An appreciation of transport and communications technology and its impress on the natural and urban environment is integral to an understanding of those forces which have shaped our economy and settlement patterns, as well as our sense of place and distance. Like other 'regions of recent settlement' of the nineteenth century, European Australia owed its very existence to developments in communications technology; throughout the nineteenth century the maintenance of communications - the transport of information, people and goods - was vital to the advancement and survival of the colonies, individual settlements and communities. This issue of 'Historic Environment' is devoted to a treatment of aspects of this important legacy in Australia. The articles by David Moloney, Celestina Sagazio and David Dunstan explore the significance and background of important railway networks of the past century, which, in the case of the St. Kilda and Port Melbourne rail lines, were both products of the mercantile economy of Melbourne and helped shape its urban physical fabric. The Outer Circle Railway, fragments of which also survive, was a project which in its very genesis reflected much of the character of Victorian politics and the significance of the issue of suburban transport development in Melbourne of the 1880s. Professor R.L. Whitmore discusses the importance of steam-driven inter-colonial passenger ships to Australia's transport heritage. Carl Doring explores a hitherto neglected part of urban transport history - the infrastructural element - in a study of the Randwick Tram Workshops of Sydney. The claims for the preservation of the vestiges of earlier transport patterns in Australia are perhaps less clear cut than argument surrounding other surviving aspects of our past, since they often by-pass the standard aesthetic-architectural criteria and demand more subtle investigation, yet such issues cannot be avoided, especially in a decade which has seen the planning and execution of redevelopment projects with profound implications for the environment of our cities in particular.