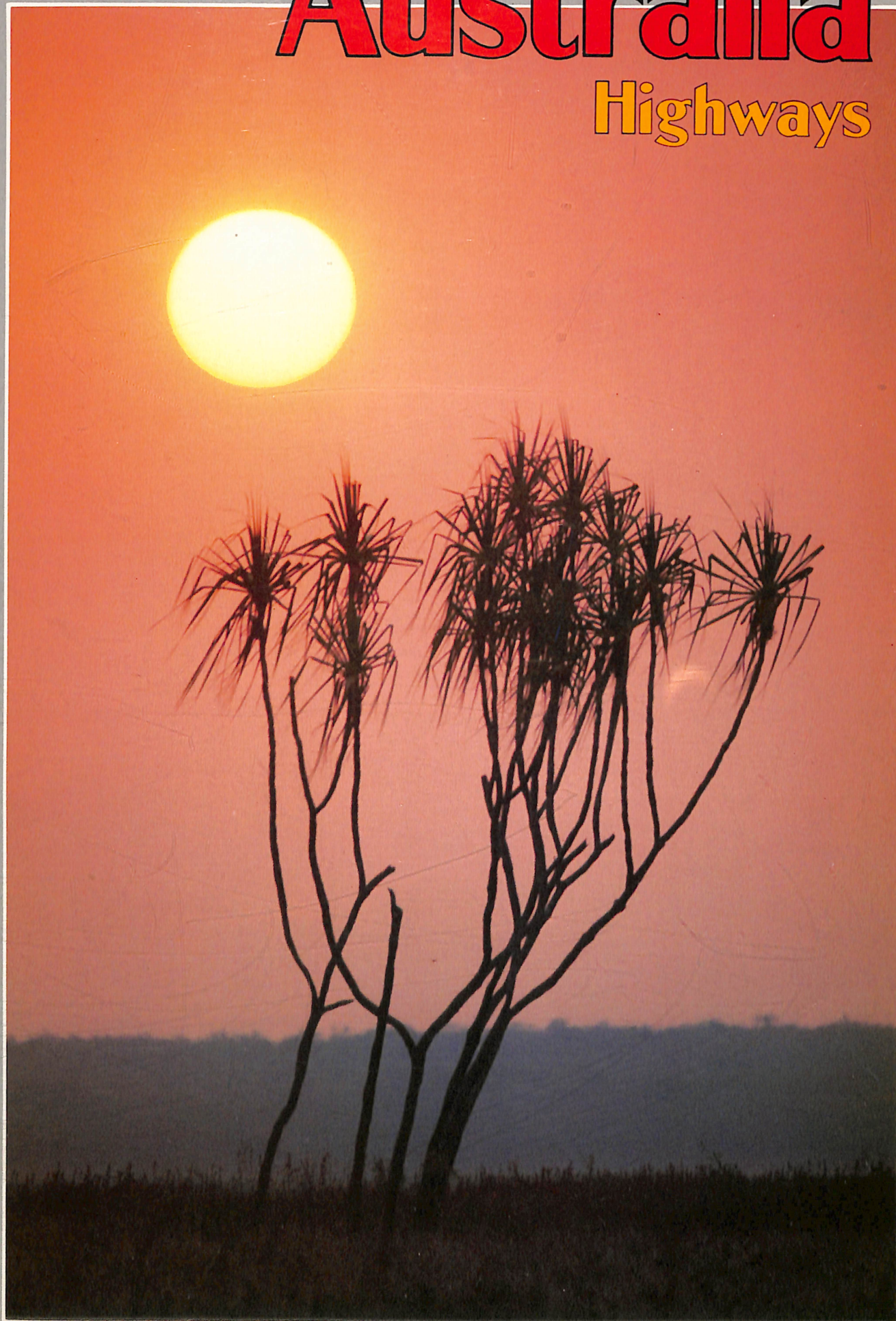


\$2.95

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# Australia

## Highways



# A new life at the end of the line

By ROBERT BEATTIE



Where can you find a fully-restored 1929 Bondi tram or a 1927 Melbourne model these days... or perhaps a 26-year-old Melbourne cable car in mint condition.

These three railway relics have made their final stop at the Old Canberra Tram Company inside the Canberra Trademen's Union Club. At one of the more unusual tourist attractions in the nation's capital, visitors can enjoy a leisurely meal on one of the trams.

