

Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

www.cotma.org.au

News Update

May 2026



MOTAT's newly restored Wanganui trailer No 21 was tested behind Baldwin steam motor No 100 on Tuesday 17 March, before its official launch the following Sunday. (David Cawood)

**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.
- ✓ Advise the Secretary of your potential requirements for wheel and axle sets.
- ✓ Check if any interest in former Brisbane dreadnought tram No 133 now looking for a new home.
- ✓ Check if any interest in former Z3 class tram inverters.

From the President

The first four months of year has been a very busy period for most museums. The committee has already convened twice over this period and exchanged emails to discuss a number of issues both ongoing and new ones raised by members as well as relevant news from overseas.

Please take the time both to read and pass on to all your members the items contained in this newsletter. Some are very important safety management items that the responsible people need to be aware of. Going forward, we now have some dates for the 2027 Conference in Ballarat so you can mark in your diary's. If you have any articles and or stories you feel other COTMA museums need to know about, please don't hesitate to let us know for inclusion in these regular newsletters.

From the Secretary

I am writing to bring member organisations up to date with some discussions at the last COTMA executive committee meeting on Sunday 10 May. These matters may be of wider interest. The next executive committee meeting will be held on Sunday 26 July followed by Sunday 18 October. If you have any matters you would like to be discussed please contact Robert Lee at robslee14@gmail.com

COTMA Conference 2027

This will be hosted by Ballarat Tramway Museum and run from Friday 17 to Monday 20 September 2027. Venue arrangements and accommodation options are currently being explored.



On his first day fully qualified in the role, Ballarat Tramway Museum's youngest driver Reg De Leon chats with colleagues on Monday 9 March during the 2026 Begonia Festival, while waiting for a cross at Gardens Loop. (James Sediakin)

New wheel and axle sets

Some member organisations are interested in obtaining axle and wheel sets. Advice from MOTAT in Auckland is that a pair of new sets with tyres from South Africa costs about \$40,000. Please let the secretary know if your museum is interested in obtaining any, advising the wheel sizes needed. This will allow the executive committee to evaluate whether a bulk purchase arrangement could be worthwhile.

National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers (2024)

Peter Hyde of Brisbane Tramway Museum reported that a review is being done of medical requirements for small tourist and heritage operators, starting with the Bundaberg Steam Tramway Preservation Society and the Brisbane Tramway Museum. This will take some time (years rather than months) and relief from the impositions of medical testing is a possibility but not assured.

Meanwhile, all members are advised that a sleep study is required for volunteer drivers whose STOP-BANG score is three or more (almost all males over 50 years of age). See <https://www.cotma.org.au/documents/brisbane%202025/COTMA%20Papers/Health%20COTMA%20Presentation1.pdf> for more details.

Visiting drivers

Policy on visiting drivers was discussed. From these discussions, it emerged that there are two types of visiting driver:

1. Social visits, which are generally arranged informally. In all such cases, a locally accredited driver must accompany the visiting driver and passengers may not be carried.
2. Policy on drivers visiting for a longer period or to assist with special events varies. Such drivers are expected to be competent and qualified to carry passengers. The general principles are that (1) a formal process of route familiarisation is required, although details vary, and (2) the driver must be properly accredited at their home museum. For example, for Ballarat visiting drivers have to work as a conductor for

three days before they can train to drive with passengers. The committee's impression was that Sydney and Perth have the greatest need for visiting drivers to cover traffic peaks and absences. All visiting drivers operating trams carrying passengers are obliged to meet the medical requirements of the National Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers (2024).



Variotram 2107 is one of the world's first low-floor trams to be preserved in operating condition. While it does not yet carry passengers, it performed exhibition runs at the Sydney Tramway Museum's Vintage Tramway Festival on 22 February. Adam Greaves in bowler hat is minding his penny farthing bicycle while explaining the use of a staff. (James Sediakin)

Expressions of interest in BCC 133

Whanganui Tramways currently holds Brisbane City Council Dreadnought 133 and wishes to dispose of it. It has been kept under cover since it came to New Zealand in 1968, and is complete but is not operable. It is relatively straightforward to restore as it has no side windows and only hand brakes. Any member museum wishing to obtain this car is invited to submit an expression of interest to the secretary. The tram will be free, but all transport costs must be met by the museum taking the tram.



BCC Dreadnought car No 133 entered service in 1913 and is seen here at Ipswich Road Depot in the post-war period. It is now available to an interested museum. (Brisbane Tramway Museum collection)

COTMA website

The executive committee has decided to have a new website designed. The problem of representing all our members, rather just one or two on the main or home page was discussed. Member organisations can expect a call for recent photographs, and/or possibly reels, and information to come from COTMA to assist with development of the new website, probably in August. So, it's appropriate to think about assembling a portfolio of a few photos and a movie or reel clip.

Parts Group Report

COTMA's Parts Working Group has continued to work on parts management since the Conference update last year. This update reflects activity since that time.

Parts storage and containers:

In late March 2026 Alex Hunter and Steve Lea from Christchurch came to Bungaree to work with Tony Smith, Neville Britton and Mal Rowe to begin the task of sorting and cataloguing the contents of 5 40-foot shipping containers of parts at Bungaree. Many smaller parts were cleaned, stripped of excess piping etc and stored in shelving provided by Ballarat Tramway Museum. We now have a better, but not complete, list of stock in hand. For example, we have over 60 air-operated windscreen wiper motors! More work is needed but this was a great start.

Request for double check valve for Perth:

During the time at Bungaree, we were able to source a replacement valve for PETS. Tony Smith also provided seal kits to enable that valve and the failed one it is replacing to be restored to full operable condition. The parts group suggested (and COTMA committee approved) that we should only supply one such valve rather than several spares. This is in line with our policy to hold spares centrally rather than each group having their own stock.

However, it should be noted that the policy does allow for some stock to be held when groups are operating a regular (more than weekly) service and this is now the case in Perth. In this case the refurbished valve that had failed will be a useful spare for PETS.

MMTB No 15 Trucks

Over the last three weeks we have removed 4 pairs of trucks from Newport to storage at Bungaree. Two pairs are for MTPA at Haddon, one pair is for Ballarat TM and one pair (a modified set) will go to Christchurch with some parts possibly going to other groups. There are two more pairs of trucks to come from Newport, one standard and one modified, and both will go the Ballarat, again with the possibility of some components being passed on to other groups. The parts wanted by other groups are:

- Wellington – magnetic track brakes
- Perth – sample roller bearing axle box.

We have had no further requests for trucks from groups and don't expect to get any more trucks from Newport once the two pairs mentioned above are received.

Z3 Inverters

Bendigo Tramway have a contract to scrap Melbourne's trams. These trams are fitted with 600V DC to 230V AC inverters that can be very useful for heritage operations. Ballarat TM have used at least one. The parts group suggest that COTMA contacts Bendigo to ask that the inverters and connecting cable and plugs be set aside for further use.



Z3

Thanks!

We are deeply grateful to Nick Hewitt of the Railway Museum at Newport for making his forklift available to enable loading of trucks onto a tilt tray. This has drastically cut the cost of loading for transport.



URGENT SAFETY ADVICE NOTICE - BLACKPOOL McGUIRE TRUCKS

Appended to the email is an urgent safety advice regarding the Blackpool McGuire trucks – Bogie Frame Stretcher bars on the brake rigging. While we don't know of any McGuire trucks being operated in Australasia there are similar bars on Brill manufactured trucks. Please bring this to your workshop staff attention so they are aware of this issue.