



## Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

[www.cotma.org.au](http://www.cotma.org.au)

Conference General Meeting

Tuesday 18 September 2018

### Chairman's Report

Welcome to the 24th Conference General Meeting of COTMA.

The past two years have flown by since we last met in Christchurch in October 2016. Again there have been ongoing challenges for our member groups, as well as some notable successes and these have been reflected in your presentations during this conference. A number have reached and celebrated significant milestones in their history.

Your Executive has continued to meet at least twice-yearly, but with much of its work spread throughout the year and done by email and individual efforts of members of the Executive team. Seven issues of COTMA News Update have been prepared and published since the Christchurch conference, four in 2017 and three in 2018, with the next due following this conference.

Since the 2016 CGM, COTMA's membership has increased with the joining of The Auckland Electric Tramways Trust, T-Mates and the Walhalla Goldfields Railway as Affiliate members, but regrettably, the Tramway Museum Society of Victoria elected to discontinue its membership. We have nevertheless endeavoured to keep in touch with TMSV and this has included working through a spare parts ownership issue with them over recent months.

It was with much sadness that we learned of the passing, in February 2017, of Ian Seymour, previous COTMA chairman, and until his resignation in 2014 a hardworking member and stalwart of the Adelaide Electric Tramway Museum at St Kilda. A fitter and turner by trade, his expertise in the mechanical side of tram restoration and maintenance is sorely missed, particularly his knowledge about the complexities of the PC5 electro-pneumatic control systems as originally used in the Adelaide H cars and now sought after for tram restorations involving PC5 equipment elsewhere in Australia and NZ.

A number of issues relevant to member museums, and some of which are also included as agenda items, have been addressed by the Executive since our last meeting, including:

- Further refinement of our new association rules to comply with Victorian law, prior to reconsideration at this meeting for adoption
- Continuing concern and discussions with FRONZ about the Museums Aotearoa document "Working Objects: Guidelines For Their Operation And Care" which seemed to have a bias against operating heritage vehicles, also to be further considered at this meeting.
- Arranging with AETM for the disposal of surplus H car seats to the Walhalla Goldfields Railway for use in their former X1 trams, including attending and assisting in their preparation and packing for disposal.
- Updating the COTMA Conference Organisational Guidelines, and reviewing feedback from the 2016 conference.
- Working with and assisting PETS to plan this conference.
- Nominating Deputy Chairman Mal Rowe as COTMA's representative on the Newport trams project
- Supporting the Wellington Tramway Museum in its efforts to procure and promote the sale of overhead and other equipment from the Wellington trolley bus system
- Supporting James Duncan and the future of the Dockline tramway in Auckland

- Endeavouring to progress the resolution of COTMA held spares at AETM (in particular PC5 equipment and parts) and considering future options for parts acquisition and storage
- Discussions with ATHRA concerning ongoing relationships including developing a Memorandum of Understanding/possible mutual affiliate membership.

Several significant matters have emerged and have received some discussion at this conference, and may need to be followed up at this CGM with specific resolutions for further action.

These include the issues raised by Tim Borchers in our Friday morning session about continuing to operate heritage vehicles in a public street environment, following the Memphis W2 fires and other incidents. These have raised concerns about the safety, particularly in the USA, of older non-compliant vehicles, which may have an impact in this part of the world in the future. Some of the concerns raised could well apply to off public road, museum situations as well. With the 2020 conference to be held in Bendigo, there is a great opportunity to follow this up and further consider the implications and possible solutions.

Secondly the management of spare parts supply and storage is now a very current issue with the Newport Trams “repurposing” project and also the Wellington trolley bus parts disposal matter now progressing. There is a need to consider how COTMA and its members can be involved to help satisfactorily progress this, together with resolving existing issues with parts held at AETM and other sites.

Thirdly it was great to welcome our international guests this year – Mikael (repeat visit) from Denmark, Noi from Taiwan and Kyoichi from Japan, representing APHTRO. Together with the recent ATHRA discussions this suggests the need to consider international (and national) relationships and the extent to which they should be formalised.

A couple of other concerns have also been noted. These include the low attendance or no-show from some groups at this conference, an issue noted last time and which perhaps suggests a need to increase/improve engagement with those groups, to get them more interested and supportive. There may have been a distance/cost factor that may be less applicable when we meet in Bendigo next time. It is also a little disappointing that there were so few nominations (just two) for the achievement awards this year, particularly when some of the museum presentations revealed a number of other possible candidates - what do we need to do to engender more interest in participating – both in this category and also for the individual awards where only three COTMA groups participated?

Finally some thanks. Firstly to the COTMA Executive team for their support and hard work. As noted in the last CGM report, all are busy people in their own museums and in their work and private lives, yet can still find time to devote to this part of their hobby. It has been great to keep Warren on board and I also need to make special mention of Mal as Deputy Chairman and also acting as Assistant Executive Officer. Mal has taken on a heavy work load which now of course also includes the Newport Trams project, and you also will have observed some of the great support he has given to helping the smooth running of this conference.

It appears there may be some changes in the Executive this year with potential vacancies. It would be good to have some new faces on board, and dare I say it, some more younger blood would be great.

Finally, and it’s been said informally already, a big thank you to the PETS team for all their hard work in putting together what I think we would all agree has been a very successful and enjoyable conference. Thanks President Allan and especially Bob and your conference team for putting on such a great show. Those of us going are now looking forward to the post conference tour, getting under way tomorrow morning.