



## **COTMA Conference General Meeting Wellington 2010 Chairman's Report**

COTMA Members through working together as an umbrella organisation continues to provide assistance to each another in many ways. The networks that have built up over many years are invaluable to our Member's activities and future plans. The Conference personal interactionst enables these networks to be maintained and strengthened. COMTA itself has continued to be actively involved in many matters as outlined below.

Through working closely with the three Australasian industry umbrella bodies; the Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Australia (ATHRA) the Federation of Rail Organisations of New Zealand (FRONZ) and the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) and it's standard making component, the Rail Industry Standards and Safety Board (RISSB).

Over the last four or so years, I have spent a lot of time on ATHRA matters, primarily rail safety, attending many meetings on behalf of the rail heritage sector. This has continued to reduce my time available on COTMA matters and other projects I would like to have been involved with.

I noted that in the last report, that a single rail safety regulator in Australia was a possibility. Work towards this has now commenced with a target date of 1/1/2013. All I can say, is that there are a lot of different views on how the rail industry should be regulated by the various states. ATHRA is involved as a stakeholder in many forums. The most important elements ATHRA sees are no fees for the tourist and heritage sector, rolling over existing SMS's with minimal change and having all the regulatory documents fully scalable. Quite a few of the remote regional railways in Australia may only operate once a month. A comment I often receive is the oppressive amount of paperwork that needs to be maintained and submitted, while other areas of museum development suffer. Community expectations are vastly different from those of 30 years ago.

The regulatory situation in New Zealand continues to change as well. While it may not be entirely safety related, the FRONZ Newsletters make interesting reading to see what is happening. Although the directions and outcomes may not be exactly the same, the subjects are often similar.

COTMA News Updates continue to be issued; ten since the last conference. The distribution of these includes some 80 ordinary members via e-mails. More names are always welcomed. Printed copies continue to be sent to each Member organisation.

I noted in the last report, the COTMA web site was a bit clunky in terms of style and feel. The web site has been refreshed using Dreamweaver software, to include photographs of our Member operations. A separate report has been issued on the web site. Past Conference proceedings are now available on the site. It is planned to have the full set available by 2011. Thanks to John Radcliffe for the scanning of these papers. The 2010 Conference papers and proceedings should be on the web site by November 2010.

Through our good working relationship with VicTrack, the owner of trams and equipment now surplus to Melbourne's needs continues to see many trams and extensive equipment go to our Members since the last conference and further is in the pipeline. The expansion of tramway heritage networks in particular New Zealand; is impressive. The generosity of the State of Victoria is again recorded. The Executive continues to put a lot of work into this area, in co-ordinating items etc. It is not easy given the workload that we are all under these days. Thanks to those outside the Executive who continue to assist us in advice regarding condition, transport etc.

I would also like to record the work of Paul Dillicar, as past Executive Officer and President of FRONZ. The healthy state of rail heritage in New Zealand is a reflection of Paul's work and we all wish him the best for his future following his recent ill health.

The Executive met twice since the last conference, once in Adelaide and earlier this year in Wellington. Such meetings are important in the work of COTMA and enable the organisation to review and plan its activities.

COTMA currently has 16 full members and 11 Affiliate Members. Heritrac and the Glenreagh Mountain Railway have resigned as Affiliate Members.

In Victoria we have seen the recent passing of a Tourist and Heritage Railway Bill. While primarily set up for the existing Tourist Railways that operate under an Order In Council arrangement within Victoria, it will involve the tramway museums at a later date. One of the good things about the Bill is recognition that it gives formal recognition of the sector, something that has long been needed.

Another good thing that I see happening within our Membership is number of formal Significance Assessments being carried out on their collections. Such assessments are vital in obtaining the formal recognition of our important collections by various bodies. I encourage all Members to have these prepared by Independent Consultants. Heritage Victoria is undertaking a study of the Melbourne Tramway system as part of the update of the Victorian Heritage Register in respect to tramway items. This study includes the consideration of the tramcars themselves. I was pleased to be invited to be part of the committee that appointed the consultant and that oversee their work.

COTMA has been assisting its Members for 35 years. Over those years, we have seen the street tramway industry turn a full cycle. From systems closing because they were then considered an outmoded form of transport to one that is now opening a large number of new systems around the world each year in providing public transport. The various Tramway Museums themselves are often witnessing a revival in their own or nearby cities once again, either as a Heritage Tramway network or an expansion of an existing network or as new network. Tramways / Light Rail are coming back to Australia. This gives an interesting problem to future Museum managers when today's new equipment is retired; do you collect them too?

It has been pleasing to work again with the Executive Committee and many others for the enhancing of COTMA's activities and for the overall benefit of our Membership.

Warren Doubleday