

Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

www.cotma.org.au

News Update

April 2025



This photo, by Norm Cross, was left to the Melbourne Tram Museum in his will.

It shows what happens when the operator decides to recycle numbers.

Two Melbourne trams numbered 164 – c1981

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

Your To-Do List

- ✓ *Mark 10th to 13th of October 2025 in your diary as dates to keep free for the 2025 COTMA conference.*
- ✓ *Prepare your submission for a COTMA Achievement and Volunteer awards in 2025.*
- ✓ *Review your need for Melbourne No 15 trucks and GE247 motors – ‘last call.’*
- ✓ *Give some thought about what you would like to happen to ‘your stuff’.*

From the President

As the days get shorter and the autumn leaves start to fall, hopefully we can all look back at another successful period of busy and trouble-free tram operations. For most of our members the summer months are our busiest times especially for revenue purposes.

What will happen to ‘your stuff’?

I have recently been involved with assisting the estate of a deceased member cleaning out a vast quantity of memorabilia that had built up over a period of many years. While the majority of this was in the form of books and magazines and not unique or uncommon, they were nevertheless important to the owner who no doubt took pride in his collection of tramway artifacts including many photographs of trams that he had taken.

It reminded me of the need for all of us to have a plan on how we disperse these items hopefully when we are still mentally able so that we can participate in where they end up. Unfortunately, many museum groups have a limited capacity to manage these sorts of donations which estates are often keen to pass on simply just to get rid of them. While some books may be sold through Museum outlets and photographs saved there are often other items that are probably destined for the rubbish tin.

While an estates intention may be well founded, the Museum people who are tasked with accepting and then sorting out a lifetime collection do not always have the space or inclination to accept duplicate copies of items already in their possession and many such things may be simply disposed of.

While this is just a fact of life it is becoming more frequent with our aging membership and I encourage individuals to discuss with their Museum Management or Archivist, what aspects of their collection can be identified for donation either before or after they pass away. Hopefully this will mean a more managed transfer of collections plus avoid instances of irreplaceable records being dumped by family members who have no interest in the items. It would be really great to leave some funds allocated to sort, transport and move onto other good homes in your will.

Conference coming up

We are fast approaching our October Conference and readers will see further into this newsletter, an outline of the conference agenda so I encourage everybody to start planning for this event so we can all enjoy our 50th celebration in Brisbane this coming October.

Henry Brittain, President

Conference details

The 2025 COTMA conference will be held in Brisbane. Here is the *draft* program:

Friday 10th Oct

- 8.58am Train ex Central then connecting bus
- 10.20am Ipswich Workshops Rail Museum
- Morning Tea
- Registration & Welcome
- Presentation by Director on Visitor Engagement
- Lunch (catered)
- Inspection of Qld Rail Heritage Fleet Maintenance Workshops
- Possible Presentation then return to City by train.

Dinner - Own arrangements

Saturday 11th Oct

- 9am conference at Qld Museum Southbank
- Presentations & Museum Updates
- Lunch catered
- Presentations & Museum Updates

Dinner - Own arrangements

Sunday 12th Oct

- 9am conference at Qld Museum Southbank
- Presentations & Museum Updates
- Lunch catered
- Presentations & Museum Updates
- Conference dinner and award presentations

Monday 13th Oct

- 13th Oct Train to Ferny Grove
- (Taxis from station for those unable to walk)
- Morning tea

- Conference General Meeting
- Lunch catered
- Inspection and Tram operations

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

Recently a photo from the 1977 conference was shared by Paul Nicholson. Some people have been recognized. Can you identify any more?



It is time to start thinking of your ideas and content for papers to be presented. If you have an idea, some research or an experience that you think will be useful to others, please email cotma@cotma.org and we will pass it on to the conference organisers at Brisbane Tramway Museum.

Achievement and Volunteer Awards

It's time to start to think about what your tramway will be submitting for your COTMA Achievement and Volunteer Award nominations. For details of the award see <http://cotma.org.au/awards.html> for details of the award and judging criteria.

The criteria for judging the Achievement awards are:

Degree of difficulty, Quality of outcome, Value to community and Historical accuracy.

We welcome Tony Messenger of MOTAT to the judging panel, joining Dr John Radcliffe of AETM and Carolyn Cleak of MTM and BTM.

