



**Australasian Region
National Model Railroad
Association
Convention Handbook**



AR Convention Handbook National Model Railroad Association

About this Document

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide to any group organizing an NMRA Australasian Region Convention.

Scope

This document is not intended to be a definitive listing of how a convention is to be conducted. Rather it is a collection of ideas and lessons learned that are presented as an aid to any organizing committee to review and use as appropriate.

Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
1.0	12/05/07	Peter Jensen	First Draft
1.1	16/05/07	Peter Jensen	Update after AR Committee review
2.0	1/11/09	Peter Jensen	Update
3.0	7 Aug 2014	Viv Brice	Updated after Canberra Convention
4.0	Nov 2016	David O'Hearn	Updated after Ettalong and Berowra Conventions

Document Approval

Name	Signature	Date



Table of Contents

About this Document.....	2
Purpose	2
Scope	2
Revision History.....	2
Document Approval	2
Table of Contents.....	3
Introduction	6
AR Convention History	6
Objectives of an AR Convention.....	7
Typical AR Conventions	8
Australasian Region Committee (ARC) Planning.....	9
Selecting a Convention Location and Organising Division.....	9
Selecting a Convention Date	9
Guidelines for the Organising Committee.....	10
Organisation of the Convention Committee	10
Liaison with the ARC	10
Tasks of the Convention Committee.....	11
Scheduling.....	12
Site Selection and Evaluation.....	13
Site Selection Checklist	13
Convention Logo and Theme.....	14
Past Convention Logos.....	14
Clinics and Workshops.....	15
Clinic Guidelines.....	15
Workshop Guidelines	16
Clinic and Workshop Hosts.....	16
Before the Clinic.....	16
During the Clinic.....	17
At the End of the Clinic.....	17



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

Convention Documentation	18
Handbook	18
Layout Tour Guide	18
Program Timetable	18
Example Timetable #1	20
Example Timetable #2	21
Catering.....	22
Convention Meal Service	22
Tea and Coffee / Morning and Afternoon Tea	22
Convention Dinner	22
Friday Evening BBQ	23
Financial Arrangements	24
Insurance and Public Liability	25
Convention Publicity/Advertising	26
Why should I attend?	26
Other Publicity Decisions.....	26
Example of a Past Convention Flyers.....	28
Vendors.....	30
Overseas Speaker	31
Auctions / Bring and Buy	32
Model / Photo / Non-Rail Contests	33
Room Requirements.....	33
Non-Rail Activities	34
Miscellaneous	35
Opening Address	35
Interstaters.....	35
Convention Photographer.....	35
Convention Memorabilia	35
In Appreciation.....	35
Public Address.....	36
Closing Address	36



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

Post-Convention Activities.....37
Lessons Learned.....38



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

Introduction

This Guide has been prepared to provide guidance to members planning to run an Australasian Region Convention. It is not meant to be a definitive “How to” on running a convention, but a collection of ideas and lessons learned from members who have previously been involved in conducting similar events.

AR Convention History

The AR has conducted the following conventions.

Year	Location	Guest Speaker	Chair
1986	Macquarie University		Bruce Lovett
1987	Macquarie University		Bruce Lovett
1988	Macquarie University	Bruce Walthers	Bruce Lovett
1989			
1990	Auckland		
1991	Macquarie University	Merv Smith	
1992	San Souci		Phil Knife
1993	Westmead	Tony Koester	Gary Spencer-Salt
1994	Bulla (Melbourne)		Laurie Green
1995	Marayong	Allan McClelland	Gary Spencer-Salt
1996	Melton		Laurie Green
1997	Marayong	Hayden and Frary	Gary Spencer-Salt
1998	Sydney – Thornleigh		David North
1999	Sydney – Huntingwood	Jack Burgess	John Saxon
2000			
2001	Sydney – North Ryde		Peter Jensen
2002	Sydney – Dence Park		Peter Jensen



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

Year	Location	Guest Speaker	Chair
2003	Sydney – Dence Park		Peter Jensen
2004	Sydney – Dence Park		Peter Jensen
2005	Canberra		John Prattis
2006	Niagara Park		Gerry Hopkins
2007	Springwood		George Paxon
2008	Brisbane		Glen Stevens
2009	Sydney – Castle Hill 25 th Anniversary Convention	Charlie Getz Tony Koester	David Howarth
2010			
2011			
2012	Niagara Park		Peter Jensen
2013	Canberra	Stephen Herrick	Charlie Dearling / Viv Brice
2014	Gold Coast	Kyla Stephan	Martyn Jenkins
2015	Ettalong Beach	Ross Cameron	Les Fowler
2016	Berowra	One day event – no dinner - N/A	Les Fowler
2017	Adelaide		John Prattis
2018	Canberra		
2019	Toowoomba		

Objectives of an AR Convention

The objectives for all conventions within the Region include:

1. Provide an environment for learning and updating of modeling skills,
2. Provide an environment that enables meeting and socialising with other modelers, and



AR Convention Handbook National Model Railroad Association

3. Where possible, provide an additional source of income for the region.

Note: It is an aim of the NMRA Australasian Region to hold its annual conventions in various locations to give its widely distributed members the opportunity to attend conventions in their local areas. This means that in some of the less well populated Divisions, it may be necessary for the Region to help finance the convention.

Typical AR Conventions

The ARC has no formal policy on the format and structure of an AR Convention and this should be decided by the convention committee. The format chosen should be presented to the ARC.

