

Tommy Choo Choo – Still Chugging Along

OVER 20 years ago, a proposal was put to the members and Board of the Rotary Club of Lindisfarne, Tas, that they purchase a second-hand children's amusement train. The proposal generated a lot of heated discussions at the time over how the club would pay for the train, if it would be a viable project, would it break down (or, worse, blow its engine) and could the club realistically maintain it for many years into the future.

Eventually, votes were taken, and the club agreed to purchase the train by using some club funds and by borrowing some money from a number of the members. As a result, Tommy Choo Choo (aka Tommy) was inducted into the club as an Honorary Member. He has since become the much-loved red and blue children's train, with a big yellow Rotary wheel on the front that is seen regularly around Hobart at school fairs and public events.

Twenty years later, Tommy is still owned and operated by the club and is seen at regular intervals transporting groups of happy, smiling children and

their parents around events such as the Sandy Bay Regatta, Royal Hobart Show, Hobart Christmas Pageant, Bunnings Car Parks, local school fairs and Christmas functions.

He is now an integral component of the promotional and fundraising activities of the club, supporting and raising funds for a huge range of projects. Over the years, Tommy has also been used in support of countless local charitable organisations and schools, assisting them in promoting a wide variety of very worthwhile causes.

Tommy can be hired by organisations or individuals on an hourly or percentage fee basis. When attending school fairs, Tommy provides much-needed funds to local Parents and Friends Associations. He also has been known to donate his time to worthy charities to assist them with their fundraising events. He has even been requested to help on Vice-Regal occasions by State Governor the Honourable Professor Kate Warner on open days at Government House.

This year, Tommy was invited by the iconic Taste of Tasmania organising committee to participate in its annual New Year's celebrations. For seven very busy days, over the Boxing Day/ New Year holidays period, Tommy transported over 3000 passengers from Constitution Docks, where all the Sydney to Hobart Yachts are docked, to the Taste of Tasmania wharf, where the best of Tasmania's fine food and wine is available.

Like most Rotarians, Tommy is no longer as young as he used to be and has been known to be temperamental at times, so a couple of short, unplanned stops, which luckily came at the end of the day, came as no surprise to his support crew. Like a true Rotarian, he really delivered, working six-hour days nonstop, in spite of the heat and the crowds.

Club president Peter O'Hern believes that the purchase of Tommy in the 90s was the best decision the club ever made. Regardless of the event, Tommy is always enjoyed by children of all ages. The Rotarians from Lindisfarne, who are his support crew, always come away from his outings tired but happy to have brought a little joy into the lives of his many passengers of all ages.

For further information on Tommy, contact the Rotary Club of Lindisfarne via Secretary.Lindisfarne@rotary9830.org.au

