



## Customer Report

**Customer:** Keppel Prince  
**Location:** VIC  
**Project:** Regional Fast Rail  
**Date:** January 2006



## ON TRACK WITH XLERPLATE®

A local Portland heavy engineering company has played a key role in Victoria's largest upgrade of regional rail in the last 120 years.

The Regional Fast Rail project involves the upgrading of the Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Latrobe Valley lines, together with 38 new trains progressively coming into service from early 2005. The project will provide services that are safe, more frequent and reliable, faster and more comfortable for all communities along the lines.

Leading construction and transport engineering companies, Thiess Pty Ltd and ALSTOM Australia formed a joint venture to undertake construction works on the Ballarat and Geelong corridors of the Regional Fast Rail Project. The project involves the upgrade of track infrastructure, including the installation of concrete sleepers, heavier rail, ballast and formation treatments, modification of signal equipment, the application of new signalling technologies and improved protection at level crossings.





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*Steve Garner, Managing Director of Keppel Prince*



A key feature on the Ballarat corridor is the eight kilometres of new track being constructed between Dunnstown and Millbrook. This new section of track involves the construction of six rail bridges, including two considerably large bridges over Moorabool River and Lal Lal Creek.

Local Portland heavy engineering company, Keppel Prince, has fabricated and supplied 600 tonnes of massive steel pylons for the two bridges. “It was a big job for us,” says Steve Garner, Managing Director of Keppel Prince.

Established by Mr Garner in 1979, Keppel Prince has just celebrated its 25th anniversary. The firm specialises in industrial fabrication, construction and maintenance fields with backup services such as crane hire, machining and protective coatings.

According to Mr Garner, the Thiess ALSTOM Joint Venture nominated steel pylons instead of concrete because of the benefits they offered in terms of erectability and ease of construction. “Thiess ALSTOM Joint Venture chose steel pylons, rather than concrete, as a part of their risk management programme,” explains Mr Garner. “In contrast to concrete, a steel pier can be erected in about two hours, with no formwork, shuttering, or scaffolding. So the use of steel, in this case, is a quicker erection method – it minimised time on site, exposure to bad weather and therefore risk.”

“Working with our customer and one of our distributors, Smorgon Steel, BlueScope Steel was able to develop a delivery schedule that allowed the processing and delivery of XLERPLATE® steel in to Keppel Prince according to the required fabrication timetable.” says Simon Fieldsend, Victorian State Sales Manager at BlueScope Steel.

Keppel Prince manufactured eight pylons for the 275 metre long Moorabool River bridge, ranging from 5.5 metres to 23 metres in height. Ten pylons have been produced for the 355 metre long bridge at Lal Lal Creek, which range from 10.6 metres to 33.6 metres high. The three largest pylons each weigh a massive 77 tonnes. All of the pylons for the bridges were made from XLERPLATE® steel, a brand of high quality hot-rolled plate from BlueScope Steel.

**Above:** The steel pylons were fabricated at Keppel Prince’s Portland workshops.



“We make the pylons in a similar way to making wind towers,” says Mr Garner. “They are essentially conical shaped cylinders, with a diameter of 4.2 metres at the bottom, which dwindles to a 1.3 metre diameter at the top. Each pylon was constructed from 250 or 350 grade XLERPLATE® steel. We get the XLERPLATE® steel, roll it, and weld the sections together. For the Moorabool River Bridge, the pylons were constructed from 20 mm thick XLERPLATE® steel, and for the Lal Lal Creek Bridge the pylons varied from 25 mm to 32 mm thick XLERPLATE® steel.”

“The major challenge on the job was handling the finished pylons, particularly the three largest ones,” he adds. “They were the heaviest products that we’ve ever produced in the workshop.”

**Above:** Steel piers provided a quicker erection alternative for Victoria’s Regional Fast Rail project.

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*Steve Garner, Managing Director of Keppel Prince*

According to Mr Garner, a good supplier is critical to the success of Keppel Prince's projects. "When it comes to steel supply, price and availability are the two key areas. Our success on a project is based on this. BlueScope Steel's commitment to this project has been exceptional – they have been very supportive. We have a great relationship with them."

"We always buy Australian steel – we've never tried to source overseas," he continues. "XLERPLATE® from BlueScope Steel is a product we can trust, and we can be sure that it complies with Australian standards, which is often a requirement of our customers. Product from overseas just doesn't compare that well."



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on XLERPLATE® steel call  
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