

AFOEM Annual Training Meeting 2026

Worksite Visit Program

YARRA TRAMS

New Preston Tram Depot, Preston
Pre-Visit Scenario | Registrar Copy

Site	Yarra Trams Depot – 18 Miller Street, Preston, VIC
Required PPE	Safety shoes; high-visibility vest

Background

The Yarra Trams network has been in operation since November 2009 and is the largest tram network of its kind in the world. As of 2014, Yarra Trams operate 487 trams across 26 tram routes and a free City Circle tourist tram. With an extensive infrastructure and trams in operation for much of the day, the network maintenance and cleaning are managed by a 24-hour operational team.

Officially opened on the 17 April 2016, the New Preston Tram Depot is situated on an approximately 18-acre block and is one of the major heavy maintenance facilities operated by Yarra Trams. The New Preston Tram Depot is one of ten depots located across its network. While the facility only has the E-class trams, other tram class (B, D2 and C2) do come here for repairs or servicing.

The workforce at the facility consists of a mixture of roles involved in administrative, rolling stock and tram drivers and authorised officers. Due to the need to provide continuous service delivery, the facility operates on multiple overlapping shifts which range from starting times of 3am to 7pm.

Scenario

You are an occupational physician asked by the employer to attend the workplace to determine if a Tram Driver can be safely redeployed to an alternative role as a Tram Maintainer, but you also want to gain an overall understanding of the maintenance operations as you are expecting to see more workers from that facility.

Discussion Questions

Q1 When visiting the Rolling Stock Heavy Maintenance Operations consider what hazards and what control measures you can see. Try to do this in a systematic manner so that no important hazards are missed.

Notes:

Case Details

A Tram Driver transferred from a Rolling Stock Heavy Maintenance role to a Tram Driver position in 2018 having worked for Yarra Trams since 2013. He is now 45 years old.

He reported the onset of niggling pain at the back of his left shoulder that progressed to affect both his neck and shoulder after a long driving shift in December 2021. He attended his doctor who arranged a cortisone injection and later physiotherapy. He was cleared for full duties after an IME for a trial of full duties, but continued to experience variable symptoms, however after a long tram-driving shift in early 2023, he experienced escalating pain in his shoulder with left forearm ache. He received medical advice that he should no longer drive the model of tram that he associated with the onset of his symptoms. Varying medical opinions were expressed about the diagnosis, including “axillary nerve impingement in the quadrilateral space”, “symptoms of cervical origin” “non-specific neck and shoulder pain” and “nTOS”.

The worker attributed his condition to the use of the tram ‘Master Controller’ which required sustained unsupported forearm posture in addition to repeated manipulation and sustained downward pressure – see photo below.



He continued on alternate duties, up until August 2025 when a decision was made to consider his suitability to return to his position as a Tram Maintainer, which while “heavy” work did not involve sustained left arm postures.

His physical examination was essentially normal, but the company accepted he could not safely return to tram driving.