



COTMA Conference General Meeting

Adelaide 2012

Chairman's Report

COTMA has continued to be actively involved in assisting our Members to achieve their objectives, through the provision of advice, tram parts, tramcars, drawings and information. Over the last two years, I have seen the continued growth of our Members throughout Australasia though sometimes under arduous conditions.

The series of earthquakes that devastated Christchurch have seen the THS recover and build a new shed under adverse conditions. All THS and City Tramway Limited workers are to be congratulated for their achievements under very trying circumstances. We look forward to the re-opening of the Christchurch City Tramway and the reconstruction of the city itself. Welcome Aboard, the operator of the Christchurch City tramways and other local attractions are to be congratulated as the operators of the new Auckland Waterfront Tramway.

Since the last Conference we have lost a number of regular conference attendees or founders within our museum movement. The recognition of the work they have done for the tramway museums throughout Australasia is now a formal part of our Conference Dinner.

Bill Kingsley's death on 3rd May 2012 was very sad. Bill championed COTMA throughout his life and put a massive amount of work into the early days as the first Executive Officer and then later on as Deputy Chairman and then Chairman; and through other Committee positions. A proposal to be discussed at the Conference General Meeting is the renaming of the EARS (Excellence and Recognition Award) to the Bill Kingsley Award for Excellence. I formally express my thanks to Bill for his works in founding COTMA and his ongoing work and support.

As noted in previous reports, I have continued to spend a lot of my time on Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Australia (ATHRA) matters representing the sector at Government and Industry levels, attending many meetings on behalf of the rail heritage sector. This will be my last year undertaking this type of work for ATHRA and in respect representing COTMA at the same time at such forums.

The introduction of a National Rail Safety Regulator within Australia will see a change from seven different Rail Safety Regulators (after 2014) to two; Victoria will continue to Regulate all tramways within its State. The recognition of the Heritage Sector within Australia by the Government and Industry and the potential impacts is far better than it was initially and shows that representation at forums is vital. Changes within NZ often mirror each other.

An example of this is the introduction of a new “Not for Profit Regulator” within Australia that follows the introduction of a NZ counterpart. This could see some further paperwork to become necessary in order to maintain your tax free and tax deductibility status and something that you will need to be well aware of.

COTMA News Updates continued to be issued; nine since the last conference. These are no longer formally posted to Members but are distributed by E-mail to all Members, interested parties and over 80 individual workers. More Member newsletters/magazines are now being sent to other Members by E-mail in digital format and this is encouraged as it spreads the word about the work being undertaken in more detail and encourages visits.

The ongoing work of Bob Merchant and Brent Efford in publishing *Trolley Wire* and *Tramway Topics* is recognised as well. Without their work in publishing news and historic articles, the Tramway Museum sector within Australasia would be disadvantaged.

One area of concern that should be of concern to COTMA Members is the closure of the Zig Zag Railway and the suspension of its Accreditation to operate passenger services by the NSW Rail Safety Regulator. This was largely because of their inability to address safety concerns of the Regulator. The failure of the Railway can largely be attributed to declining governance skills and internal disputes over the last few years. Good organisational governance is critical to ensure your long term sustainability.

On a happier note, we continue to see the resurgence of street tramways within Australia. The construction of the Gold Coast tramway is underway, the planning for the extension of the Sydney system is well advanced, Adelaide has opened an extension and further extensions are planned. The opening of the Auckland tramway loop during 2011 using heritage tramcars is good news and those workers from the Western Springs Tramway at MOTAT are to be congratulated.

Currently Membership of COTMA is 15 full members and 12 Affiliate Members. The NZ Transport Heritage Trust based at Masterton has resigned. New Affiliate Members are Newstead Tramways and the Market St Railway of San Francisco.

Since the establishment of COTMA in 1975, we have seen the Tramway Museum movement within Australasia continue to grow in stature and our collection and operations recognition by the Community. Community recognition of our collections is important and needs to be fostered.

Although I stand down as COTMA Chairman at this Conference General Meeting I plan to continue to assist in the background looking after the COTMA website and communication lists and supporting the new Chairman as Immediate Past Chairman. The last 10 years as Chairman has seen a visit to each of our active Australasian Members at least once and I have found it very useful to meet and discuss matters that relate to COTMA and their activities. I formally thank my fellow Executive members and many others for their support and in enhancing our activities for the overall benefit of our Membership over the last ten years.

Warren Doubleday