

TROLLEY BUSES

Chaired by Peter Rendall, Wellington Tramway Museum

Each museum present advised the group on their current situation in respect to trolley buses.

Tramway Historical Society

The trolley bus side of the museum is an integral part of the organisation and is part of tramway history in Christchurch.

The museum has an example of a trolley bus from every city in New Zealand which operated them, however they do not have sufficient overhead erected to permit running. Wellington 103 has had a short trial run only. Within the museum a diesel bus group exists and this compliments the trolley bus aspect of preservation.

Trolley buses have been part of the Tramway Historical Society's philosophy for the past 25 years and much restoration is needed before the section will have a viable operation in a museum setting.

Melbourne Tramcar Preservation Association

Nothing established yet and are still thinking about the concept.

Museum of Transport and Technology

MOTAT owns quite a few trolley buses and has a small running loop erected but it is not complete and needs upgrading. Museum interest is not high and future is not clear. Unless this interest picks up there is a strong possibility that the buses could end up as static exhibits.

Australian Electric Transport Museum

AETM has only one diesel bus but 4 trolley buses, however interest in buses is not high. None of the buses are operable but parts are on hand to allow restoration if interest can be generated. One, a Sunbeam, is in the same condition as it was when it ceased duty and should not be difficult to get going.

The buses are all under cover and are used as static exhibits.

Perth Electric Tramway Society

PETS has two Sunbeam buses, one could go without too much trouble, however operation of these two trolley buses is difficult in competition with trams, and may well end up as static exhibits.

Tasmanian Transport Museum Society

TTMS has two operable trolley buses but no suitable site to operate them. Would like to get them a road setting to permit proper operation.

Wellington Tramway Museum

WTM possesses four trolley buses, two at Queen Elizabeth Park, one leased to the Motor Coach Museum Trust at Foxton and one in storage at Ormondville. However, member interest is not high, especially as Wellington City Transport still operates trolley buses. As the future of trolley buses is uncertain, a watching brief is being kept to see what happens. WCT is still a source of spare parts.

General Discussion

Bill Kingsley asked if Wellington City Transport (WCT) could just keep the Courtenay Place Railway Route open so as to keep the trolleys running or whether the Wellington Tramway Museum had ever considered taking over a route.

Peter Rendall explained the changes currently being implemented in the public transport sector in New Zealand with the WCT and other local authority operators having to form companies to run their services. If the trolley buses survive in Wellington it would be as a single entity with only one or two closures. The Wellington Tramway Museum has never considered taking over a route. The WCT also has four preserved trolley buses and their future is questionable if trolley buses are phased out.

John Radcliffe noted that spare parts are important especially as Wellington is the only system in operation in this part of the world and asked whether WTM co-ordinate between WCT and museum wanting to acquire parts including overhead.

General discussion then took place about the need to have access to WCT supplies, especially if they were disposing of them. It was agreed that:

1. Ian Little be approached in order to ascertain whether he was interested in being the contact for trolley bus parts and liaising with WCT.
2. COTMA should consider inviting the Motor Coach Museum Trust at Foxton to join (proposed by Mark Skinner), especially as trolley buses are part of COTMA's constitution, but the wording of the constitution might need to be modified.
3. If Ian Little is interested, museums be invited to prepare a list of parts they need.

John Bettle noted that WCT still manufactured parts, including overhead parts, and these were available for both tram and trolley bus operation.