock available in **Tuscan, Reverse, Freightrail Blue** and **Pacific National** colours in the ‘Basix’ range. **Price \$195.00**

[< link to photo >](#) [< link to order page >](#)

CL / CLP: In stock available in **AN Silver - Green - Yellow, ANR Maroon & Silver, AN Green** and **QR National**.

Price \$275.00

[< link to photo >](#) [< link to order page >](#)

X class: In stock available in **VR – V/Line & QR National**.

Price \$275.00

[< link to photo >](#) [< link to order page >](#)

C35 / NN class: The QSI sound versions are most impressive and while we will have good stocks of all C35 / NN variants it is likely that the sound versions will sell out first. Some sound versions are getting very low. The price of the C35 / NN is now \$475.00 for the non sound version and \$575.00 for QSI sound fitted. Some items of sound fitted locos are now Sold Out including preserved engine 3526, but in general no problems. [< link to order page >](#)

C36 class: All listed items are in stock except for two DCC fitted engines which are Sold Out. We have ordered enough C36 models to last some time. A working headlight has been fitted, the rods and valve gear have been upgraded to stainless steel and provision has been made in the tender for a DCC decoder. Knuckle couplers are fitted to the tender and the fitting of longer couplers, if required, is made simple by having a standard coupler box moulded into the tender. The C36 is available with the option of a factory fitted decoder for an additional \$45.00. Price for the C36 will be **\$395.00** standard and **\$450.00** with decoder. This pricing will ensure that the C36 remains the least expensive high quality Australian steam locomotive available for some time into the future. 750 units of the rerun have been made with the factory decoder which works quite well. [< link to order page >](#)

VR - V/Line – SAR - ANR ELX Open Wagon and variants.

Price for this run of the ELX / ESX is \$ 160.00 per pack of three. [< link to photo >](#) [< link to order page >](#)

WHX Wheat Hopper: Four different sets are being offered. Two are ex factory silver, one has ‘Manildra Flour Mills’ on one side and ‘Manildra Starches’ on the other as per the prototype. Another set is decalced with the Sun Rice logo for Rice Traffic. These models are being sold in sets of four as per the order form. Price is \$220.00.

[< link to photo >](#) [< link to order page >](#)

NSWGR MLE Flat Wagon & variants.

The **NSWGR MLE Flat Wagon** and its variations the **TME Pipe Carrier** and the **FME LCL container wagon** are still available however: The TME sales have surprised us and this version is now **sold out**. Also **sold out** is **FME pack** with assorted coloured containers. We still have good stocks of pack D with yellow Melbourne – Sydney containers and of the packs of six separate containers. The MLE and its variants are moulded in diecast zinc alloy with plastic detail components. This gives them plenty of rolling weight which makes them sit on the track a lot better than previous all plastic or resin examples. The retail price for a three pack of FME’s with a six container load is \$195.00. A three pack of unloaded MLE’s is \$145.00. We also have available the LCL containers off the FME, with different numbers, in a separate six pack for \$30.00. [< link to photo >](#) [< link to order page >](#)

VR - V/Line Cement Hoppers: All Cement Hoppers are now **Sold Out** except for some packs of VR and V/Line livery. The Cement Hopper tooling will now be put into storage while we concentrate on other products. If you want any Cement Hoppers better not wait. **Retail price is \$149.50 per pack of three and by todays pricing that is seriously good value..**

[< link to photo >](#) [< link to order page >](#)

Office Hours: Austrains is a business like any other. Just because the office is at home does not give customers open slather to phone at all hours of the day or night. Although the situation has improved we are still getting calls at what normal people would consider to be ridiculous hours. If I have a reputation for being abrupt or grumpy is it any wonder when some lunatic phones at 6.30am to complain that his loco doesn't work because it fell off the layout last night, or another rings at 7.40am on a Sunday morning and continues to talk over the top of me despite me telling him that I was standing dripping wet after just coming out of the shower (that ain't a pretty sight) or another rings at 7.30pm just as I am sitting down to a much anticipated steak and wonders why he copped an earful. Give us a break. An increasing number of people appear not to have learned or been taught any social skills whatsoever. Our office hours are 9.00am to 5.00pm EST or EDT Monday to Friday. If the office is unattended the phone is usually switched through to a mobile. If you can't phone during that period please, save me the stress and send an email or a letter or a carrier pigeon. Or an owl if you are a Harry Potter fan.

