

# Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

[www.cotma.org.au](http://www.cotma.org.au)

## News Update April 2020



After many years in Victoria, Sydney R class 1845 has returned to NSW where it is in storage for Sydney Tram Museum

### From the President

Welcome to our Update for April 2020.

How the world has changed since our last Update (October 2019), particularly in recent weeks. Until then we were living in the comfort of booming economies with international tourism a major export earner and in our museum and heritage rail sector, high expectations of and planning for continuing growth and prosperity.

In Christchurch where we had lived through and were coming back from the horrors of the 2010-11 earthquake sequences and then the mosque shootings a year ago, we were welcoming the rebirth of our devastated central city. This included a new vitality in retail, hospitality, visitor accommodation and attractions, better public transport and with a new convention centre due to be completed with its first large international conference booked in for October.

And then came COVID-19 and all the other new words we have learnt associated with this real life disaster movie, and the impacts we are all experiencing. We will get through it but we don't really know when, so please in the meantime we need to keep in touch, share experiences, and continue to plan for our future, including that of our museums and heritage tramways. COTMA will be there to assist, using all the means as our disposal to maintain contact and continue towards achieving our common goals.

The COTMA Executive Committee, following cancellation of its intended meeting in Bendigo on 20-21 March, met via Zoom video link last Thursday. This edition of Update will advise of the decisions made due to COVID-19, as well as reporting on the progress we have been making in a number of areas. We will report some of the actions that members groups have already advise that they are undertaking in response to the pandemic, and we are keen that you share with us all your concerns and ideas and solutions.

In both Australia and New Zealand a common mantra now coming through the daily messaging from our governments, and being picked up by many is: "we are all in this together". The COTMA community needs to think and act the same way. So, stick to your local lockdown rules and while physical distancing is likely to remain the order of the day for some time to come, we have plenty of modern communication tools to keep in touch with each other and our group members in the weeks and months ahead.

Dave Hinman

COTMA PRESIDENT

### *Your To-Do List*

- ✓ *Note the deferral of COTMA Conference in Bendigo.*
- ✓ *Keep in touch with us and with your members – share your experiences and lessons being learnt.*
- ✓ *Plan for your re-opening of services.*

## COTMA conference deferred to 2021

The 2020 COTMA Conference has been cancelled due to the travel and health safety restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bendigo team had almost completed their planning and were ready to launch the conference and take bookings.

Bendigo Tramways hope to be able to offer the conference in 2021 – around the same time of year.

We will probably run the following conference two years later – in 2023 - when the conference will be hosted by MOTAT in Auckland.

## COVID-19 pandemic



The rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus has affected almost every activity involving people to people contact. Virtually all tram museums have closed their doors temporarily, with no clarity on when they may re-open.

This is of course having significant impact on 'the bottom line' – especially for museums who have a significant income stream from tourism activities.

This may be the time to get on with the task of sorting through those long-neglected archives, but NOT as a group activity!

Operating Museums will need to plan a re-start to ensure all your equipment and infrastructure is safe to be used and all your operating crews and staff have current medicals and qualifications as needed.

The pic shows how Melbourne reduces risk for tram drivers.

## New Zealand and COVID-19

At midnight on Wednesday 25 March the country entered a stage 4 level Alert. This effectively closed the Country down apart from essential services for an initial period of 28 days.

All of the Tramway Museums were closed as from this date and members banned from attending. Apart from security checks nobody is allowed on the premises.

This curtailment of tram operations will have an effect of all Museum finances especially as a return to opening status is unknown and when this does happen, it will take time before patronage levels pick up.

## FRONZ conference cancelled for 2020

The Annual conference of The Federation of Rail Organisations of New Zealand, our associated rail heritage body across the Tasman, has also been cancelled. It was due to be held in Gisborne over Queen's Birthday Weekend 29 May -1 June, and has now been rescheduled for the same time, same place next year.

## Trevor Burling

Many of you will have heard of the unexpected passing of Trevor Burling, Past President and life member of the Wellington Tramway Museum, active with THS Christchurch in earlier years and also a Past President and current Executive Officer, of FRONZ. Trevor had attended many COTMA conferences and with his wife Marlene had intended to come to Bendigo in September and to celebrate his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday while there. He died on 25 January, following surgery after a major medical (heart) event earlier the previous day. Detailed tributes have been published in NZ tramway newsletters, Tram Lines and Ferrymead Tram Tracts.

## Michael Vash

Prior to Trevor's passing, Wellington had another unfortunate death in December when Michael Vash, a member since 1965, was killed when he was involved in a motorcycle accident on the way home from the Tramway.

## Peter Letherby and Ron Fluck

Australian Electric Transport Museum at St Kilda near Adelaide have lost two of their members. Peter Letherby passed away on 1 November 2019. He was an active member involved in restoration work, including E118 and the "Bib & Bub" set. Ron Fluck was one of the first members of AETM. He was also heavily involved with the National Rail Museum. Ron passed away on 9 December.

(with thanks to Trolley Wire for the information)

## Peter Kahn gets a gong

Peter Kahn, who has been involved with Sydney Tram Museum since 1960, was awarded the Medal of Order of Australia (OAM) in this year's Australia Day honours for service to community history. COTMA joins others in congratulating Peter and thanking him for all he has contributed over 60 years.

Peter is well familiar with tram gongs, and now has a well deserved 'gong' of his own!

## Parts Management

A policy on managing the parts owned by COTMA and those given to us for allocation by VicTrack has been agreed and is available on the COTMA website at: <https://www.cotma.org.au/documents.html>

The policy provides for parts to become the property of museums on completion of their installation into a heritage tram and expressly forbids commercial sale of any parts. A template for application for parts is also on the COTMA website.

