

POWERLINE UPDATE

Volume 1 Issue 1

January 1999

Update on Powerline Products and Production.

This is the first edition of the POWERLINE UPDATE. This UPDATE will supersede the irregular production of information about Powerline Products. We are moving at a rate with new production that we are leaving our customers and retailers behind. Hence the need to provide regular updates.

The UPDATE will be produced on a regular monthly bases and extra copies are available for retailers who have customers who would like a copy.

No exact format of the UPDATE has been decided on at the present time, rather it will try and become an information sheet for sellers and buyers of Powerline products.

Change in Distribution.

From 1 January 1999 all Powerline Distribution will take place from Melbourne. Roger Jones, due to pressure of his new business has had to relinquish doing this service from his base in Sydney. Roger has also advised that he is unable to do any work as a Sales Representative outside the Sydney area. He will continue with the Sydney area for at least the next three months. The pressure of running his new business is proving that there is only 24 hours in each day and 7 days in a week.

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Change in Personnel.

Powerline Models Pty. Ltd. Was formed by Bev. Jones over 10 years ago. She was joined by her husband Roger in the company and for seven year they ran the company. They sold the business a little over 3 years ago to Brian & Valerie Comport.

Since selling the company Roger & Bev. were still active in the running of the company and in recent times Roger was the Research & Development Officer and Sales Representative in NSW for Powerline and Bev. did the dispatch of Powerline products.

Roger and Bev. have always had a desire to be in show business. By this we mean running a model passenger carrying railway. They use the Thomas the Tank Engine theme. After a couple of years of false starts they have now established their theme model railway at Vicary's Winery on the western outskirts of Sydney. The new railway opened in October.

When Roger travelled to Hong Kong in October with Ian & myself, I mentioned that there was only 24 hours in each day and I estimated that in three months he would have dire problems with time. Roger did not seem to think so. But time has proved me correct. In two months Roger was out of time. The railway is progressing very well and in 2 months got to where Roger estimate it may be in six months. The track is in

and running, the shop is open on the site. The upshot is Roger is out of time.

By mutual agreement Roger has scaled down his R&D role to a position of a consultant to our new R&D officer. He has had to completely give up the wholesale distribution side (this is now all done from Melbourne) and to help Powerline out will still be our sales rep. for the Sydney area for at least the next 3 months. If things keep going the way they are now, he should have run out of hours in the day by then.

All of you are welcome to visit Roger & Bev. at their new site. Take a ride behind Thomas. If you are visiting Sydney take a little drive out to Vicary's Winery. If you need details just let us know and we will fax/post you a map. I know Roger & Bev. Would be delighted to see you. They are open 7 days a week during school holidays and Saturday, Sundays & Public Holidays at other times. 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

PRODUCTION UPGRADES

"The Big Locomotives"

We call the 81 Class / BL Class / G Class the big locomotives to distinguish them from the 48 Class locomotives. Saves putting the full title in place all the time.

A lot of new tooling has been put in place in the last 3 months. I went to Hong Kong with Roger Jones and my son Ian in October with the express purpose of getting everything correct for these locomotives.

Whenever you produce a completely new mechanism you must expect some problems. But we got more than we bargained for and more. It is Murphy's law that what ever will go wrong, happens and once you have one problem, more will surface.

We received advance tests of the new mechanism, tested them, ran them at Liverpool 1997 and everything was fine. They had good power, excellent traction, and could pull a huge load.

That is were it finished going right. The traction tyres were produced from a new die. Of course we had to have a batch of faulty one. But even worse we brought the initial shipment out by air. We then had a heat/cold problem with the tyres. They expanded. Use of a freezer and an oven proved what had happened. Solution, reword die and make tire about .5mm smaller. Problem solved. Locomotives with new tyres run very well.

But next the die that had been used for making locomotives wheels started to make wonky wheels. This with the tyres gave no end of problems. Solution. Make a new wheel tool and assembly tool. Costs money but will get it right. The final shots from the new tool landed in Australia 7th. January 1999.

Thought you had had the last of the problems. Never it always happens in big numbers. The PC Board. Carefully worked out. Same as another big name brand. We got the same problems but in spades because of how our motors were set up. The power for the lights drained power from the motor. Result. Motors starved of power and therefore went too slow. Solution: We had a new unique PB Board developed that gives full

power to the motors. (called SM2) Also this board gives direct power to the lights. But then there was another problem.

Not enough light goes to the lights on the locomotives. Why? First because of the PC Board. (known as SM1) there was a voltage drain which affected the motor(s) and the light globes. This was solved with the SM2 PC Board. But still not good enough. Research & development went back to the drawing board. The light guides were produced so that you would not be able to see them in the cab. But with our new cab set up this was not a problem. Solution: increase the size of the light guides. This we have done for the 81 Class and we are currently changing the G/BL light guides.

Anything else to hold up things? Yes a small matter of the wires from the PC Board to the motor. They keep breaking. Opening up the locomotives does not help this and the wires get jammed when reassembling. On the first curve they can break again. The solution: heavier grade wire used and a modification to the placement of the wires. This involves drilling holes in the motor unit and passing the wires through them. We need to put out details of how this can be done. Perhaps next issue.

48 / 830 Class Locomotives. (Mk 1 version)

The test shots of the alterations to this locomotive have been received in Melbourne. This includes alteration to the motor housing to accommodate the new electric motor, removal of covers that stopped the previous motors circulating air around the motor, repositioning the light holder and alterations to the chassis.

The new wheel tool that has been made for the "Big Locomotives" driving wheels will also be used in the production of the 48 / 830 Class wheel sets and also use the new tyres tool. This standardizes the tyres used by Powerline. One tyre fits all locomotives.

