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I am delighted to write the foreword for this Special Issue on Advances in Rail Track Infrastructure Research and Practice, of the Electronic Journal of Structural Engineering. The collection of articles in this special issue will contribute to the other valuable research that is underway to improve our railway standards and practices.

Indeed the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) – the standards setter for Australian and New Zealand Railways - is a strong advocate of research to assist it in its work to develop and manage Australasian rail industry standards, rules, code of practice, and industry guidelines. The work that RISSB does is very important to assure its stakeholders (including Governments) that every effort is being made to harmonize the Industry, thus creating a safer and more productive operating environment for the Australian and New Zealand railways. In many cases RISSB standards, and those of other standard setting bodies around the world, are based on sound research. RISSB relies upon the Cooperative Research Centre for Rail Innovation (Rail CRC) in Australia to undertake research for its standards.

The Rail CRC works closely with international ‘like-minded’ organizations to pursue cooperative research. Indeed with the support these organizations, the Rail CRC and the RISSB worked together along with the Australasian Railway Association to host the highly successful 10th World Congress on Rail Research which was held in Sydney from the 24th of November 2013 to the 28th November 2013. There were 189 research papers delivered through presentations and 145 poster papers on display during the WCRR. Over 1500 people were exposed to a diverse range of international rail research which augurs well for the future. However the Rail Industry cannot afford to rest on its laurels. It must continue its research activities to improve its objectives. Accordingly new research and development to improve railway systems is very welcome by RISSB.

I commend this journal as it provides another valuable source of research information for rail professionals, engineers, students and academics. I would also like to thank the researchers who wrote the papers in this journal. Their commitment to ensuring that rail becomes even safer, greener, more efficient and more productive is applauded.

Kevin Taylor

Chief Executive Officer

Rail Industry Safety and Standards Boards

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