



Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

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News Update – July 2008

From the Chairman

It has been a while (March) since the last News Update. My eight week trip to Europe was most enjoyable, but it is now back to the grindstone once again. The trip was timed with the Fedecrail conference in Salzburg. Salzburg has a very extensive trolley bus system, which is considered as a railway by the Regulators in Austria – the tracks are in the air! While on the subsequent tour around Austria, which included Peter Hyde of Brisbane, we visited Graz, a wonderful tramway system with narrow trams in narrow streets, Gmunden – the world's smallest tramway system, Innsbruck, a steam tram and electric tram museum in Mariazell and of course Vienna. After the conference, I visited Prague (full and standing tramcars even at 2.30am in the morning), Berlin, Potsdam, Munich and Woltersdorf to the east of Berlin. The latter is very reminiscent of Ballarat, road side running, crossing the road a number of times, four wheel trams and a lovely lakeside terminus with a working canal lock to have lunch. Well recommended. A subsequent visit to the UK included a visit to Crich, Blackpool, Croydon (London) and Nottingham. Interesting to see the contrasts between the old and the new.

The Fedecrail Conference was interesting, with a number of European developments that could impact on rail heritage in the future. I presented a paper on behalf of Chris LeMarshall, ATHRA's heritage liaison officer, titled The Heritage Rail Sector – Interaction with the Rail Industry and Government The Australian Experience Are There any Lessons? The comments received back was that the regulatory situation in the UK and parts of Europe is very similar, but it seems that the volume of paperwork required in Australia and thus the resultant effort is a lot larger.

Changes in the air – one regulator and other changes

One of the agenda items for discussion at the COTMA August 2008 Launceston Conference will be the ramifications of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) move to a single rail safety regulator. Although the formal decision was not to be made until late July 2008, it is very likely. The problem for COTMA Members who operate trams is that the Safety Goal Posts (the documentation system) are very likely to change again unless we are able to find an alternative approach or method. However, hopefully, those with good systems already in place should not be forced to change once again.

ATHRA in a June 2008 discussion paper found a number of issues with the possible move to a single national rail safety regulator and the current regulatory system. The system is now oppressive, impeding development and being based around heavy railways; and is not scalable for heritage rail operators. It also found that there is a problem with regulatory staff in many places understanding the heritage sector. In many heritage railways, there is a significant problem of finding people willing to prepare this paperwork or having the necessary technical skills. We are already seeing this within the COTMA membership.

Part of the problem is that we are being caught up in the National transport network deliberations. Heritage railways and museum tramways are not part of the National Transport sector, we are part of the Tourism sector.

What does this mooted change mean potentially for our small sector? Further closures or moves to static museums are very likely. The enjoyment of preserving an important community heritage asset is going fast due to the nature of the regulatory systems that we are now facing. COTMA will work closely with ATHRA to try and find an appropriate solution, but there are no guarantees. As it was pointed out by one President of a COTMA Museum; *"But equally realistically, it is difficult to get bureaucrats to let go of anything"*.

ATHRA Submission to National OH&S Review

ATHRA has made a submission to the National Review of OH&S laws. It encompasses many of the problems that we are having with Regulators and other issues. It promotes the need for Codes of Practices. It can be viewed on the COTMA web site (see the Latest News tab) and will also be available on the ATHRA web site.

2008 COTMA Conference

Bookings for the 2008 Launceston Conference, commencing Friday 22 August are progressing well. Please book by the end of July to ensure your preferred accommodation in Launceston and your spot for the Post Conference tour.

Booking forms are downloadable or can be done online by using the links on the COTMA web site: <http://members.optushome.com.au/cotma/documents/COTMA%20Conference%202008%20Invite.pdf>

Conference details, programme etc can be viewed on the COTMA website at the following link - <http://members.optushome.com.au/cotma/conference.html>

• Conference General Meeting

The Conference General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 26 August. The draft Agenda and Notice of Meeting is included within this mailout. Delegates should be aware of any items that may require decision by your Board/Committee prior to the meeting. One of the items for decision will be the Tram Equipment Protocol.

VicTrack assisted by the Executive has developed a draft protocol regarding equipment that has been donated to COTMA Members by VicTrack. The protocol provides a basis for the use, transfer between members and any disposal of the equipment. A draft copy is attached to this mailout. It has been sent to Members for formal consideration and is proposed to be finalised at this year's Conference General Meeting. Each COTMA Member accepting tram equipment and tramway infrastructure items from Victrack is expected to formally ratify and accept the Protocol.

• BRAGs (or what has your Museum Achieved since the last COTMA Conference)

As in past conferences, we will be having sessions that enable your Museum to tell the rest of us what you have been doing since the last Conference. Presentations can be video, DVD, slides, or PowerPoint. Please limit your presentation to no more than 10 mins.

Disappearing Consumable Items

Incandescent Light Bulbs – both Australia and New Zealand have announced the phasing out of Incandescent light bulbs. This move is being followed around the world as well it appears. While in the future, alternatives for the bulbs we use in tramcars, may be developed, all we can say at this time is “go out and stock up”. Electric light bulbs if safely stored, don't have a shelf life.

Slotted Head Screws – another legacy item which is becoming almost unavailable in Australia and New Zealand due to the small use by industry and the prevalence of machine driven screws. At this time, they are available in the UK and the USA and from undertaking a web search, from India – for example: <http://www.brasparts.com/brass-wood-screws.htm> Information about suppliers would be most welcome.

Items within this mailout or from the COTMA web site:

1. Notice of Conference General Meeting
2. Draft Conference Agenda
3. Draft Protocol with VicTrack

Next News update – September 2008 – after the Launceston Conference