FRONZ
FEDERATION OF RAIL ORGANISATIONS OF NEW ZEALAND

Dear Henry and the COTMA family,

On behalf of the Federation of Rail Organisations of New Zealand, I want to welcome COTMA to the 50 club!

At FRONZ's 50th anniversary conference in June, Peter Hyde from Brisbane Tramways gave us an overview of the terrific work you do, and what is in store for your celebration. I'm sorry that I cannot make it, as it sounds like it will be a good deal of fun.

Instead, I'll be in the South Island city of Dunedin, for the first in-person meeting of a new FRONZ executive. While we cannot make it over, we will be thinking of you all, and of the stories and tales you'll be sharing this weekend.

There is a tramway component to my weekend, though. We'll be making a visit to the Dunedin Cable Car Museum to see the wonderfully restored cars and trailers in their collection… for those of you who haven't been, it's well worth a visit, should you ever find yourself in the brisk nether regions of New Zealand.

Fifty years is a remarkable milestone, and no small feat. It's an accomplishment that could only happen with the collective effort from the people - past and present - who laid the foundations for us.

Our respective organisations run on the goodwill of everyday volunteers – the people who give up their time to keep heritage trams, trains, rolling stock and museums alive for new generations to enjoy and experience.

Yet time is a precious commodity.

Like the FRONZ family, many of your members will be volunteering already, caring for their families, working one or more day jobs, and sorting the necessities of life. Lord knows, toilet paper doesn't buy itself, and dinner doesn't magically appear on the table (at least for me, it doesn't!)

Life pulls at us from every direction, and despite that, there are still people who happily give their precious time to keep our history alive.

There are times of challenge, of joy, of laughter and frustration. But we keep doing it.

When COTMA and FRONZ were formed in 1975, I doubt any right-minded individual would have been thinking about either organisation reaching 50 years. Our founders wanted to bring groups together to celebrate a shared passion, and to overcome issues collectively.

An army of volunteers and workers have done that – year after year, after year – for half a century.

Today, our organisations face different challenges and work in different environments than what anyone would have expected in 1975. But here we are, surviving, thriving and adapting. We are building on the legacy of our founders, and – if we do it right – that work will continue well into the future.

Our 100th anniversaries will be for a new generation to celebrate, though.

It's our job to lay the foundation for them, just like the founders of COTMA and FRONZ did for us.

But this weekend… this weekend is for you.

It's about celebrating, reflecting and telling stories from the past – especially the tales that would give the health and safety people a heart attack.

On behalf of my executive and our more-than 60 member groups, I extend my warmest wishes to you all.

Happy 50th anniversary – and enjoy!

Jeff Tollan,
FRONZ President