The club recently took delivery of two more trams, one each from Brisbane and Adelaide and hopes to add a sixth from Perth to its street car shelter. Restoring a tram takes many months and the club's two fulltime carpenters and an electrician have their hands full.

It's not easy finding space inside a club for four trams and a cable car and in the

past two years the club has expanded to twice its original size.

The driving force behind the restoration is secretary-manager Rod Driver and his wife, Ann-Marie. He recalls that when he first suggested buying a tram to the board of directors they were less than enthusiastic. "The club wasn't faring too well at the time and we had to do something different to survive. But buying a tram didn't appeal to everyone as the way to go.

"Anyway, they finally agreed when I promised the whole venture would cost less than \$3,000 and I'm happy to say we haven't looked back since. Membership has trebled and business is booming."

Each tram has a story. The first, No. 447, was bought from the Melbourne Metropolitan Tramway Board in 1980. It was in reasonably good condition, having just come off a run. After a paint job,

*Body of "D" type tram car 156 on farm at Dublin, South Australia.*

*It's a long process restoring the new acquisitions. Here one of the club members works on the Brisbane tram, No 499.*



Adelaide "D" type tram car 156 being loaded at Dublin, South Australia.



Adelaide "D" type tram car 156 on Port Wakefield Road en route to Canberra.



numerous minor repairs, new carpet and tables, the club had its first mechanical showpiece.

Later that year the Bondi tram, No. 1729, arrived. Not from Sydney but from a caravan park in Braidwood where for 30 years it had stood in the open air, occasionally used as a dormitory when accommodation was tight.

The Melbourne cable car, No. 589, was the next acquisition. It was one of the last trailers built for the Melbourne Cable Tram system, leaving the Nicholson Street Workshops in 1920. It made its final run on October 26, 1940 on the Bourke Street to Northcote line. For the next 40 years it sat in the backyard of a Melbourne home in Separation Street, Fairfield. It had deteriorated to such a degree that the owner was going to burn it because he didn't think it was possible to remove it intact from his

backyard! An 1889 cable car was "cannibalised" to provide parts and every piece fitted neatly into place.

"We managed to buy the older car which provided many missing bits and pieces," says Rod. "Even though there was a 20-year age difference everything slotted in perfectly."

When cable cars operated in Melbourne they had two vehicle components: the trailer (which the club has restored) and a 'grip' car in which the gripman used a lever to grab the moving cable in a tunnel below the ground. The club is keen to obtain one of these 'grip' cars and would welcome a call (062-48 0999) from anyone who might know where one could be found – whatever the condition!

The Brisbane tram, No. 499, was found in a backyard in Logan Lea, south of Brisbane and arrived in 1983. The Adelaide

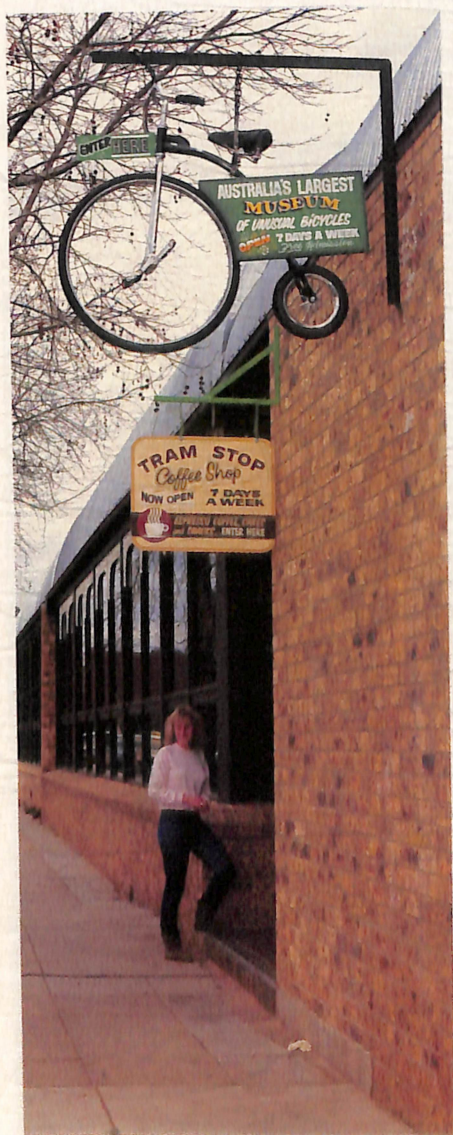
tram, No. 156, was found in a paddock by the Adelaide Tramway Museum who arranged transportation to Canberra.

