

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

MEMO TO: TERESA COLDABELLA, CHAIRPERSON, HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: ROBERT GREEN, HERITAGE VICTORIA

SUBJECT: RESTORATION OF HERITAGE TRAMS

DATE: 19 JUNE 1995

BACKGROUND

In March 1995 the Minister for Public Transport announced that \$300,000 would be spent on restoring three vintage trams housed at the Hawthorn tram depot (refer attached Minister's News Release dated 16 March 1995). I understand the three trams are from the collection of the Tramway Museum Society and comprise Nos.164 and 180, which are former Melbourne Brunswick & Coburg Tramways Trust vehicles constructed in 1916 and 1917, and No.217, an American one-man operated car, imported by the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board in 1924. These vehicles are the only surviving examples of their type.

Presumably the vehicles will be restored by Public Transport Corporation staff at the Preston Workshops. The dedicated staff at Preston has already demonstrated the high degree of workmanship that can be performed on the restoration of historic tramcars. A recent example of their work is the former Hawthorn Tramways Trust car No.8, unveiled by the Minister last year. Unfortunately, the restoration of this important vehicle does not appear to have been based on available historical evidence, with the result that amongst other things, the external colours and signwriting are far from an accurate representation of the original scheme.

Having been concerned about this for some time I recently raised the matter with Mr Robert Doyle, MP (Malvern). Mr Doyle is chairman of the Heritage Tram Consultative Committee, of which I am a member. I explained to Mr Doyle that the restoration of all heritage tramcars should be carried out in accordance with accepted conservation practice, which includes the preparation of a Conservation Plan in accordance with the *Australia ICOMOS Guidelines for the Conservation of places of cultural significance*, commonly referred to as the *Burra Charter*. (ICOMOS stands for the International Council on Monuments and Sites). Mr Doyle agreed with this proposition, and also acknowledged the importance of establishing a collection policy for the proposed heritage tram fleet.

The need to properly conserve and manage items of engineering heritage significance, especially items of movable heritage, has also been addressed by the Institution of Engineers, Australia, who has published *Engineering Heritage & Conservation Guidelines*, based on the *Burra Charter*.

On several occasions the Minister for Public Transport has stated that the proposed Melbourne tramway museum will be of "world class". If the imminent restoration of the three trams, and indeed the future restoration of other trams in the heritage fleet, is not carried out in accordance with a conservation plan based on internationally accepted conservation principles, the trams and the proposed museum will not attain the international standard promised by the Minister.

The preparation of a conservation plan for the three trams is a simple matter which can be carried out in a short time. A conservation plan for the three trams would cost about \$5,000-\$6,000 and could be completed in approximately one month. When compared with the large amount of money proposed for the restoration, the cost of a conservation plan is a trifling sum. The preparation of a plan is a vital preparatory stage for the restoration work which should not be overlooked.

RECOMMENDATION

That the matter be referred to the Heritage Advisory Committee with a recommendation that the committee resolve to advise the Minister for Public Transport that it is essential for the restoration of all trams in the heritage tram fleet to be carried out in accordance with a properly prepared conservation plan.



Victoria

MINISTER FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

NEWS RELEASE

27 MAR 1995

Thursday, 16 March, 1995

NEW LIFE FOR HISTORIC TRAM DEPOT

Public Transport Minister Alan Brown today announced a major refurbishment for the Hawthorn Tram Depot and progress on the development of a world-class historic tram museum and vintage tramway.

He said a grant of \$62,000 had been made from Heritage Victoria for the exterior restoration and repainting of the historic Hawthorn Tramway Trust Depot, which accommodates some of Melbourne's oldest trams.

In addition, \$300,000 will be spent on restoring three vintage trams kept at Hawthorn.

"It is the Government's aim to ensure that the fleet accommodated at Hawthorn becomes one of the world's greatest tram collections," Mr Brown said.

"It is my vision that Melbourne's new tram museum would be a "living museum" providing the opportunity for our heritage tram fleet to be regularly seen once again on Melbourne's tram system providing tourist and charter services.

Mr Brown also announced that the Government would soon be inviting Expressions of Interest from the private sector and community organisations wishing to convert the Hawthorn Depot into a world class tram museum and vintage tramway.

Mr Brown said he had appointed the Member for Malvern, Mr Robert Doyle MLA, to chair a broad-based consultative committee, including heritage and tourism representatives, to oversee the plans for the tram museum.

"In the last year we've witnessed the enormous world-wide interest in Melbourne's historic trams, with more than 1.5 million passengers expected to catch the City Circle Tram in its first year of operation," he said.

"As a result, the trams accommodated at Hawthorn have become even more invaluable assets and I expect there will be very strong interest from organisations with a tourist or heritage background," Mr Brown said.

Robert Doyle said that he was excited to be involved with the Hawthorn Tram Museum project, which he saw as a tremendous opportunity for both Melbourne tourism and public transport at large.

"The refurbishment of the Hawthorn Tram Depot's exterior work will include the repair of external timberwork, plumbing, glazing and the removal of the non-original and damaged awnings.



ON THE MOVE

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