



President's Report 2021/2022

I am pleased to present my 32nd Presidential Report for the Light Railway Research Society of Australia, this one being for the year 2021-2022.

“LIGHT RAILWAYS” magazine, saw issues No.280 to No.285 published, all of which contained 48 pages. In total 288 pages of light railway history. Again, all the additional pages have been necessary to enable submitted articles to be published in a timely manner. I thank all authors for submitting their excellent articles for publication in LIGHT RAILWAYS.

“LIGHT RAILWAYS” Editor Richard Warwick and the editorial team have maintained a very high standard that is appreciated by all readers. To Richard and his Associate Editors Mike McCarthy, Frank Stamford and Phil Rickard, Field Report’s Editor Peter Evans, Industrial Railway News Editor Chris Hart, Research Editor Stuart Thyer and Heritage & Tourism Editor Andrew Webster, thank you for your efforts throughout the year. Thanks also to Bruce Belbin for laying out LIGHT RAILWAYS for printing.

The cover price of “LIGHT RAILWAYS” again remains as it has been for the last decade, mainly due to the competitive nature of the publishing business

At the end of the 2021-2022 financial year we had a total of 689 members, 16 fewer than at the same time last year.

Our mailing list shows that 711 copies of “LIGHT RAILWAYS” are sent to our members in both print and electronic versions, with some members taking both versions. “LIGHT RAILWAYS” remains available on the newsstands and other outlets and is also sent to a number of libraries and historical societies. The subscription rate for hard copies remains at \$48.00 and \$27.50 for electronic copies.

Our electronic membership system “Wild Apricot” has functioned well during this past year, with some amendments to improve its performance and reporting, is proving to be a valuable management tool. Thank you to Mike McCarthy for his maintenance of the system. Thank you also to Andrew Hennell for managing membership matters and his use of the electronic system

The Light Railways of Australia Facebook Group, member numbers continues to grow and will shortly go past 4000. It is a useful tool for communicating with a large number of people, particularly when we are about to release a new publication and other notifications. Postings by members can also provide useful information to researchers. Thank you to John Dennis, Mike McCarthy, Frank Stamford and John Browning the moderators of our Facebook Group.

During the 2021/22 year we published two new books. I incorrectly mentioned “Australia’s Colourful American Locomotives” by David Fletcher, in my last report, but regardless of that, it has sold very well and now with less than 50 copies remaining, has proven the wisdom of the LRRSA to publish this kind of book. Also published this past year was “Tramways, Coconuts & Phosphate by David Jehan, which is selling well.

I thank our Publications Officer Frank Stamford for his efforts during the year as well as the people who carry out all the activities required to publish a book. Thank you, Bruce Belbin for producing the final layouts for printing. I also thank Gaye Belbin, who has produced the layout for several of our books.

Book sales for the year was 541 orders compared to the previous years end total of 805. This may seem like a significant fall in sales per annum, but is similar to year prior to the Covid pandemic lockdowns. The total value of sales was \$40,378 compared to \$67,620 the previous year, which is a substantial decrease but not unexpected.

In my last report I noted that "In the Shadow of the Prom" by Mike McCarthy, had been shortlisted for the 2021 Victorian Community History Awards sponsored by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Public Record Office Victoria. We were very pleased for Mike when his book was announced the winner and we were proud that it was published by our society.

Thank you to John Dennis for maintaining both the website and the online shop, with Bill Hanks managing the storage of sales stock, packing and dispatch of orders.

The eighth JLN Southern Award for the most outstanding article/s published in LIGHT RAILWAYS during 2020 was awarded to Peter Evans for his article “Copper, Platinum, Gold and Lime” (the mines and tramways of Coopers Creek, Victoria.)

The ninth JLN Southern Award for 2021 has again judged by Dr Ruth Kerr, Roderick Smith and David Whiteford. On behalf of the Council, I thank them all very much for the time and effort, to complete this task. The winner of the award for 2021 will be announced during this AGM.

Our society at the end of the 2020/21 financial year is again in a very sound position. Whilst membership subscriptions cover the cost of producing LIGHT RAILWAYS and mail outs, our financial reserves are there to publish more books. It is envisaged that in the future as volunteer input wanes, the services needed to publish our books will have to be outsourced. This is where having a war-chest of cash will enable the society to continue to publish more books for our members.

Online Member’s Entertainment Meeting have proven to be a huge success, as we now reach many more members, than we ever could when holding entertainment meetings at fixed venues. Presenters are currently scheduled twelve months in advance of a meeting. To date comments from attendees have been very gratify. Thank you to Mike McCarthy for arranging these Zoom meetings and scheduling presenters.

At the last Annual General Meeting, Nick Sheridan who lives in Sydney, New South Wales was elected to Council in the position of Secretary. With the assistance of modern technologies such as Zoom for Council meetings, emails and the online sharing and storage facility of Dropbox. Nick has been able perform all the duties expected of him.

I thank Colin Harvey our Treasurer, for managing the society’s finances. Colin has held this position for well over thirty years.

During November 2021, Simon Moorhead again tried to organise tours but has been thwarted by Covid restrictions. Thank you, Simon for again trying.

Throughout 2021/2022, all Council meetings have been conducted using Zoom online conferencing. With the Secretary now located away from Melbourne in Sydney, has proven that society business can be conducted anywhere. In recent times when Council members have been on holiday, they have still been able to perform their respective duties, in particular our Sales Officer who is currently on a holiday.

Thank you to Bob Gough for organising the Southeast Queensland meetings when possible.

After forty years as President of the New South Wales Division, Jeff Moonie has retired. Thank you very much Jeff for the effort you put in organising the Sydney meetings and other activities. In his place we welcome David Jehan and thank him for putting his hand up. Also thank you to Ross Mainwaring the Treasurer.

Thank you to Les Howard in South Australia for convening meetings in Adelaide.

In Western Australia thank you to our representative David Whiteford and thank you to Ken Milbourne, our representative in Tasmania.

Finally thank you to Mike McCarthy, Nick Sheridan, Phil Rickard, Colin Harvey, Frank Stamford, Richard Warwick, Peter Evans and John Dennis for all they have contributed to our society throughout the year.

Many current society officers have been on Council for more years than we can remember. The time will come when each of us would like to hand over the reins of the LRRSA, to other members. With the ability for people to meet online, new council members could be living anywhere in Australia. In my last report I said I was confident that the LRRSA will continue into the immediate future, but beyond that I am not that confident. I hope there will other members prepared to continue on this rewarding work.

Thank you.

W.L.(Bill) Hanks
President LRRSA (August 2022)