



# STEAM SCENE

Newsletter of the Steam Tram and Railway Preservation (Co-Op) Society Ltd.  
t/a Valley Heights Steam Tramway.  
Affiliated with the Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia and  
Rail Heritage Australia (NSW) Inc.

"Preserving the past,  
enriching the future."

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## Passing on the baton—who picks up the future?

It besets all volunteer organizations from the biggest like Rotary and Lions Clubs to the tiddlers like ourselves—how do you get more volunteers involved? Who is going to do the job in the future?

The perceived causes are many and varied. Some of them have been mentioned in passed issues of Steam Scene. But again, what do you do about it. Do you do nothing and hope that something will turn up? Or do you look further afield for answers?

We have opted for the latter.

Resulting from our liaison with Museums and Galleries NSW, a visit to the museum by a "volunteering professional" was organized by STARPS. On Wednesday February 2, Kerrie Spinks of Volunteering Central West, met with nine interested parties from STARPS and VHLDHM.

Being around as long as one has in the business, we tend to think we know it all. This might make us experts in recognizing problems but not always adept at finding solutions.

A frank interchange took place in which Kerrie took the role of "devil's advocate". Much was discussed and really, none of it was "rocket science" just good old common sense. Like most common sense however, it only becomes obvious when some else has pointed it out. Too much detail to place on record here but some major points were:

- There are opportunities to get volunteers as distinct from members e.g. "mutual obligation" is expanding in dole programmes.

- Sort out what you really want to do and how you want to do it. Define the project.
- Project a positive message, not one of desperation. Few respond to plight that seems to have no end for their potential involvement. Don't overlook the fun part.
- Actively seek assistants in executive positions to share the load and promote succession. If a bus strikes us down, we will have to be done without. Better to be prepared.
- Much, much more.

We have a lot to digest and sort through as to what approaches can be used. It is not a quick-fix but it is a help for a big problem. Our horizons on the issue have been broadened. We have been encouraged to think outside the square. Things have changed in society and railways don't have as high a profile in the mind of youth in particular, as they used to. That is a challenge in itself. In the meantime there is still a lot of potential to be tapped into from baby-boomer retirees coming on-stream. Contacting professional organizations to alert them to our activities is another thing we learnt. We must learn to change as the rest of society changes. There are resources out there that we can tap into. We shouldn't make an impenetrable wall of problems—go over the top and see what the community has to offer. The need to do "good deeds" is innate in most people. Unfortunately, I think there is also a rising tendency to "let someone else do it".  
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Our challenge is to make our profile as appealing, worthwhile and fulfilling to men and women as fire fighting and S.E.S. volunteering.

When it comes down to it, we are not looking for 100 new workers at once, just a steady flow to pick up the baton for the future in their turn.