Volunteer awards are on the basis of recommendation from the home museum. Please give us some background information as set out on the web.

Before the Conference

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

Other options to fill in the days between could include riding the City and Southeast trams in Sydney, looking at the new Parramatta tramway and checking out the latest extensions to the Gold Coast tramway.

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

Sydney and Parramatta pics by Mal Rowe



Opportunity to have your say

RISSB has drafted a Code of Practice for Light Rail – Management of Rail Safety Worker Competencies which includes tramways. The link for the background and document is at

<https://www.rissb.com.au/news/code-of-practice-light-rail-management-of-rail-safety-worker-competencies/>

Closing date for comments is Friday 18/4/2025

Trucks & motors – last call

Up to the end of March, 31 pairs of trucks have been allocated to us with 25 of those sets passed on to museums, 2 more sets allocated and awaiting collection from Newport and 4 sets in storage at Bungaree or Newport awaiting allocation. We expect that a few more sets will become available at Newport.

The last trams will leave Newport by the end of June and allocated trucks will need to be collected by then.

WE NEED TO KNOW NOW THE REMAINING APPETITE (AND CAPACITY) FOR MEMBER MUSEUMS TO TAKE AVAILABLE TRUCKS OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS.

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

Sydney Tramway Museum - 60 years of tram operations

On 23rd of February, Sydney Tramway Museum celebrated 60 years of operation and 75 years of preservation.

Local polities, local members, COTMA affiliated tram museum members (several in uniform) and a very large crowd celebrated the day with an all-Sydney heritage tram operation day.



Local MP, Maryanne Stuart presented an NSW parliamentary community recognition certificate.

New COTMA member



Yass Railway Heritage Centre was welcomed as an affiliate member of COTMA in December 2024. They had Melbourne tram 987 from Newport and hope to run it on street track in Yass. They have already received support with advice from Sydney Tramway Museum members and with parts from Newport. Tram 987 was found to be missing a lot of vital underfloor components. They have now been allocated an additional tram, one of the former "Art Trams" (No 824), which will be transported to Yass in the near future.



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July 2025



Christchurch trams #152 (left) and #24 (right) built by Boon & Co in Christchurch and in their 1920's livery present a nicely matched pair.

They were waiting in Cathedral Square to carry the 2025 Super Pacific Rugby champion rugby team (the Canterbury Crusaders) for a victory parade in Christchurch on the afternoon of 23rd June, 2025.

Photo courtesy of "Tracts", the Newsletter of the Tramway Historical Society Incorporated.

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Your To-Do List

- ✓ *Book for the 2025 COTMA conference 10th to 13th of October 2025*
- ✓ *Send your submission for a COTMA Achievement and Volunteer awards in 2025*
- ✓ *Attend the AGM on August 30th – in person or on-line*
- ✓ *Think about who you would like to see on the COTMA committee for the next two years and nominate them.*
- ✓ *Advise Mal Rowe of the names of members who have passed in the last two years*
- ✓ *Send any technical data you would like to share to COTMA for use around the world.*

From the President

Welcome everybody to this edition of the COTMA newsletter which amongst other items includes details of our upcoming Conference kindly hosted by the Brisbane Tramway Museum between the 10th and the 13th of October.

You will note that we are calling for nominations for the various awards that will be made at the Conference and I encourage member groups to give serious thought to nominating some of their achievements over the past two years without forgetting the individuals who may be sight unseen but are nevertheless the glue that

holds the place together. I am thinking about those people who turn up week after week and quite unselfishly give their volunteer hours simply because they enjoy spending time with fellow enthusiasts in a mutually interesting hobby.

Complimentary to this, I encourage members to give some thought to nominating suitable people for the COTMA Executive as some new blood into any organisation can bring fresh perspectives on where and how we are going to face the future. Having achieved our first half century we need to ensure that we have people with foresight and enterprise to lead us into our next 50 years.

I also remind members of the 2025 Annual General Meeting to be held on 30 August at Hawthorn depot at 3pm AET, and for those who cannot attend, join in by Zoom at the link shown elsewhere in this newsletter.

Look forward to catching up with you all in October.

