

ARE WE TALKING TO THE RIGHT MINISTRY

Presenter: Richard Gilbert

Session Chair: Jack Nyman

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As a tramway museum we should look at ourselves and consider where we stand as a group of tramway enthusiasts.

We should consider: Who do we serve? We, I suggest, serve tourists, people seeking a day out and we are an education resource. We entertain and we educate. We relive memories for older people. We entertain all age groups. We educate the younger generation. We educate other members of the community. Therefore we should regard ourselves as being in the area of tourism and museums. We are not public transport. We should talk to the Tourism Ministry and the Arts and Culture Ministry. There are other areas we should make contact with. Grants and other forms of assistance are available, not only from the areas of tourism and the arts, but Youth, Sport and Recreation, Rural Area Grants, Specialist Grants such as the Tasmanian Government "Tasmanian Research Publications Fund" which is available to publishers of works dealing with the historical context of Tasmania.

There are Grants for Courses, which can be of benefit to museum members to develop skills for the museum. There are labour supply schemes such as the LEAP scheme and the Saturday Community Workers.

We have to broaden our visions and aspects of what our museum is doing in the community. The Transport Ministry does not usually have grant money. It is not set up for that task. The Ministry can be an important resource. After all, it may have, or does still supply, the heart of the collection, that is, the trams, related equipment, or even land. Like Puffing Billy, we acknowledge the history of the equipment, the area it came from and its part in developing the city, but now, it has moved on. It has a new owner, an owner operating in the area of tourism and museums.

As such it is more directly under the umbrella of Tourism and Arts and Cultures Ministries.

Some grants that the Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society has had are:

State Government - The Ministry for the Arts : A Cataloguing Kit.

This kit allows us to preserve, sort and file our archives. These archives can be objects, film or paper. The grant gave us a filing cabinet, acid free envelopes for film and negative storage, storage boxes and folders, labels, pencils, rubbers, rulers and books on cataloguing and listing the collection.

Federal Government - Community Employment Scheme: Labour and materials.

This grant enabled us to achieve considerable progress on reconstruction of the Horse Tram and conduct heavy engineering maintenance of the electric trams. The grant gave us paid labour for a period of months.

Local Government - Ballarat City Council: Cash amount to house Tram No. 14.

The Ballarat Council considered that their grant of a Tram from the SEC would be better utilised if the tram were housed at the Tramway Society Depot. The Council granted a monetary amount equal to what it would cost the Council to house the tram at a Council site.

In fact, the BPTS has had no direct grant from the Ministry of Transport. The Ministry can, of course, be the greatest benefactor by making an initial grant of vehicles, equipment or land, but once received we need to look at other areas to restore, develop or preserve our granted equipment from the Transport Ministry.

You will inevitably ask what steps do we take in our new field of regarding ourselves as a museum. You can join another organisation, Museums Australia, either at the State branch or the Federal branch, or both. The State and Federal branches produce a magazine newsletter which not only lists coming events and articles on particular museums, but also lists some grants that are available.

Getting sponsors for a particular event at your museum. The local business community can often be obliging for some reciprocal advertising. Our 21st year celebrations saw the bread and sausages provided for our public barbecue breakfast. We ran advertisements for these two firms in all our brochures and advertising for the weekend. The Road Construction Authority supplied the truck that delivered Electric Supply Company Tram No. 12 as part of their donation of the tram that was on the site of the Ballarat ByPass Freeway.

Sponsors can be sought for open days, displays, a particular event or a restoration project, exhibition, conference or a course.

Multiple Heritages

Make contact with other museums in your district. The trams were part of the community. They were not just there on their own. A local museum may be able to provide your museum with further details or information about tramway history in another aspect. Your museum may also help that particular museum. The trams were once part of the community, now the museums have to be a community.

Involve the community in you museum. There can be permanent displays of a fellow community group, or well publicised particular days of a special event such as:

Car Rally/Tram Calvacade, Fashions and Transport, Food and Transport.

Speak at local fellow interest groups. I spoke at the Ballarat Vintage Car Club and fascinated the audience with our archival tram tape; they loved the cars in it!

Sourcing Grants

Join Museums Australia. Join your local tourism region. Join your local historical society. Go to seminars, be seen, be known, Lobby - Rub shoulders. Don't just be on your museum site. Be part of your community.

Ballarat History Fair

This popular yearly event concentrates on a particular aspect of history each year. Recently the theme was transport - we took our Horse Tram. It was a great drawcard at the entrance, and we had a sponsor to truck it there and the entire exercise cost us nothing. We also took part in the fair by having a display stand of photographs, models and sales supply.

Advertise yourself as part of the community.

In Victoria no one knows who 'Steamrail' is, but in Western Australia everyone knows who 'Hotham Valley' is.

Recently, I went to the Nyora Hotel after a day of working on the tourist railway there. The publican said that I was the first one from the railway that had come over and spoken to her. She wanted to advertise the railway and the locals often talked about the railway that ran past the front but they hadn't heard from anyone to be able to tell them anything about it.

We are all in the competitive market place. Our hobby was set up by us to enjoy our interest but we must have a wider vision.

Force yourself into it - to survive!

Maybe COTMA should join Museums Australia. Our Conference programme would have been placed in the 'Whats On' columns of their national magazine. People of importance may have read about it. Its a case of rubbing shoulders, and being outward with information and news about the Australian tramway museums. Our museums are rich in social and technical history and yet they are not exactly the topic of conservation of people directing and selling tourism and culture.

We have to lobby for our cause. We have to seek out the right Ministry and the many other areas of available resources and funding.

Questions

John Radcliffe: Need to know as many Ministers of Parliament as possible

Trevor Burling: Need to know whats going on in Regional and Local authority bodies.

Vote of thanks by Jack Nyman