

Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

www.cotma.org.au

News Update

August 2026



Ballarat tram 14 during the 2026 Winter Festival. The tram has been rewired and low voltage lighting installed. The neon lights are a temporary fitting. Photo Benjamin Boehle Mitchell 25-7-2026

**UPDATE IS FOR ALL OF YOUR MEMBERS.
PLEASE FORWARD IT TO ALL ON YOUR E-MAIL LISTS**

Your To-Do List

- ✓ *Mark 17 to 20 September 2027 in your diary as dates to keep free for the 2027 COTMA conference.*
- ✓ *Check if any interest in obtaining the castings for W5 strap hanger and bellcord brackets*
- ✓ *Review the Transport Heritage NSW paper on the Lifecycle of Volunteers*
- ✓ *Review the two documents regarding tram electrical voltages and general safety.*

COTMA Conference 2027

Planning for the 2027 COTMA conference to be held in Ballarat is well underway. The conference is scheduled to be held from Friday 17 September to Monday 20 September 2027. The conference venue is planned to be the VRI building, a short walk from the Ballarat station. It is opposite the North Star Hotel at the intersection of Lydiard Street North and Seymour St. There is plenty of accommodation within the vicinity.

Website Revision

A consultant – ASCET Digital has been appointed to undertake the reconstruction of the website. Work is well underway.

UK Tram – Pedestrian Collision

The report of a collision between a Sheffield tram and two pedestrians at a crossing has been published by UK Rail Accident Branch. The report noted issues with the crossing itself, and the audible warning devices fitted to the tram.

“The investigation found that the pedestrians were unaware of the approaching tram as they crossed into its path. This was because the pedestrians had not recognised the approach of the tram and they were not alerted to the approaching tram by the tram’s audible warning devices. Additionally, the crossing layout and signage did not effectively alert the pedestrians to the risk from approaching trams.”

It is important when operating trams for the driver to be aware of the behaviour of pedestrians who may be unaware of the tram and that they may not have heard the warning gongs or similar.

The report can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/report-102026-collision-between-a-tram-and-two-pedestrians-at-staniforth-road>

W5 and SW5 Bellcord/strap hanger support castings pattern.

The Ballarat Tramway Museum has had a pattern made to enable the casting of new brackets that support the strap hanger rod and the bellcord in W4, W5 and those W5s that were converted into SW5s. If any Museum wishes to have some cast, please contact Paul Mong at paul.mong@btm.org.au



Photo of one the new bellcord support castings.

Transferring the knowledge

At the recent Executive meeting, there was discussion on the education of volunteers about tramway infrastructure and equipment, their features and uses. This is important to enable them to deal with visitor enquiries. Information can be overwhelming, especially to new volunteers. It is desirable to have an education program whose curriculum is staged and doesn't lead to information overload.

The COTMA Website Library section has available for download, textbooks such as the ICS manuals which are applicable to most of our tramcars and equipment and give a great background knowledge and historical information.

Volunteering Lifecycles

The Transport Heritage NSW May 2026 Sector Development Day looked at a number of issues affecting the Rail Heritage Sector. Their programme started with a presentation looking at volunteers and their involvement. One item reviewed was the issues your organisation faces with volunteering. For example:

- Diversify age range
- Diversify vols' background
- Education re rules and regs
- Understanding potential vols availability
- Local engagement (and access to site/yard)
- Understanding cost of living constraints on availability
- Limited time
- The 'grey wall'
- The 'old ways'
- Succession planning
- Understanding shifting motivations
- Understanding capacity of those interested

A copy of the Transport Heritage NSW document is attached. Thanks to the Sydney Tramway Museum for making, it available to us.

Electrical Voltage issues

FEDECRAIL (The European heritage rail umbrella body) recently published a note on "Managing Higher Voltages while operating Heritage Trams) – see

https://mcusercontent.com/2a9aef8d8a2adb4311c85caa0/files/73c21509-5a1c-44e6-4aa7-f4b37c975ce9/Managing_Higher_Voltages_Industry_Insight_ENGLISH_June26.pdf

This note looks at issues with operating heritage tramcars operating on active modern tramway networks, often with increasing line voltages and aging insulation of wiring on tramcars themselves. They note that vehicle condition is a key and the use of low voltage lighting systems. While none of us currently operate on 'new' light rail or tramway systems, as is done in Europe, many of the considerations are applicable.

Reference is made to Richard Clarke et al of the Sydney Tramway Museum paper at the 1988 Sydney Conference titled "Electrical Supply and Electrical Safety Standards". -

https://cotma.org.au/documents/sydney_1988/Sydney%201988%20-%20-%20Paper%207.pdf

S Buckles

The recent very hot weather in Europe has caused a number of heritage railways to have buckled track that took the shape of a S. Given the predictions of a very hot and dry summer in parts of Australia, we could see the same here too.

MOTAT Launches Wanganui Trailer No. 21

Following on from the last issue of News Update, MOTAT (Auckland) formally launched Wanganui trailer No. 21 on Sunday 22 March 2026. The story of the work can be seen at <https://www.motatsociety.org.nz/post/tram-trailer-21>

This is an excellent example of a COTMA Member's work and setting the standards for presentation and reconstruction. The tram itself is fully convertible from an open cross bench to an enclosed saloon tram as shown in the two photographs.

Two photos by Leyton Chan illustrate this:



Photo of the tram taken on 8/3/2026 as an open Toastrack trailer.



Interior of the tramcar showing the excellent work in the finished tram with the sides closed off to become an enclosed trailer.