Henry Brittain KSM

July 2025

Annual General Meeting

The COTMA Annual General Meeting to be held on 30th of August 2025, commencing at 3 pm at the Melbourne Tram Museum, 8 Wallen Road, Hawthorn. COTMA members from each museum have been sent details. **You may need to forward these onto your nominated delegate.**

The meeting will receive the Financial Report to 31 March 2025. The Conference General Meeting in October is where key reports and decisions will be addressed.

Conference details

The 2025 COTMA conference will be held in Brisbane.



If you have an idea, some research or an experience that you think will be useful to others, please the Conference Organiser, Peter Hyde at peter.hyde@bigpond.com by Friday 1 August 2025.

The actual presentation, if you are using PowerPoint or similar, must be with the organisers by Wednesday 1 October.

Presentations planned now include:

- Working with rail safety regulators
- 50 years of COTMA
- Using social media to promote your museum and tell the stories
- Medical standards for rail safety
- Statistics of museums

Photo: Mal Rowe

Here is the current draft program:

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- Presentations & Museum Updates
- Lunch (catered)
- Presentations & Museum Updates
- **Conference dinner and award presentations**

Monday 13th Oct

- 13th Oct Train to Ferny Grove. (Taxis from station for those unable to walk)
- Morning tea
- **Conference General Meeting**
- Lunch (catered)
- Inspection and Tram operations

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

Cost

Registration including all sessions, four catered lunches and the Conference Dinner is \$A350

A partner program is being prepared and partner registration is expected to be \$A300.

Achievement and Volunteer Awards

For details of Awards and the nomination process see <https://cotma.org.au/awards.html>

Museum Excellence

Submissions the and achievement awards including the Bill Kingsley Award are due to be submitted by **Monday 1 September** to the Secretary – mal.rowe@gmail.com

Volunteer Awards:

Volunteer awards are on the basis of recommendation from the home museum and the deadline for those is also **Monday 1 September** to the Secretary – mal.rowe@gmail.com. Please give us some background information as set out on the COTMA website.

New COTMA committee members

COTMA works well and the executive are always impressed by the level of mutual support, sharing and cooperation between groups.

That won't change any time soon, but what will be changing is the membership of the COTMA committee.

Henry Brittain is stepping down from President and Mal Rowe from Secretary. Neither are in any way negative about COTMA - rather the opposite. However, the years go by and both look forward to seeing some 'new blood' managing the show.

Henry will stay on as immediate past president for a period and Mal is open to supporting the work of the Committee if needed.

Please give consideration to capable people who you might nominate to join the COTMA committee.

It's an important role but won't be as demanding as the last few years have been.

Each position on the Committee is nominated for and voted for separately. The positions and current people are listed at:

<https://www.cotma.org.au/executives.html>

Individuals are able to be nominated for more than one position but will only be elected for one.

Members who have passed

It is our tradition to remember those who have passed on at the Conference General Meeting. Please **advise the names of those of your members who have passed** to the Secretary – mal.rowe@gmail.com before the Conference.

Geoffrey Claydon

Geoffrey Claydon passed away peacefully late on the evening of Monday 30 June 2025, at Derby Royal Infirmary, following a short period of illness.

Geoffrey visited Australia several times and was known to many COTMA people.

In the UK where he was a key figure in the development of Crich and one of the authors of the UK Transport and Works Act of 1992 under which the current generation of new tramways in the UK have been built.

His wise and learned advice was freely given, not only to the TMS but to other heritage tramways and heritage railways.

His service to the Museum and tramways will never be forgotten.

He made one last tram trip – pic at right from the Tramway Museum Society facebook pages.



Rail Safety

Members should note the proposed changes to the Australian Rail Safety National Law as detailed on a link on the ATHRA web page - see <https://www.athra.asn.au/2025/07/24/proposed-changes-to-rail-safety-national-law/>

COTMA Library

COTMA has an extensive library of tramcar related technical documents - see <https://cotma.org.au/library.html>

We recently added some documents about PCC tramcars, one being received from the Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society, who hold Sydney O class car No. 1187. They commented there is " It is the best online data I've found for my tram maintenance"

If you have any tram related documents that are not listed, please send us a pdf copy and we will add it to the Library. You never know who may need it.

See you in Brisbane!

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News Update December 2025



Christchurch Tram No. 24, the Winner of the Bill Kingsley Award for Excellence 2025 – Photo from THS Submission;

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Your To-Do List – Consider your Museum needs for the final batch of No 15 trucks from Newport. There are NO more after this lot.

