



Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

www.cotma.org.au

Conference General Meeting Tuesday 14 October 2014

Chairman's Report

Welcome to the 22nd Conference General Meeting of COTMA. Since we last met at St Kilda, Adelaide, two years ago, there have been on going challenges for our member groups, as well as some notable successes, which you have been highlighting in your presentations during this conference. Your Executive has also faced some challenges, not the least of which was the sudden and unexpected resignation of Chairman Ian Seymour in March this year, hence you now all have the challenge of putting up with me running today's meeting! Although he is not here, it is appropriate that I again acknowledge the long and faithful service given by Ian to the AETM and COTMA as well as other related rail/heritage organisations.

Rod's report outlines the work of the Executive team over the past two years and at this stage I would like to formally record my thanks to Rod and the rest of the team for their support and hard work. All are busy people both 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 welcome Mal Rowe to the team as a valued assistant to Rod and who has taken on some special projects such as the expansion of the COTMA awards including the new Bill Kingsley Award. My thanks also to Warren who may have thought he was escaping in his outgoing role as past Chairman, but he continues to publish the COTMA News Update, looks after the website, is involved in reviewing our Rules, and generally provides advice and assistance to the Executive team. Long may this continue!

The theme of this conference has been about taking stock of where we are and where we expect/would like to be in 10 years time. This has been an important exercise for our Members and it is also appropriate that we apply similar thinking to COTMA itself. We are now nearly 40 years old and have come a long way since that first get-together in Ballarat back in 1975 and those of you here today who were there then (or the following year in Sydney where we Kiwis were invited for the first time) are not as young as we used to be! From my own observations COTMA has come a long way since that time when there was much rivalry and distrust among groups, and when a prime goal for getting together was the acquisition of spare parts (in particular from Melbourne). Over the years we have got to know and respect each other, we have had the opportunities to meet and to showcase our museums and home towns on both sides of the Tasman and have worked well together over issues such as spare parts acquisition and other issues as they have arisen such as rail regulation. Issues continue to arise, and in particular the need to revisit and revitalise our relationship with the Victorian Government for the benefit of all COTMA Members.

But, and perhaps highlighted by the low numbers of attendees this year from some groups, and looking at the age of many of those present (how many don't have or are soon to be eligible for seniors/gold cards?), what do we need to do to ensure that COTMA is still alive and well in 2024 ? Is our current conference format and frequency still relevant? I note how some museums embrace COTMA and have multiple attendees at conferences while others struggle, or fail, to send a single representative. The programme and key note speakers this year have been topical and relevant, but Sydney struggled to get the numbers, and the submissions for COTMA achievement awards were disappointingly low. Is this a general malaise or is it more simply about people needing detailed advice and incentivising earlier so they can plan ahead? Rod also notes some COTMA membership losses.

Wearing my Christchurch hat, and assuming we are successful in confirming our bid for the 2016 conference, our team would be keen to hear, later in this meeting, and informally, your expectations for the 2016 event.

Succession planning is also needed for the COTMA Executive and while it is great that all current members (other than Warren) are putting their names forward again, his formal departure leaves one position vacant and I hope we can get some fresh blood, perhaps a little more youthful, on board. Given the current geographical spread of Executive members it would be good if a candidate to the west of Victoria would step forward.

In conclusion I wish to record my thanks and congratulations to the Sydney team for staging, after some pre-conference nervousness, what has turned out to be a successful, interesting and memorable conference. Thanks also to Peter Hyde for putting together a great pre-conference tour of which the highlight of highlights had to be seeing and riding the magnificent new Gold Coast Light Rail. A small but select group of us are looking forward to another great Richard Gilbert event, post conference, prior to returning home.

Dave Hinman

13 October 2014