COTMA – The Future

A Discussion to Define our New and Evolving Directions

Presenter: Lindsay Richardson, PETS, current COTMA Chairman
Session Chair: Colin Seymour *Session Secretary: Peter Stock*

Notes from the Session Secretary

Lindsay commenced this session with the quote, "Look to the past to find the future". He referred to a remark that in early days PETS was thought to not be able to establish itself, but this was "spur under the saddle to attain better things".

Looking back, all groups are still in existence, with the exception of one that failed. Member organisations comprise 80% traditional museum operations and 20% commercial museums.

Lindsay expressed a note of caution – preserve the past? preserve the future (eg Melbourne Z)? COTMA as an organising body handles tramcar distribution and spare parts. It has been held back in this since 1990.

He referred to the stored trams at Newport with the general observation and comment that the Victorian Government has to listen to all community views, and that includes "paddling through" minority non-tram museum bodies.

COTMA also provides to member museums:

- Bi-annual conferences;
- Tour organising;
- Fraternity to enjoy each other's company.

Mr Richardson then went on to invite questions from the assembled member organisations. The request was for new ideas for the COTMA operations in the future. (However, Mr Richardson did indicate his disappointment that there was, in recent times, no – or at best vague – member feedback).

Discussion

Anthony Smith (MTP) – COTMA needs to structure an active section re the W2 situation and needs more up-front push regarding this situation. It should have more input into the situation. COTMA should consider part-time consultants to further claims. Anthony observed that the present situation is a disgrace and needs working through, but with no reflection on COTMA. He referred to blueprints at Preston Workshop. He also referred to the loss of parts and other items at Spotswood. Anthony observed that COTMA should be there first before items are lost.

Bill Kingsley (BTM) – Bill replied to blueprints having been seen, but no action as yet.

Rod Atkins (TSMV) – Rod replied at length about details of contracts with Mike Ryan (Department of Infrastructure, Transport Heritage). He reminded the meeting that Mr Ryan was to speak at the conference the next day (Monday). Rod commented that the heritage review of Victorian groups (and the minorities) are with the Minister. He explained Newport's background and the submission by a COTMA member regarding this. He commented that COTMA is talking to the right people but was worried that it is not in anyone's interest to "rock the boat or go to the media", it being viewed at this time as a no/no option. Rod requested more follow-up notes to member museums regarding developments.

Graham Breydon (PBPS) – Graham said that government is aware of this disposal and spoke of studies relating to the matters. What assets they have and how to responsibly try to do something properly with the issue.

John Radcliffe (AETM) – John said that in the early days the National Trust was not interested. Andrew Neil has been through all this before and was able to negotiate participation in heritage issues.

Tim Borchers (CDB) – Tim spoke of having needed to "rock the boat" in the past and had made submissions through COTMA also. He talked about separate submissions dealing with each car at Newport. An industry body as commercial operations with Australian Standards is needed. Tim enquired whether COTMA has, and should need, a business plan to take member groups into the future.

Bruce Gamble (MOTAT) – Bruce spoke of human resourcing of museums relating to age, and encouraging people. He also talked about succession within COTMA as, with no disrespect, the same faces are on the Board. (Mr Gamble posed these comments as questions for the member groups to give thought).

Lindsay Richardson summed up the questions and comments:

- In general terms COTMA is meeting expectations;
- These issues need to be put for endorsement at the general meeting and need to be further developed.