Presidents Christmas Message 2025

On behalf of the COTMA committee I would like to wish you all of you a Merry Christmas and a safe, successful and happy new year in 2026. 2025 has been a very successful year with excellent work and achievements with all member groups moving forward with projects and ongoing public relations as part of each Museum's activities.

The success of the Brisbane conference last October, led by Peter Hyde and his team, opened our eyes to some of the new issues facing all the groups and therefore highlights the need to keep working together as a team. The next Conference to occur in Ballarat in 2027, will no doubt flag both ongoing problems and new issues.

Attached with the email is a Christmas Greeting from Mikael Lund of the Danish Tramway Museum.

COTMA Conference Report

The 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia was celebrated at its biennial conference from 10 to 13 October, hosted by the Brisbane Tramway Museum and the Queensland Museum. The first day's venue was Queensland Museum's Rail Workshops campus at Ipswich. Brisbane Tramway Museum's Peter Hyde chaired all sessions, starting with the first, and was a hard-working and at times necessarily creative convenor and chair throughout the conference. COTMA was very fortunate to have Peter as the conference host.

Jen Garcia, director of the Ipswich campus, opened the conference with a lively presentation urging all museums to improve their levels of engagement with their visitors and audience, by making visitors and their experiences the main focus of a museum's activity. This is a move away from the collection-oriented approach of the traditional museum, but Jen spoke convincingly and passionately about the advantages of engaging visitors on their own terms, by offering them experiences connected to their own life experiences and interests. Jen produced evidence that such an approach had much improved levels of visitation and engagement at Ipswich.

The Ipswich campus is enormous, and the site is shared with an operating railway workshop, where Queensland Rail's heritage rolling stock, and also its diesel tilt train sets are maintained. QR fitter Don was a great host for the inspection of the QR workshop side of the site, and answered all queries with enthusiasm.

The Saturday and Sunday sessions were held in the lecture theatre at the Queensland Museum Kurilpa in Southbank. This was everything one could wish for as a conference venue and delegates much appreciated Queensland Museum's generous hospitality. Most of the papers were reports from the various museums, and fascinating they were. The levels of achievement in terms of engaging younger members and the public; and in restoration and site presentation, often were inspirational.

The first two papers addressed safety management and regulation. Greg Wagner, Queensland Manager of the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator discussed what ONRSR does, and what it doesn't do, and urged museums to take a practical and achievable approach to safety management, commensurate with risk. Medical testing is increasingly an important responsibility for tram crews, and Dr Jim Bradley AM, who is the Chief Medical Officer of a number of heritage rail operators in Queensland, explained in practical terms what health requirements are for drivers in particular.

The conference dinner on Sunday night at Easts League Club in Coorparoo was excellent. Retiring President Henry Brittain, ably assisted by Secretary Mal Rowe and our host Peter Hyde, presided over the awards ceremony, which as usual punctuated the courses of the dinner. Six volunteer awards were made, three to Perth (William Allnutt VII, Michael Stukeley, and Ray Blackmore), and one each to Haddon/Ballarat (Tony Smith), Wellington (John Tier), and Sydney, whose member No 28, Vic Solomons, had joined as a 17-year-old in 1959, was recognised for his lifetime of service.

The Bill Kingsley Award for outstanding achievement went to the Tramway Historical Society for their restoration of Christchurch Hills car No 24, which Trolley Wire has covered with interest and admiration, and which benefitted from a \$255,000 lottery grant. Achievement awards also went to Ballarat Tramway Museum for their work in providing an accessible tram in the form of newly restored W7 1029, assisted by a Vic Track grant of \$27,000, and to MOTAT in Auckland for their relaying of their dual gauge track at a cost of \$NZ2.75 million.



Benjamin Boehle-Mitchell 2023

BTM Tram 1029 – photo Benjamin Boehle-Mitchell



Track renewal at MOTAT – from their report.



The President’s Award went to Richard Gilbert (left) of the Ballarat Tramway Museum, who was one of the organisers of the first COTMA conference in Ballarat in 1975 and has been involved in the movement for well over five decades.

