

## **2023 Judges Comments for the COTMA Bill Kingsley Award**

Dear Mal,

I bring to you for consideration and any discussion the recommendations of the COTMA Award Committee (Graham Stewart, Carolyn Cleak and John Radcliffe).

In summary, we recommend

**1 – The 2023 Bill Kingsley Award be shared equally between the submissions from Ballarat Tramway Museum for the new interpretive Centre adjacent to its existing Depot in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens, and the submission from the Tramway Historical Society, Christchurch, for the rebuilding and restoration of Kitson steam tram no. 7**

**2 – That the COTMA Awards should be divided into two categories – (a) The Bill Kingsley tramcar or tramway artifact restoration award and (b) The COTMA Infrastructure award**

**3 – That a submission be prepared by the Awards Committee to be presented to the 2023 Conference General Meeting recommending the changed structure, which I would present to the meeting on behalf of the committee**

The underlying e-mails outline the development of these recommendations. I have highlighted in them in yellow some of the important issues. At the commencement of the project, Carolyn Cleak advised that though she was and is the Treasurer of the BTM, and recognised scope for a potential conflict of interest, she was not directly involved in the development or supervision of the project and was not involved in preparing the submission, She suggested that Graham and I initially resolve a way forward (the underlying e-mails) but for convenience, discuss progress with her by telephone.

In summary, we felt it very difficult to separate out logically, the superiority of one project over the other, one project involving a Society husbanding of funds (largely donations) over a protracted period, the addition of Federal and State funds for associated trackwork, the latter managed by the Ballarat City Council, and the overall enormity of the project and the regulatory hurdles to be managed, the whole project managed by 2-3 office-bearers and the Board of the BTM, compared with the seven year endeavour of about 20 members of the THS to restored the Kitson based on the fortuitous and foresightful acquisition of a replacement and restorable boiler 30 years earlier.

Very large infrastructure projects, managed by a small group with a lot of other sources of funding, and technical assistance are always going to be impressive, and in the views of the committee, more of them are likely to be developed. Equally, incentive recognition should be available for museums whose members have had the technical skills to complete historically significant projects “with their own bare hands”.

We reviewed the applications received since 2016 (see attached table), and the projects divide up into two categories – restorations and infrastructure. You will also identify in the infrastructure lists a third group of submissions, those involving the restoration and conversion of trams for purely commercial purposes (Cuthberts 939, R 1808 and W2 411). These have no especially historical merit and would not be part of a registered museum collection, though they can be directly or indirectly sources of revenue to the museums. We debated whether to put them in the restoration class or the infrastructure class but felt a third category of award was not desirable. And as Graham has pointed out, these cars, though

regular use, will require periodic overhaul and they will not get an award for that (as 411 did not in 2021.) If necessary, the COTMA Conference Meeting could decide into which of the two categories such “commercial restorations” might be placed.

A further issue is what to do about the \$500 prize award, which this year could be split \$250 each, though the sum of \$250 is pretty trivial in relation to the (unstated) cost of the Ballarat project. Presumably the original \$500 was determined by the COTMA Budget, which has no revenue stream except membership fees. Consideration will need to be given as to the extent of any financial awards in future years if our recommendation to create two awards is accepted.

We would be pleased to have your comments and response to these recommendations.

With regards

John Radcliffe (also on behalf of Graham Stewart and Carolyn Cleak)

17-9-2023