

## THE PLACE OF TRAM MUSEUMS IN THE INTERNATIONAL AND AUSTRALASIAN MUSEUM MOVEMENT

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The fourteen tramway museums which are federated into the Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia are but the first order of aggregation of museum organisations. These aggregated groups are important for their power in lobbying to Governments on policy issues. Governments and Ministers prefer to deal with single cohesive organisations rather than splinter groups having disparate and competing aspirations. Therefore, when making approaches either on issues of legislative change or when seeking funding support, it is desirable to do so from a position of strength achieved by bringing together museums which either have a common technical or a common geographic interest. It is therefore helpful to understand the way in which museum organisations are structured in Australia and New Zealand and how they relate to the international museum movement.

### MUSEUM ORGANISATION IN AUSTRALIA

Within Australia, individual museums and museum participants are catered for by the **Museums Association of Australia (MAA)**. It is a national body that includes among its members persons employed mainly in history, natural history, science and technology museums. This is the museum association which will have most immediate benefits to offer those interested in tramway conservation.

However, there are a number of other related organisations which also pertain to museums. The **Art Museums Association of Australia (AMAA)** serves all of those working in art museums and public galleries throughout Australia. It has its own formal secretariat established in Melbourne in 1986 with funds from the Australia Council.

The **Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM)** is the national organisation of conservators whose aim is to foster the preservation of material of cultural significance in Australia. Conservators are particularly important in advising on the care and maintenance of fragile historic materials such as paper, photographs, textiles, metallic objects, and timber and synthetic artefacts. Whilst they are usually thought of in terms of small items, they can also advise on the conservation requirements of much larger exhibits including tramcars themselves.

The **Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD)** comprises the sixteen directors of Australia's principal State sponsored museums or museum control agencies concerned with science and history. The **Council of Australian Art Museum Directors (CAAMD)** comprises the eight directors of Australia's

principal art museums of whom two from the Tasmanian and Northern Territory Government museums are also members of CAMD.

The **Museum Education Association of Australia (MEAA)** is a national association of educators working in museums, galleries, botanic and zoological gardens and similar institutions. Frequently, its members are employed by local education authorities but seconded to museum institutions. They are responsible for many of the school programmes in the major museums.

The **Australian Federation of Friends of Galleries and Museums (AFFGM)** is a national organisation with more than seventy support groups, representing 130 000 friends of museums, galleries, botanical gardens zoos and libraries in Australia. They are the "volunteers" who support the staff of the major collecting institutions. (In North America these volunteers are sometimes called "docents".)

The **Australian Heritage Parks Association (AHPA)** is the national body formed to represent the interests of outdoor museums and heritage parks in Australia, encompassing such organisations as Sovereign Hill at Ballarat. The group exchanges visitor information and has excellent statistics on visitor trends and average levels of visitor expenditure in the outdoor museums and parks.

The **Australian Museum Shops Association (AMSA)** is a national body which facilitates the free exchange of ideas and information among members about commercial activities within institutions, and encourages joint buying and/or manufacturing to maximise profit margins and aids in the promotion of museum shops to the public as educational resources as well as generating additional revenue.

These organisations are federated together in the **Council of Australian Museum Associations (CAMA)**.

CAMA is increasingly responsible for the conduct of meetings and conferences among the museum community in Australia. Its next conference is scheduled to be held in Melbourne at the Royal Exhibition Buildings from November 17-21, 1992.

### MUSEUM ORGANISATION IN NEW ZEALAND

The principal museum organisation in New Zealand is the **Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand (AGMANZ)**. Its corporate and individual



membership has primarily been drawn from the professional museums, and it has been under stress in recent years, and virtually collapsed two years ago over the issue of Maori-Pakeha perspectives. It has now been revived to incorporate a Maori-Pakeha partnership with half of its committee representation coming from each group.

A **Museum Directors' Federation of New Zealand** operates, but is primarily driven by art gallery directors. It is likely to be expanded to include museum directors.

Other specialised museum groups in New Zealand include the **Museum Education Association of New Zealand (MEANZ)**, which conducts an annual conference for education staff, and the **New Zealand Professional Conservators' Group** which links conservators. Other rather ad hoc groups link registrars, historians etc. There is nominally a national committee for ICOM.

## GOVERNMENT POLICY AND SUPPORT TO MUSEUMS IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

The primary thrust of Government support to museums in Australia is through the State Ministries of Arts, or Arts & Cultural Heritage. Federal responsibility for museums is within the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories (DASET). The Australian Federal Government also contributes through its sponsorship of the Australian National Gallery (ANG) and its intended creation of the Museum of Australia.

