



AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY (WA DIVISION) Inc
trading as

RAIL HERITAGE WA

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Rail Heritage WA is delighted to announce that we have won the right to preserve, restore and own the former Commonwealth Railways' locomotive GM1.

GM1, named "Robert Gordon Menzies" and in its traditional Commonwealth Railways maroon and silver livery, has been gifted to the society by the Australian Government.

GM1 will be brought together with the standard gauge passenger carriages which Rail Heritage WA has restored and made available for operation. Our society already owns a train of ex-Commonwealth railways carriages, some gifted previously to us and others which we purchased. We have previously fully restored several of the most significant cars, including the first carriage built for the trans-Australian line in 1917. We operated these cars as the "Federation Train" in 2001, hauled then by GM1. Our restoration was so good, especially of the 1917 dining car, that the cars were then hired by the commercial operator of the "Spirit of the West" dinner train.

The Australian Government, through the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, asked for expressions of interest in 2009 from parties interested in owning GM1. Our society prepared a detailed submission pointing out

- the historical importance of the trans-Australian line to WA
- our proved record of restoration and operation of heritage trains
- our museum at Bassendean, now operating continuously for over 35 years
- how appropriate it would be to celebrate important anniversaries of the interstate railway with this iconic unit.

GM was built in 1951 by Clyde Engineering, now a part of Downer Group. It was the first critical step in modernisation of the Nullarbor railway. The line through the centre, so long fought for by Sir John Forrest and other WA pioneers, was a vital link, especially in wartime. However, it was an inefficient link in steam days and it is only since dieselisation and then extension of the standard gauge to opposite coasts that this line has turned into today's busy freight route carrying over 80% of east-west interstate goods.

GM1 was the first mainline diesel locomotive in Western Australia and the first interstate diesel in Australia.

There are many details still to be decided, but our society plans a staged program to maximise community benefit from this historic locomotive and train:

1. **Restoration of GM1** to achieve certification for being towed on main lines, so that GM1 becomes mobile again to take it anywhere needed for display. Its base will be our museum at Bassendean in WA, where we have our skilled volunteers
2. **External restoration** of the locomotive and placement on **prominent display** in our Railway Museum – a key exhibit. This will open the opportunity for significant upgrade of the museum to incorporate a standard gauge display
3. **Operational restoration** of GM1 to working order and accreditation/certification for operation on special occasions. For example, we can celebrate centenary events related to the trans-Australian railway, hopefully in co-operation with kindred bodies interstate.

Of course there are challenges as well as the opportunities. GM1 is not currently certified even for towing on main lines, so we have to engage a contractor to bring it to this minimum standard before it can be moved. Returning the locomotive to full operating condition will also almost certainly require more work by firms with the necessary expertise and facilities, involving significant costs. Upgrading the Bassendean museum to afford an appropriate display will also involve considerable work and cost. However, this was a special opportunity to acquire such a significant locomotive, capable of return to operation. It will allow us to both upgrade your museum to present a vital part of WA's railway heritage – the link to the rest of the nation – and to celebrate that link in the most appropriate way.

Rail Heritage WA extends its thanks to the Department of Infrastructure and Transport for entrusting us with GM1, and looks forward to the future with the iconic train which we can now assemble and restore.
