

The retired trams of Newport

A PRESENTATION TO COTMA IN 2025
BY MAL ROWE



Background

In the late 1970s most W2s were retired.

Many were preserved in Australia and many were sold to the USA – especially to a dealer who onsold them to various US cities wanting a vintage tram service.

When the time came for retirement of the later Ws a group of Australians with links to the National Trust and some museum groups ran a strong campaign against further sales.

The then Minister of Transport promised that no more W class trams would be disposed of.

Eventually around 240 trams were in storage at the former Newport railway workshops.



A strategy

Several attempts were made to move the trams on, but each time the campaign to keep them re-started.

In 2018 a new attempt was made under the title of the “Retired Tram Strategy” with a high-level group of public servants. Mal Rowe of COTMA was invited to join by the Minister of Transport as a subject expert.

The promise was *“a collaborative approach with key stakeholders to find ways to repurpose these assets in line with community expectations but being realistic about what can be achieved with these assets.”*

In practice, this included a willingness to provide trams, parts and support to our members.

The strategy is outlined at: <https://www.victrack.com.au/-/media/victrack/documents/reinventing-trams/victrack-retired-trams-strategy.pdf>



What was achieved: Tramsheds

Two substantial tram depots have been built with VicTrack funding to store trams held for future use PLUS space for trams owned by the hosts.



One is at Bungaree and also holds trams of Ballarat Tramway Museum and Melbourne Tram Museum

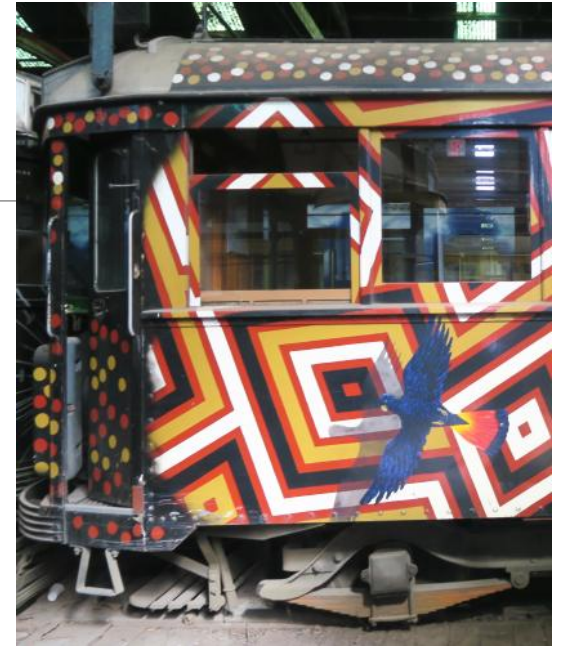
The other is at Bendigo



What was achieved:

Complete trams for preservation

- Melbourne Tram Museum
six trams including Victorian Railways No 20
- Perth Electric Tramway Society – two ‘art trams’
- Tramway Museum Society of Victoria - two trams
- Liston Transport Heritage Park – one tram
- Ballarat Tramway Museum – two trams including an ‘art tram’
- Bendigo Tramways – two trams
- Yass Railway Heritage Centre – two trams including an ‘art tram’



What was achieved: Trucks

We decided early in the process that trucks would be offered to museum groups on the basis of 'come and get them'.

- 26 pairs of trucks have been taken from Newport and most of these have been delivered to Museums.
- 6 more pairs are at Newport awaiting either collection or allocation.
- There may be a few more pairs before the end of the year.

If you want them, it's now or never!



What was achieved:

Parts that can't easily be made: **Six shipping containers**

Westinghouse self-lapping
brake valve

Dual pressure gauge

Motorman's door valve

Line Breaker

Compressor switch

Car light switch

Headlight changeover
switch

Windscreen wiper motor
(air operated)

EE controller

RC2 controller

Handbrake staff

Line Breaker

Safety Valve

Relay valve

Double check valve

Compressor Governor

Brake cylinder (8")

Resistance grids EE

Resistance grids RC2

Compressor (Westinghouse DH 16)

Contactors Boxes RC2

Trolley pole

Route number box



Helping other recipients

One of the key factors in the strong support we have received from VicTrack is our assistance to other non museum groups in getting parts and giving advice to the many other recipients of trams for various commercial and non-commercial re-purposing.

Bendigo Tramways have been active in preparation of trams for various uses.



Sharing the parts

- Requests from COTMA member tramways for parts and infrastructure items can be directed to the Parts Management Group via the COTMA secretary.
- The application must include justification of current or near future needs.
- Applications for building up stocks of spares for long term use in a particular museum will not be considered.
- It is recognised that heritage tramways with intense operations – sometimes 7 days a week – will need to hold some key spares ‘in stock’.
- The policy and template are at: <https://www.cotma.org.au/documents.html>



Thanks



Many people have put in a lot of time and effort over 8 years (so far) to achieve this outcome:

- VicTrack and the Victorian government have been generous beyond state borders in ensuring a 'treasure trove' of tram parts are not lost.
- Mal Rowe has worked consistently with and for VicTrack in supporting the project
- Tony Smith has provided much valued expert advice and hands on work on the policy and its implementation.
- Individual museums – notably Ballarat Tramway Museum- have cooperated to get parts and trucks out of Newport to their new owners.



Ending

The program is set to conclude this year.

This presentation was prepared in the last couple of days.

It almost certainly has errors and omissions.

Please accept my apologies if your special interest or experience has been left out.

It has been a busy but rewarding 8 years!

Mal Rowe