Since 1975, efforts have been made to encourage the Federal Government to contribute to museum development at state and regional level, though largely without success. The policy issues for museums are dealt with in the Cultural Ministers Council which is composed of the relevant State and Federal Ministers responsible for the Arts.

By contrast, support for museum activities in New Zealand is largely through local government where there is potential for rating powers to be used to support the creation of regional museums. The New Zealand Government sponsors the National Museum, formerly the Dominion Museum and has been moving towards the creation of a new Museum of New Zealand on a reclaimed site on the Wellington waterfront. Like its Australian counterpart, this proposal has also had a chequered career. The Museum of New Zealand is an independent statutory authority, though it derived from the Internal Affairs Department of the Government. Museum policies to the extent that the New Zealand Government takes any direct responsibility, lie within the Ministry of Arts & Culture.

Although there are no direct grants from the New Zealand Government to support regional and

specialised museums, the government view is that it indirectly supports museums by their ability to access capital funds through the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board. This board also supports four museum liaison officers who provide an advisory service to regional and specialist museums from bases in the four principal museums in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

## MUSEUMS, INTERNATIONALLY

The international museum movement is brought together under the auspices of the **International Council of Museums (ICOM)**. Its organisational structure is based on national committees comprised of members of ICOM resident in the different countries and with an international organisational headquarters in Paris. The **Australian National Committee for ICOM** is also a constituent member of the Council of Australian Museum Associations.

ICOM also has a series of international committees and affiliated international organisations which bring together groups of museum participants with specialised interests.

The international committees, some of whose acronyms are derived from their French titles rather than their English titles as both French and English are the official languages of ICOM, include:

- Applied Art (ICAA)
- Archaeology and History (ICMAH)
- Architecture & Museum Techniques (ICAMT)
- Conservation
- Costume
- Documentation (CRDOC)
- Educational and Cultural Action (CECA)
- Ethnography (ICME)
- Exhibition Exchange
- Fine Art (ICFA)
- Glass
- Literature (ICLM)
- Modern Art (CIMAM)
- Museology (ICOFOM)
- Musical Instruments (CIMCIM)
- Natural History
- Museum Public Relations (MPR)
- Regional Museums (ICR)
- Science and Technology (CIMUSET)
- Museum Security (ICMS)
- Agricultural Museums (AIMA)
- Arts and Military History (IAMAN)
- European Open Air Museums
- International Confederation of Architectural Museums (ICAM)
- International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM)
- Performing Arts (SIBMAS)
- Transport Museums (IATM)

ICOM convenes every three years, recent conferences having been held in Buenos Aires in 1986, The Hague



in 1989 and Quebec in 1992. There are proposals afoot to secure the 1998 Conference for Melbourne.

The specialist organisation within ICOM to which tramway museums are best affiliated is the International Association of Transport Museums. COTMA has been a member of this group for many years, and has been in receipt of the annual year books which the IATM has published following its own periodic conferences. The 1992 IATM Conference is being held in Ottawa from September 14-18 1992 which is the week prior to the 1992 ICOM Conference. Other IATM members include the National Tramway Museum at Crich, UK, and MOTAT is a member in its own right. Other Australian IATM members include the National Museum of Australia, the Museum of Victoria, the History Trust of South Australia, and the National Maritime Museum, Sydney.

### OTHER COUNTRIES

Just as there are various museum structures within Australia and New Zealand, there are similar co-ordinating bodies in a number of other countries.

For example, in North America, railway and streetcar museums are loosely joined into the Association of Railway Museums. Within each State of the USA there is a State Historical Society, providing a role somewhat akin to that of the State Branches of the National Trust in Australia or the History Trust of

South Australia. The American Association of Museums in Washington brings together the various professional associations and their role in protecting and advancing the interest of museums in the USA.

In Britain the Museums Association caters for Government-sponsored museums, while the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) serves museums outside of the Government sector including the National Tramway Museum at Crich, Derbyshire. Much of the initiative for the development of the AIM came from Dr Neil Cossens, when he was Director of the Ironbridge Gorge and later the Greenwich Maritime Museum, though he is now the Director of the Science Museum at South Kensington.

The horizons of tramway museums and their members can be broadened by participation in the wider national and international museum movement and much of the benefit can be obtained by correspondence when attendance at conferences is not financially practicable. Participation in these organisations leads to considerable credibility to individual museums in their dealings with the Government.

As Australasian tramway museums move towards greater maturity, their horizons will become broadened and their place in the greater museum movement will become increasingly important to members.