Apart from the trams, the club has other transport treasures on show. There's a beautifully restored T model Ford painted as it was when it was used as a breakdown van by the Brisbane Tramways Trust in the 1920s. The club also has Australia's largest bicycle museum with penny-farthings, high wheelers, tandems and triples in the 70-plus models on display. They also have the world's longest bike which can seat 40 on its 22.86 m frame!

Next door the club operates a BMX track where bikes can be hired for youngsters while their parents enjoy the club.

Many interstate and overseas visitors use the club facilities and the membership badge – a tram, naturally – is a very popular souvenir.

One of the entrances to the club and bike museum.

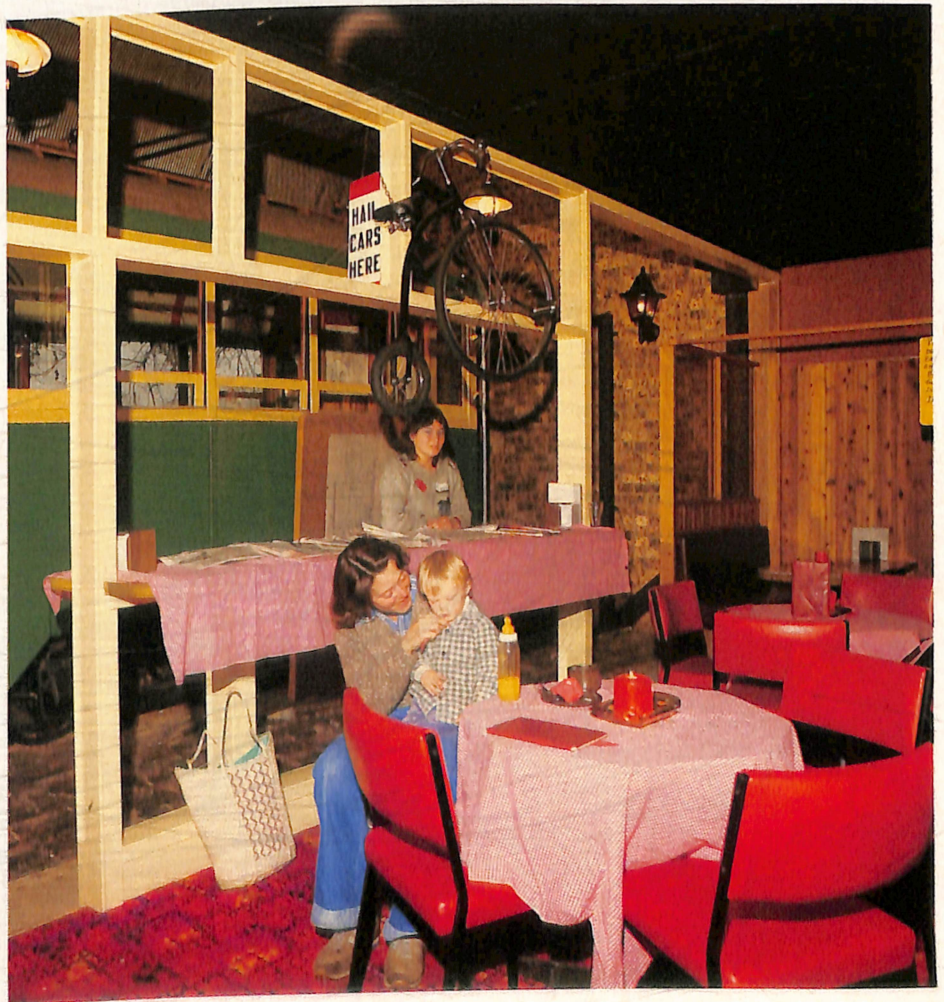


Nestled in its final resting place, No. 1729 to Bondi, still carries loads of passengers every day.





*The Melbourne cable-car has been beautifully restored and is the club's pride and joy.*



*Coffee, tea and snacks may be eaten in the Tram Stop Coffee Shop or inside any of the trams. The Shop serves close to the best hot chocolate in town too...*