

Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

www.cotma.org.au

News Update

November 2024



Melbourne Art Tram 829 – Lin Onus

Photo: Public Records Office of Victoria

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

Your To-Do List

- ✓ *Review your need for Melbourne No 15 trucks and GE247 motors*
- ✓ *Mark 10th to 13th of October 2025 in your diary as dates to keep free for the 2025 COTMA conference.*
- ✓ *Think about what you can contribute to the Tram Museum Community by preparing a paper for presentation at the conference.*

From the President

It has been just over twelve months since we had our 2023 Conference in Auckland and we are now less than 12 months away from our next one, scheduled for October 2025 in Brisbane.

How time flies when you are actively engaged in our pastime of operating and preserving our collection of Heritage trams. Some of our working trams are now over a century old and still operating faultlessly which reflects the dedication, professionalism and commitment we collectively bring to our hobby.

2024 has been a year of achievement for many of our groups and some of these are outlined further down in this newsletter. Aside from these individual achievements, it is also pleasing to see a wind down of the Spare Parts Committee who through their efforts have made available a large range of tram parts for our members either directly or indirectly by placing them in storage for future use. Through the generosity of VicTrack and those COTMA members who oversaw the acquisition and dispersal of these items, we have been able to set up a facility containing a large amount of parts that will keep all of us satisfied for many years. Our thanks go to all involved.

As the end of 2024 approaches, may I wish all of our members and especially my Committee, thanks for their contributions over the past year and their commitment in maintaining COTMA as a vibrant and professional organisation preserving Tramway Heritage in Australasia.

Finally on a finishing note, many thanks to all those kind individuals who sent me congratulations on my being awarded a Kings Service Medal in June of this year. I regard this award as a wider recognition of our efforts in showcasing an important part in the development of each of our individual nations as without our dedication, our Heritage items would have been confined to only pictorial records.

Henry Brittain. KSM
November 2024

Parts

In 2017, VicTrack started a process to move over 200 withdrawn trams out of storage by offering them for re-purposing. COTMA recognized this as possibly the last opportunity in the world to collect equipment designed and built in the first part of the 20th century for heritage tram restoration and maintenance.

Our focus has been on parts that are not able to be manufactured at any reasonable cost, including motors, compressors, brake valves, governors and other valves. COTMA now has five 40-foot containers and one 20-foot container filled with these parts. In addition, 28 pairs of trucks have been allocated to us with 25 of those sets passed on to museums and 3 sets in storage at Bungaree awaiting allocation.

The last trams will leave Newport over the next few months.

WE NEED TO KNOW NOW THE REMAINING APPETITE (AND CAPACITY) FOR MEMBER MUSEUMS TO TAKE TRUCKS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO BECOME AVAILABLE OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

Please send an email stating your requests - based on your capacity to collect the trucks from Newport by the end of February 2025 – to Mal Rowe, COTMA secretary and secretary to the parts group.

COTMA conference 2025



Brisbane's early electric trams Photo Mal Rowe

The 2025 COTMA conference will be held in Brisbane.

This conference marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of COTMA in 1975.

Registration and welcome will be on Friday 10th of October and the Conference will conclude on Monday 13th of October. The venue is likely to be the central Brisbane City area.

While this is still about a year away, it is time to start thinking of subjects for papers to be presented. The formal call for these will occur in January next year.

Before the Conference

Some COTMA members may like to take part in the New South Wales Transport Heritage Expo which runs the weekend before the conference – from Saturday 4th of October to Monday 6th of October.

Other options to fill in the days between could include riding the City and South East Light Rail (tramway) in Sydney, looking at the new Parramatta tramway and checking out the latest extensions to the Gold Coast tramway.

Canberra and Newcastle have also installed new tramways since we last had a conference on the East Coast of Australia!

MOTAT turns 60

Congratulations to all at MOTAT on the occasion of the 60th birthday of the organisation in October this year. The Western Springs Tramway forms the core and skeleton of the MOTAT sites. Graham Stewart had planted the seed when he and others formed the “Old Time Transport Preservation League” to preserve some trams. As they say, the rest is history!

Henry gets a Gong



Henry Brittain, Wellington Tramway Museum Secretary (and former President) Henry Brittain has been awarded the Kings Service Medal in the Kings Birthday list. This is very high recognition of service to the community. Congratulations Henry – and thanks!

