

PRESIDENTS ADDRESS TO THE CONFERENCE GENERAL MEETING IN BRISBANE, OCTOBER 2025.

Good morning everybody and welcome to this our 50th Anniversary of COTMA.

Who would have known back in 1975 that the foresight of those early tramway enthusiasts would have resulted in today's large group meeting here today.

I was recently appraising the proceedings of our inaugural conference held in Ballarat between 25 to 27 April 1975 and was interested to note that of the 12 different groups that had attended, 9 were still in existence but that our total membership had now grown to 24 which is a reflection of what we have achieved and recognises the merits of having a cohesive and effective organisation to oversee and look after our collective interests. I could not help but note a comment made by Bill Kingsley, one of the original proponents for forming an Association when he said at the time " This Conference is the initiator of a snowball about to roll downhill, a snowball called COTMA which would slowly grow and gain momentum. Again we are warned that snowballs sometimes melt"

Today we assemble here to recognise Bill and those early organisers who set this snowball rolling recognising that it has only got bigger and has an assured future.

Any voluntary organisation is only as good as its membership and I can confidently say that our current member organisations are held in high regard both here in Australia and in New Zealand for the professionalism they have brought to the Heritage industry by preserving and operating tramcars for people to enjoy.

At the 2023 Conference in Auckland, I had indicated that if I was re-elected to the position of President, it would be unlikely that I will be seeking re-election in 2025. This time has now arrived and I have decided to move aside and hand over the reins to somebody else.

Being President of COTMA has been a very enjoyable and fulfilling occasion and I have derived great pleasure in holding this position. The fact that I was awarded a Kings Service Medal in June 2024 that recognised my lifetime involvement in Tramway Preservation and Tourism does I believe highlight not only my involvement with COTMA but the far wider Heritage Tramway movement in Australasia.

Like any organisation I could not have performed in this role without the support and co-operation of my elected Executive committee. While everybody has played their part I must single out Mal Rowe who apart from being my main support person has been the leader of the small group who have organised and led the COTMA involvement in the acquisition of trams and parts from the derelict trams stored at Newport. While some

of our members were able to get access to complete trams many of us were able to obtain required parts to assist with restoration. This was a mammoth undertaking by Mal and his team and means that a large stock of tram parts are available in our store at Bungaree for our members to access for many years to come.

It is sad to have to acknowledge the passing of many of our members many who have been the life-blood of our respective organisations however this is a fact of life with our aging membership and I encourage everybody to enjoy their hobby while they can.

Like many voluntary organisations, those engaged in the day-to-day management and operations of their groups get encouragement and support from their spouses and family and I can attest to this. Thank you Lorraine for your ongoing support in my chosen hobby.

In closing I can say unequivocally that I am leaving COTMA in a very sound position as it has met and continues to meet the expectations that our early tramway enthusiasts set back in 1975.

Henry Brittain KSM
President