For my five functional sound designs, I decided to design auditory alerts for a train station context. I catch the train periodically and have noticed a number of times the auditory alerts that are designed for particular train station events, those events being; a train approaching the platform, an alert to signal an incoming intercom message from station attendants, alerts to signal the opening and closing of the train doors, an alert in between the opening and closing of train doors, and finally an alert to signal a train's imminent departure.

With this in mind I designed my five alerts around five specific train station functions. These were; an alert to notify passengers that a train was approaching the platform, an alert to notify the opening of a train's doors, a notification sound to inform that the train was in its embarkation and disembarkation phase, an alert to notify passengers of the trains doors closing, and finally an auditory alert to notify of an imminently departing train. I believe that these five functions are the most important and encompassing in a train station environment.

I used a number of different sound editing software to produce the sounds I came up with, including Pro Tools, Adobe Soundbooth and some GarageBand.

My first sound was an alert to notify passengers on the platform of an approaching train. The sound is a synthesized sort of sound. There is an echo like feel to the sound which helps to accentuate the purpose of the sound. It isn't a very high frequency, and isn't urgent as the sounds that make up the alert are not all clustered together. There are frequency changes that progress from a lower frequency to a higher frequency, giving a sort of progress-like feel to it and giving it some momentum to fit in with the function of the alert. The reasoning behind the echo-like shadow across the alert is that it is not too invasive to passengers, it avoids the audio shock associated with sounds that just appear out of nowhere and have a high kick to it as opposed to a build-up. I was also thinking as this sound would also be applied to an underground subway context as well, having a non-invasive alert is more important as it is usually a lot quieter underground as opposed to above ground. There is quite a long echo at the end of the alert which is to let the auditory alert linger a while in the atmosphere of the station and platform so that passengers will all understand what to expect. The way it bounces from note to note is important as well because it allows a sort of ‘casual’ listening of the sound. It doesn't require concentration, it does not cause a headache, but it also is not inaudible enough for people to miss it completely. It is an important alert for all passengers to hear as it is helpful in improving safety at the station and gives a warning to everyone to step away from the edge of the platform as a train is approaching.

My second sound is an alert that represents the train's doors about to open and for passengers to be prepared to embark onto or disembark from the train. I designed this alert so that it fits into the feel that my first alert produced, a sort of relaxed alert just to do the bare minimum of notifying the passenger of something in a very unobtrusive manner. Again the general direction of this alert is from a relatively low frequency to a relatively higher frequency. This again emits the sense of movement forward which fits into the function of the sound being to notify passengers that the doors are opening and that they should be prepared to get off or get on the train. The alert is very calm and quite peaceful and this helps to keep passengers on an even keel as a lot of people who ride trains are often people
coming to and from work or school or university and require as relaxing an experience that can be offered. The dreamy feel to this alert accentuates that point.

My third sound is an alert to notify passengers that the train is now boarding. It is an alert you do not hear very often in a lot of Sydney train stations, but they do exist. The purpose of the alert is to make sure passengers know and realise that the train in question is currently in its boarding phase, where passengers should make ready to board their train as soon as possible.

The alert was designed with three simple notes with a heavy echo and ring to it. The general direction of the frequency shift is once again from low to high to portray the notion of moving forward. This is to help speed up the process of embarkation at train stations and speed up in general the service of the trains. As the period in between the train doors opening and closing is usually the noisiest and most vulnerable to auditory alerts not being audible, this alert was design as being not intrusive at all over the background noise that would be present, as well as having a very lingering echo to it which would stay in peoples’ minds for a while. The structure of the tones in the alert also give a message like feeling, as if something is expected next after the alert.

My fourth alert is a notification to passengers in the vicinity of a train for the train doors about to be closed. This alert has no frequency shift and is a single note repeated 4 times. The intervals between the repetitions are short and the general frequency of the alert is high. There is also a ring-like echo to the alert. These attributes contribute to the alert being a much more urgent audio sequence than the previous alerts. This is mainly due to the fact that this audio alert is quite an important one as it is closely related to human safety on train platforms. It also serves as a notification to passengers who are running late to how long they may have left before the train doors actually close. It also is a prompt for any passengers in the vicinity to move away from the train doors as they are closing and could close on a body part or item.

My final auditory alert is an alert for a train departing the platform or station. This is another important alert as it is representing a train action that would be very dangerous if there was no auditory alert designated to it. As the train is moves out of a stationary position and into transit, this alert represents a very dangerous part of the train process. Accordingly this alert is very urgent, like the previous alert for closing doors. The frequency shifts from high to low with a sharp electric like bite to it which really gets the attention of passengers. The alert is made up of 3 tones in quick succession to further emphasise the urgency of the alert. The alert is quite piercing and is quite intrusive in terms of loudness and sharpness, but by this time in the station the only people who would be able to hear the alert would be people already actively doing things such as standing up or walking, and people who have just disembarked from the train that is about to leave and are walking away from the train. The passengers inside the actual train would not experience any of the more intrusive elements of the alert.

I think the different alerts in this auditory alert set work well with the other sounds in creating a peaceful yet informative environment in a train station/platform context.