Henry is also President of COTMA. Henry was presented with his medal on 5th September 2024 and is pictured here with the NZ Governor General, Her Excellency the Rt. Hon. Dame Cindy Kiro.

Bendigo extensions and workshop opened

Bendigo Tramway received a grant from the Victorian Government to improve their site including workshops redevelopment, landscaping and a large storage shed at the rear of the depot several years back. The work was finished and launched by local Member of Parliament and Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan in May 2024. New facilities include a professional quality paint booth, a wheel lathe and a remarkable battery powered tram transporter.



CEO James Reade is seen at the opening and the tram mover is pictured at right

Photos Mal Rowe

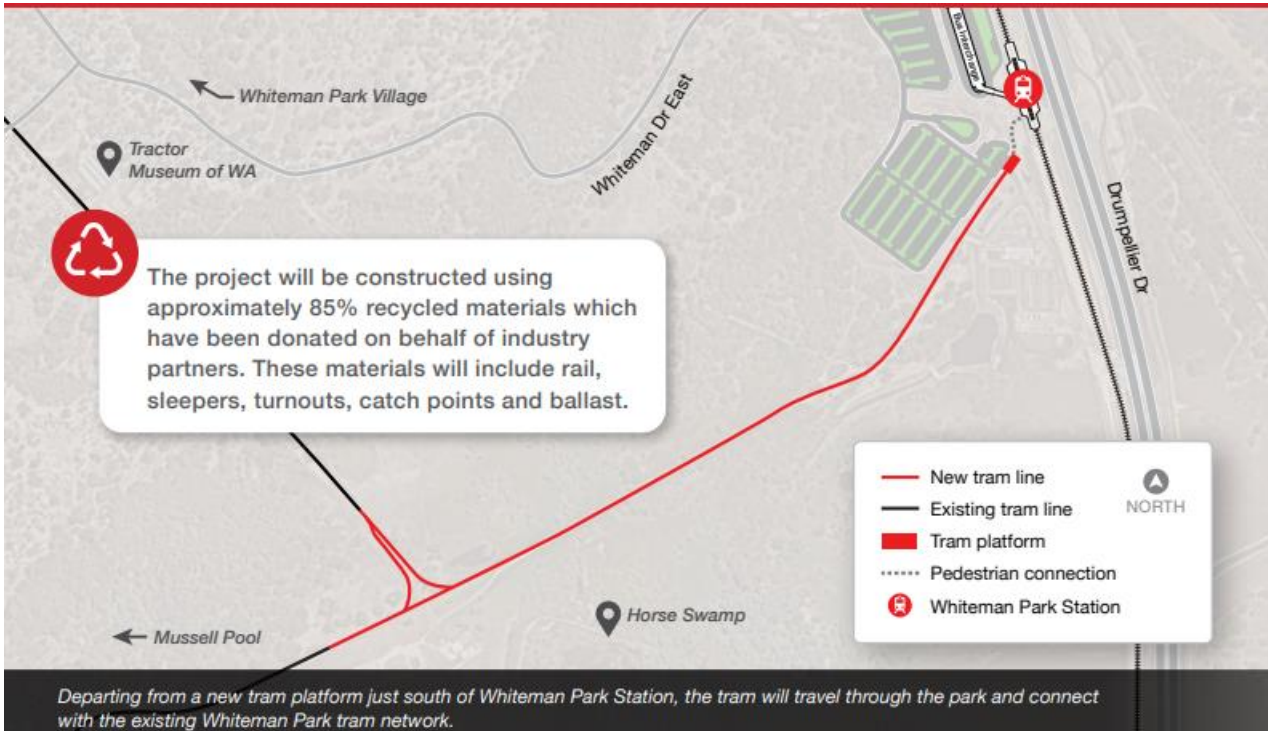
Brisbane power woes to end

High Voltage equipment in the Brisbane Tramway Museum substation at Ferny Grove was found to be on the brink of failure in November 2023. The switchboard has an 11,000 volt busbar which is essentially a cylindrical “tube” that carries the 11,000 volt conductors from the incoming to the outgoing side of the switchboard. Inside this “tube” are three conductors surrounded by a large quantity of bitumen insulation. During substation maintenance it was noticed that bitumen was leaking from one of the filling caps on the busbar. The system was turned off before failure. Replacement costs are prohibitive, so the electrical team at BTMS has set out to restore the equipment in line with old techniques, but to modern standards. The task is nearly complete with plans to re-commence electric tram operations in December.