### Parts recovery at Newport

Trams allocated to various community and commercial groups are steadily moving out of Newport East Block.

Key components from the cabs are being removed from many trams and crated up for the COTMA parts program.

Two 40' containers have been placed on site for storage of all recovered components.

These will eventually be moved to a COTMA storage site, probably at the Bungaree off site storage facility owned by Ballarat Tram Museum.



Controllers are being stored in a locked 20' container and access to them will depend on an accredited asbestos removal process.

Tony Smith leads the Parts Management Group and has negotiated a process for removal of underfloor components, including trucks with good wheels, before trams are shipped out. We are very grateful for the active cooperation of VicTrack and the contractor handling the process.

## PC5 parts

COTMA holds a stock of parts for PC5 controllers. This is a limited resource and the need for spares for existing trams plus parts to make old tram bodies operational will demand careful management. The COTMA committee has accepted a kind offer from Alex Hunter from Christchurch to audit and catalogue the stocks and work to set up a management process. We expect that the parts will be managed by the Parts Management Group.

## Z1 / Z2 parts

Yarra Trams and VicTrack are disposing of their stores of spares unique to the Z1 / Z2 trams. COTMA members who have trams of this type have been advised of what is available and the VicTrack heritage registrar is working through allocation with Yarra.

## Tramway News

### Melbourne 685 to find a new home

Melbourne's W5 685 was allocated to COTMA member "Tramcar W2 568 group", but they indicated that they were unable to accept it, so it was offered to other museums by COTMA at the request of VicTrack.

685 is one of the few W5s to not be converted to the SW5 format. Body alterations stopped at the stage where the centre doorway was removed.

COTMA member Liston Transport Heritage Park (formerly "T-mates") will take 685 and give it a new home alongside two Z1s and two Brisbane trams.

685 was due to leave Newport on March 30, but restrictions on interstate trucking due to the COVID-19 pandemic have caused a delay.



### Christchurch

It had been hoped that construction of the new extension of the Christchurch Tramway to a turnaround loop at the High-Tuam-Poplar intersection would have commenced by now. However, delays in finalising some necessary land purchase and a decision to do the tram works at the same time as the refurbishment of three blocks of High Street, have delayed the projected start until late 2020. The onset of COVID-19 is likely to result in further delays.

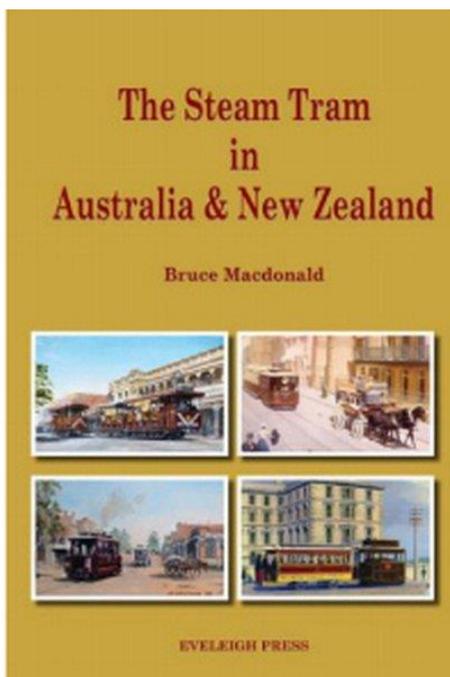
Meanwhile both the City and Ferrymead tramways have currently suspended operations because of the COVID-19 lockdown. We are all working from home on tramway as well as other matters with some THS members having taken home some smaller items under repair or restoration to work at in their home workshops.

(The pic at right by Ron Scholten shows Christchurch's 244 in what the COTMA secretary reckons are the right colours.)



A couple of our younger members (ie under 70) are doing drivebys and checking security of the THS Ferrymead site a couple of times a week.

## “New” book



The Steam Tram in Australia and New Zealand is the title of a book by Bruce Macdonald, published late in 2018 by Eveleigh Press. ISBN is 978 1 876568 64 1

In its 184 pages printed on fine quality gloss paper are comprehensive details of the locomotives that served on steam tramways in Australia and New Zealand. That's the key focus of the book.

That's not surprising as the author was apparently the major force behind the retrieval and restoration of Sydney 103A - now at Valley Heights.

It has broad details of the systems and services, is profusely illustrated, and the maps are magnificent.

One shortcoming is the lack of an index. There's not even a contents page that lists all the cities covered – contents are listed by state / country only.

It is a must have for anyone who wants to know about Australasia's steam trams. Cost is around \$A70

## More books on the way

Here is some advance notice of the pending publication of a couple of what will be interesting and useful titles by well-known and highly respected senior authors on either side of the Tasman.

- In Australia Hugh Ballment & Carl Segnit are now in the latter stages of completing their Illustrated Trolley Bus Atlas of Australia and New Zealand, companion to their Tramway Atlas published one year ago. Hugh advises that it is likely to be ready in the second half of this year. And this won't be all from Hugh – there are several more in the pipeline, and not only about trams and trains.
- Meanwhile in NZ, Graham Stewart's latest book, titled "Crossing Ahead – when Trams met Trains in New Zealand" is getting close to being ready to go. Graham says that this is definitely his last book!

More details, including publication dates will be advised in due course. There may be some delay due to COVID-19.

## Any News?

Museum News in COTMA News update is always of interest. If you have something to tell us, then we would be delighted to hear at [cotma@cotma.org.au](mailto:cotma@cotma.org.au)