NEW PRODUCT NEWS

West Coast Railway Coaches.

The first decoration samples have been received in Melbourne. The colours are good but there were a number of minor changes needed to the actual lettering.

We are producing the BS Economy Coach with two different numbers and a BRS Snack Bar Coach.

New decorations samples are due later this month from Hong Kong. Small point, the underframe and bogies of West Coast Railway coaches are a light grey. They do not always look like this after some use. But this is the official colour scheme. We are going to try and have them run in grey. (and it is a very light grey.)

V/Line Corporation Coaches.

Samples of the decoration were received at the same time as the West Coast Railway coach samples.

We have a big problem with these coaches. The position of the lettering appears to differ from coach to coach. We will have to standardise on one coach. But for all those rivet counters, you cannot have it both ways. We cannot produce variations from coach to coach.

We also have problems with colour. It is hard to get it correct. Every coach is slightly different, and everyone has a different idea of what the correct colour should be or what he or she thinks it should be.

To take it to the final degree we have taken the samples into Spencer Street and matched the colours against coaches in the platforms. We think we have it right. Time will tell. But even though the colours are a little out, they look great.

We have made the BS coach with three different numbers.

New Couplers

We advised back in September that the coupler used on all Powerline products, 'the Australian Standard Coupler', was to have a new shank. The involves considerable amount of tooling and testing.

The tool work was finished in early November but we found that the new shank was a little tight in certain boxes.

We have designed the new shank to fit into ALL #5 boxes. This means you will be able to change over the X2F couplings in Athern, Roundhouse, and other US brands and put in a Powerline 'Australian Standard Coupler'. It also means that in future Powerline will be able to produce tooling with a standard #5 box and assist those who want to convert the couplings to other brands.

48 / 830 Class Locomotives. (Mk 1 version)

There are three Locomotives to be produced in this years production of the Mk 1 version:

Austrac 48 Class
Freight Corp. 48 Class
ANR all green 830 Class

It is intended to have a choice of numbers available in all three liveries.

The final decoration drawings for the Austrac are now in Hong Kong. We would expect samples of the decoration and locomotive to be available late in February 1999. There could be a hold up because of Chinese new Year. (Feb. 16th. For two weeks.) If test production & decoration does not occur before the 16th. February , it could be mid/late March before a sample locomotive is available.

'CL' Diesel Locomotive.

The first production run is well on its way. The bodies have been cast and delivered to the decorators. First locomotives should be available towards the middle of January.

These hand finished locomotives are largely Australian made. The bodies were cast by MAINS WEST MODELS. The high impact resin bodies are up to and exceed the original CL bodies a few years ago as a kit.

For those who have paid the \$50.00 deposit, the locomotives will be delivered, as a R-T-R with kadee couplings (unless you have ordered the new Powerline coupling) with extra detail in the form of jewels for head lights, brass ladder, corridor connection, horn etc.

The 'CL' Locomotives are available in: Commonwealth Railways -Maroon & Silver

Australian National Railways - Maroon & Silver
Australian National Railways - Green & Yellow.

The production of the CLF followed by the CLP is already in the planning stage. Actual production due towards the middle of the year for the CLF and towards the end for the CLP.

V/Line P455 Tangerine/Grey BS Coach.

This coach has proved to be one of the most popular in our range. Stocks are low or non-existent. The wholesale section ran out of stock prior to Christmas.

Because of the runs of the BS coaches being done for V/Line Passenger Corporation and for West Coast Railway liveries, it has been possible to run extra BS coaches and do a run of P455.

We will be producing a run, with two new numbers. Production will be at the end of the West Coast & V/Line Passenger Corp. run. This makes delivery in May/June 1999. But the down side will be a rise in price. The last run of these coaches were made when the dollar was at 78 cents to \$US1. Now it is around 61 cents. Looks like a 20% price hike coming.

Gondolas.

For many years Powerline has produced a popular line of Gondolas. There is black, red and blue for NSW, grey for South Australia, green for AN, grey for NR & Tuscan for V/Line. We are out of some colours and we have therefore decided to re-run all the current colours plus some new ones.

The gondolas are made in Australia? Yes that is correct, the moulding is done in Dandenong (outer suburb of Melbourne), the bogies are imported with the boxing. The decoration is done in Australia.

Whilst preparing for the re-run we have made minor repairs to the die in the hope that we can reduce the moulding mark. This has required us to revamp the die with new heaters in the die and a new die box. We also took the opportunity, whilst doing this work, to repair a crack in the actual die. The end result we are trying to get is a better moulding with less rejects.

The mouldings will be run during January and we hope to have production available by mid-February 1999. Price, now that is a problem. These wagons have not been produced for 5 years or more. Price will have to rise a little. The bogies have cost over 25% more (costs plus the \$A = \$US). We will try to keep the rise to the smallest amount.

Full list of the revised gondola range should be in the next 'Powerline Update.'

Prices.

The Australian Dollar continues to languish in the low 60s'. By this we mean 61/62 cents to \$US1. We buy in US\$ or Hong Kong Dollars which is tied to the US\$. The result means a rise in prices in the very near future. How much will depend on the price we have to pay to buy US Dollars. But we would expect a price rise of around 20% for all items produced in China / Hong Kong. 'Powerline Update' has been produced to provide Retailers and modellers with the latest information about Powerline products. It is hoped to produce this 'Update' on a regular (monthly) bases. Extra copies are available for retailers to distribute to their customers. Photocopies of this 'Update' may be made with reference to Powerline Models Pty. Ltd. Provided the whole 'Update' is copied. Use of portions of the 'Update' may be photocopied provided the photocopy acknowledges the source of the material.

All dates quoted in this 'Update' were correct at the time this 'Update' was prepared for publication.