Exhibitions:

During 2012 Austrains will be attending the following exhibitions:

Note that some dates are still awaiting confirmation:

3rd – 4th March.

Forestville, NSW.

North Shore Railway Modellers Assoc. Inc.
Forestville Memorial Hall,
Cnr Warringah Rd & Starkey St, Forestville, NSW.
Sat: 9.00am – 5.00pm Sun: 9.00am – 4.00pm

31st March – 1st April.

Canberra. ACT

Canberra Model Railway Club. Inc.
University of Canberra High School,
Baldwin Ave, Kalleen, ACT.
Sat: 9.00am – 5.00pm Sun: 9.00am – 4.00pm

7th – 9th April.

Collingwood. VIC

Hobsons Bay Model Railway Club.
Collingwood College, (entrance off Campbell St.)
Hoddle St, (entrance off Campbell St.)
Collingwood, VIC
Sat: 10.00am – 5.00pm Sun: 10.00am – 5.00pm Mon: 10.00am – 4.00pm

26th May – 27th May.

Albury. NSW

Murray Railway Modellers
Mirambeena Community Centre,
19 Martha Mews, Lavington
Lavington, NSW.
Sat: 9.00am – 5.00pm Sun: 9.00am – 4.00pm

9th – 11th June.

Epping MRC.

Brickpit Sports Stadium,
Dartford Rd, Thornleigh. NSW
10.00am – 5.00pm

Dates to be confirmed: August.

Canberra.

ACT Model Railway Soc. Inc.
Malkara Special School
Wisdom St, Garran, ACT.
Sat: 9.00am – 5.00pm Sun: 9.00am – 4.00pm

Dates to be confirmed: August.

Melbourne.

Australian Model Railway Assoc. Vic. Branch
 Caulfield Racecourse,
 Station St, Caulfield East.
 Sat: 9.00am – 6.00pm Sun: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Dates to be confirmed. September.**Newcastle.**

Our Town Model Railway Club
 Newcastle Racecourse,
 Chatham Rd, Broadmeadow
 Represented by Barnes Hobbies.

30th September – 1st October:**Liverpool.**

Australian Model Railway Assoc. NSW. Branch
 E.G. Whitlam Centre
 Memorial Ave, Liverpool, NSW.

Dates to be confirmed:**Croydon, VIC.**

Croydon Model Club.
 Kalinda Primary School,
 Kalinda Rd, Ringwood, VIC.
 Sat: from 9.00am. Sun: from 10.00am.

The above is subject to alteration but should remain firm

Warranties:

All Austrains products are covered by a 12 month Replacement warranty. In other words we replace rather than repair most items returned to us under warranty. This warranty only applies to items sold by Austrains or by an authorised Austrains retailer. We are currently disputing a warranty claim made by a customer in Queensland for a locomotive purchased in supposed new condition from a retailer who apparently claimed to be an authorised Austrains retailer. It appears that the loco was second hand and the retailer was most definitely not an authorised Austrains dealer. Nor are items purchased second hand over ebay covered by warranty. Be careful. Check the Austrains dealer list on this web site before purchasing a supposed new product.

Our arrangement with Retailers: Please take note of this to avoid missing out on some models:

For a peaceful life our preference would be to supply all our product to retailers from day one and allow them to do all sales while we disappear into a contented semi retirement. However this is just not a viable option for any manufacturer who wishes to expand their range and stay in business. The reasons for this are many and complicated. Suffice to say that the reason there are so few Austrains retailers usually relates to the inability of many of the retail trade to carry the amount of stock we deem necessary to promote the range as we wish to see it promoted. Current Austrains retailers have proven that they can do the job for us and we are happy to continue supplying them as we can. Surprisingly there are a few retailers who would probably qualify for an Austrains franchise but have never approached us. That is their loss.

The other part of this equation is that the cost of new tooling in China is horrendously expensive. To offset this initial cost we need a markup on cost better than we can get by just supplying retailers. This is why we direct market. Not all Austrains products, especially new tooling items, are available immediately to the retail network. Rolling stock items are especially expensive to tool compared to the retail return which can be made on them. So, while you may walk away with a happy heart after placing an order for a new Austrains product with your friendly neighborhood hobby shop that does not guarantee that you will get it. We have even had recent examples of orders being placed with retailers who are not Austrains authorised dealers. In these cases those placing the orders missed out completely. Austrains retailers are aware of these conditions when they accept a franchise. Please check availability before placing an order for advance delivery with a retailer.

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