On Monday the delegates relocated to the Brisbane Tramway Museum at Ferny Grove for the Conference General Meeting. Ferny Grove MLA Mark Furner warmly welcomed delegates and, in his brief, but interesting speech, informed delegates that a Queensland bipartisan parliamentary committee had been formed to advise government on rail heritage matters and advocate for rail heritage operators.

Henry Brittain and Mal Rowe stepped down after long service as an urbane and kindly president and secretary respectively. Mal in particular has been obliged to do far more than the normal workload of a secretary because of his involvement with managing the disposal of spare parts from the trams stored at Newport. This process is now almost complete, and museums are reminded that now is the last opportunity to obtain parts, as any still at Newport after the end of 2025 will be scrapped.

Rod Atkins of the Melbourne Tramway Museum and Robert Lee of the Sydney Tramway Museum have assumed the roles of the president and secretary. Tony Weston of Launceston remains as treasurer. COTMA’s financial year will move to end of 30 June instead of 31 March from 2026. Following confirmation that the 2027 conference will be hosted by Ballarat Tramway Museum, but with the opportunity for delegates to visit tramways in Bendigo and Melbourne, the conference concluded with the usual tram rides.

Robert Lee
Secretary

Who is Who on the Committee

President – Rod Atkins of the Melbourne Tram Museum

Immediate Past President – Henry Brittain – Wellington Tram Musuem

Deputy President – Alex Hunter – Christchurch Tramways

Secretary – Robert Lee – Sydney Tram Museum

Treasurer – Tony Weston – Launceston Tramway Museum

Ordinary Committee Members – Warren Doubleday – Ballarat Tramway Museum

Ordinary Committee Members – Peter Hyde – Brisbane Tramway Museum Society

Australian Museums Liaison Officer – Darcy Baird – Bendigo Tramways

New Zealand Museums Liaison Officer – Vincent Chan – MOTAT Auckland

COTMA parts management

Last chance to get Melbourne No 15 trucks

COTMA has been allocated 35 pairs of MMTB No 15 trucks over the last 5 years. Most of those have been passed on to member museums and taken by those groups.

- 4 pairs at Newport are already allocated but 3 of those pairs are still under trams yet to be taken away by recipients under the VicTrack process.
- 3 pairs are unallocated and stored at Bungaree. These sets have some low tread wheels but are otherwise in 'good as withdrawn' condition.
- 2 pairs with good tread are still at Newport and are available for allocation.

If your museum want any of these 5 pairs then you will need to make a formal application as soon as possible using the Tramway Parts and Equipment Application Template at:

https://www.cotma.org.au/documents/cotma_admin/partsapplicationtemplate.doc

Applications should be sent to the COTMA Parts Management Group secretary (mal.rowe@gmail.com) by early January 2026.

You will need to arrange collection and removal of the trucks promptly. Through the generous support of the Railway Museum at Newport we are now able to load trucks without the need to hire a crane. Recent recipients have used a tilt tray truck to carry a pair of trucks.

Mal Rowe

Hugh Ballment Slide and photograph collection

The massive collection of slides and negatives from the Late Hugh Ballment of Transit Australia Publishing who passed away during November 2024 has been sorted through. Most were of his extensive trips around the globe to all types of places, not just for trams or trains but cities and countries as well. Many were distributed at the COTMA Conference to those representatives of our Members. Further negatives and slides have been sent to Museums and the various railway archives as well. A large box of slides and negatives is about to be posted to the On-Line Transport Archive in Shrewsbury UK – see <https://www.onlinetransportarchive.org/>



Hugh's photo of the 1956 illuminated Olympic Torch in Swanston St – yes there are a couple of trams in the view.

Thanks to Warrington Cameron, Rod Atkins, Mal Rowe and Warren Doubleday with special thanks to Trish for the lunches.

COTMA Technical Library

The COTMA Technical Library continues to grow with recent materials received from the Seashore Trolley Museum. Currently being added are extracts from International Textbook Company (later known as the International Correspondence Schools) 1905 book on Electric Railways (Tramways). The various documents ranging from power supplies, construction and design of the line or track, motors, to controllers are very relevant to understanding where our technology came from and how it developed at the start of the 1900s.

We are always on the lookout for further technical documents to put on our library page which is accessed by people from around the world.

See <http://www.cotma.org.au/library.html>

COTMA Website

The Website has been updated for the Conference papers, Awards and Museum Presentations.