New station at Whiteman Park to bring crowds to Perth tramway museum

Perth will see the official opening of a new railway to Ellenbrook on Sunday Dec 8th, 2024. Full normal train services start on Mon Dec 9th.

The line has a station at Whiteman Park, home to the Perth Electric Tramway Society and their tramway is seen as the logical 'distributor' for the park – much like Western Springs Tramway at MOTAT in Auckland. The extension is being built for PETS as part of the Ellenbrook Metronet project.



The extension to the tramline to Entrance (Whiteman Park Railway Station) is also scheduled to open on Sunday Dec 8th. The first two trams in convoy will be locals: WAGT 66 and FMT 29.

Tram operating days will remain as Tuesday, Friday, Sat, Sun and Public Hols between 11.00 and 4.00pm

AMAGA award to Ballarat Tramway Museum

Congratulations to the Ballarat Tramway Museum on winning the Victorian Museums & Galleries Award for a Volunteer Run Project - Creating a Contemporary and Accessible Tramway Museum. Archival Survival, the BTM's supplier of archival storage materials, sponsored the Award received on 1 October.

The Judges commented:

"This project skillfully used innovative technology to engage all age groups, transforming visitor experiences and making Ballarat's history more accessible. It quadrupled visitation and extended visits from under 20 minutes to 2-3 hours. The integration of tech greatly increased access to the museum's collections, demonstrating clear innovation and significantly boosting community engagement."

Ballarat will celebrate 50 years of tram operation in Wendouree Pde on Boxing Day, 26 December 2024.



Another Art tram to Ballarat

SW5 tram number 829 was painted by first nations artist Lin Onus in 1991. (A picture of 929 in 1991 is our cover photo.)

It is considered to be one of the best of the series and was celebrated with a new art tram inspired by the original design in 2022.

929 has been given to the Ballarat Tramway Museum where it will join the original art tram painted by Clifton Pugh.



The 2022 version of Lin Onus' tram.

Mal Rowe

Christchurch accident

Brill #178 was involved in an accident in April when a member of the public drove into the side of the tram while exiting the Arts Centre. There were no injuries, however there was substantial damage to the PC5 Controller under the side of the tram ... and to the motor car!

The tram has been made temporarily operational and full repairs will be made using PC5 parts held by COTMA since the withdrawal of the H type trams in Adelaide.

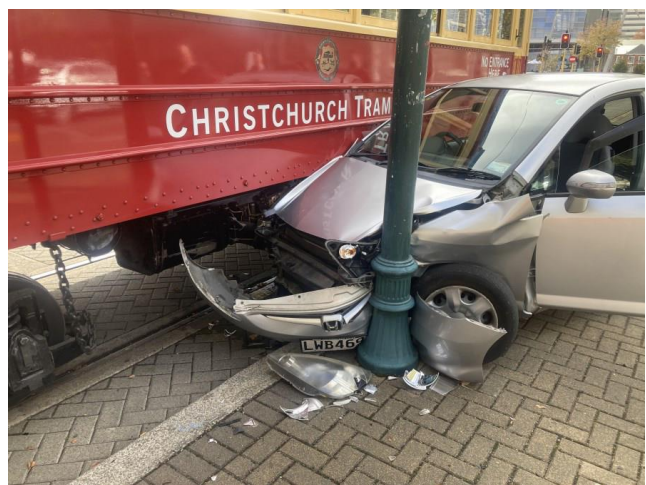


Photo courtesy THS

50 years on the salt pans



The 50th Anniversary of tram rides at the Australian Electric Transport Museum at St Kilda, South Australia was celebrated on Sunday 28 April 2024.

The opportunity was taken to launch 'Bib and Bub' tram 14-15.

Photo by
Sean Zhang

Any News?

Museum News in COTMA News update is always of interest. If you have something to tell us, then we would be delighted to hear at cotma@cotma.org.au