

## A new era: GM 1 – standard gauge diesel

Built in 1951, GM 1 was the first mainline diesel locomotive in Western Australia and the first standard gauge, hence first interstate diesel locomotive in Australia. Being able to operate diesels instead of steam locomotives across the Nullarbor reduced the logistical challenges of supplying water and coal in the remote areas. The diesels could also travel at higher speeds, haul bigger loads and operate in multiple with just one crew.

The design selected was a modified version of the successful American F7 model made by EMD. Various examples had been built by General Motors for use in the USA. Built by Clyde Engineering in Granville, NSW it was modified for Australian conditions by lowering the height of the body, while extending its length and using 3-axle bogies instead of four.

GM 1 was the class leader of the first group of 11 GMs which very quickly displaced steam from all mainline work on the Trans Australian Railway. A further 36 more powerful GMs were built later.

During its five decades of almost continuous service, GM 1 could be found heading the Trans-Australian passenger train and later, after the standard gauge railway was extended from Kalgoorlie to East Perth, it hauled the Indian-Pacific into East Perth on its regular 4,000 km journey between Sydney and Perth.

Its augural run for the Commonwealth Railways was on 22 September 1951, following by a naming ceremony on 6 October to name it 'Robert Gordon Menzies' after the then Prime Minister. That celebration was followed by a trip to Port Augusta and an official dinner and private ball. Then the first time that GM 1 travelled the Trans-Australian Railway into Kalgoorlie, a special dinner was held to celebrate the occasion – this was clearly a significant time in Australian railway history and GM 1 was the focus. It was to run over 8 million km during its working life, operating mainly across the Nullarbor.



In 2001, GM 1 hauled five former TAR carriages, restored by Rail Heritage WA to celebrate the promise to build the TAR which was made to entice WA to join the Federation. Between East Perth and Kalgoorlie, the 'Federation Train' gave rides to local school children.

In its traditional Commonwealth Railways maroon and silver livery, GM 1, was gifted to Rail Heritage WA in 'as is, where is' condition by the Australian Government. It has taken several years to organise its relocation to Western Australia and Rail Heritage WA greatly appreciates the assistance of UGL in this move.

### **Technical details**

**Builder:** Clyde Engineering, Granville, NSW

**Engine:** GM EMD – 567B, V16

**Wheel Arrangement:** A1A-A1A

**Horsepower:** 1500 HP

**Length:** 18.52 m

**Height:** 4.267 m

**Width:** 2.97m

**Weight:** 107.7 tons

**Fuel capacity:** 6,819 litres

**Max speed:** 143 km/h

When the new Wegmann steel passenger carriages entered service on the Trans-Australian Railway in 1952, the Commonwealth Railways promoted a modern interstate train – a campaign which featured GM 1.