Tradition has given the following scenarios:

1. Alternate years have been a 2 day event with the Conventions starting on the Friday evening (pre registrations) until around noon on the following Sunday. A convention dinner would occur on the Saturday evening.
2. A one day event would be all day Saturday, with the convention dinner on the Saturday evening.
3. Some conventions have been more akin to workshops where most activities have been hands on. Others have had more clinic/lecture sessions.
4. Some conventions have used overseas speakers, some have only used local presenters.
5. All conventions have had at least one vendor, some up to five or six.
6. All conventions have provided the opportunity to visit local layouts (usually this is self-drive).

As there is no fixed format, the ARC will be guided by the recommendations of the convention committee.



Australasian Region Committee (ARC) Planning

Selecting a Convention Location and Organising Division

This should be done by the ARC well over a year in advance of the convention. This gives time for the organizing Division to do initial planning to the extent that a brief introduction to its convention can be given during the closing of the current convention, thus ensuring continuity.

Selecting a Convention Date

This needs to be set by the organising division and confirmed by the ARC.

Selection of a suitable date for a Convention can be crucial to the success of the convention. Again, there are no ARC rules or requirements on the dates. Tradition has seen all conventions run in the June to October timeframe. Most recent conventions have been either on, or on either side of, the October long weekend.

The date selected should consider:

1. Travel time of interstate attendees,
2. Accommodation requirements for attendees,
3. Local events occurring that may enhance or hinder the convention attendance,
4. Any prevailing weather conditions such as heat, cold and rain,
5. Conflicts with other NMRA events,
6. Conflicts with any other model or railway event, or synergies to be gained by being concurrent. E.g. AMRA Exhibition in Liverpool
7. Public holidays,
8. Public events (such as grand finals, elections, Father's Days, etc.), and
9. School holidays.

It is often advantageous to coincide with some other local activity such as a flower or craft show as it may provide significant attractions to the non-rail partner.



Guidelines for the Organising Committee

The convention will be managed by a Convention Committee which will be charged with the responsibility for the success of the convention.

Organisation of the Convention Committee

1. The Committee will be managed by a Convention Chairperson, normally a volunteer from the host Division, whose appointment will be endorsed by the AR Committee.
2. The Convention Chairperson will appoint the members of the committee, normally volunteers from the host Division.
3. The Convention Chairperson will keep the AR Committee informed of planning, agreements, and issues.
4. The Convention Chairperson shall prepare minutes of all meetings..
5. Progress reports and status reports shall be prepared as required for periodic presentation to the AR Committee.
6. The Committee will need a Treasurer who would be responsible for the control of the convention funds. The treasurer's duties include:
 - Management of funds in accordance the AR policy on Fiscal Management.
 - Working closely with the Region Treasurer to establish procedures for handling the funds.
 - Preparing a budget for the convention and keeping the budget up to date.
 - Setting the registration and any other fees/costs to ensure a profitable event.
 - Presenting financial reports.

Liaison with the ARC

The AR Convention Coordinator is an occasional AR region position, appointed by the AR President, a position which may or may not be filled. Their role is for forward region planning and will be used as a conduit by the Convention Committee to the ARC when appropriate.

The Convention Committee will liaise with the ARC through the AR Convention Coordinator, if appointed, or through the AR President.



Tasks of the Convention Committee

The Convention Committee is responsible for the following:

1. Setting the date of the convention.
2. Selecting the venue.
3. Setting the format of the convention.
4. Setting the theme for the convention if it is to have one (such as “working on the railroad”).
5. Should the convention have a convention logo? This can be useful for convention branding (See below for some past examples).
6. Establish and implement a marketing plan. Include Diary sections of modelling magazines, writing to other model clubs and associations in the area, etc.
7. Will the convention invite an overseas speaker?
8. Establishing the registration fees and budget.
9. Handling the registration of the event.
10. Survey of members for what should be presented.
11. Setting the agenda (timetable) of the convention.
12. Selecting the clinic presenters.
13. Finding the layouts for the tours.
14. Inviting layouts to the convention.
15. Inviting the vendors.
16. Finding and allocating the necessary helpers for the event.
17. Identifying what competitions will be conducted.
18. Identifying any sales facilities to be provided.
19. Establishing the catering needs.
20. Establishing a non-rail program.
21. Ensure adequate security for the environment.
22. Survey of the attendees on what was good, and what could be better.

It is important that the Convention Committee addresses and completes these tasks. The process for addressing these tasks may be to identify a volunteer who will be responsible to the Convention Committee to complete the task. For example, the contests may be run by the Region’s AP chair who would find the judges and appropriate prizes.



AR Convention Handbook National Model Railroad Association

The Convention Committee should always remember that the resources of the entire Australasian Region are available to assist and support from these resources can be sought via the link to the AR Committee.

Scheduling

There exists within the NMRA AR a typical scheduling spread sheet which covers most of the tasks which need to be done to bring a convention to fruition. It is called the Convention Checklist.

It does not necessarily contain every task that has to be performed for every convention. It does however contain tasks which are not necessarily applicable to every convention. Use it wisely and it can be an invaluable tool for helping with convention planning and scheduling.



Site Selection and Evaluation

Site Selection Checklist

1. What is the targeted and expected number of delegates to the convention?
2. How easy is it to reach? By train, by car, etc.
3. Is any accommodation available for delegates? Is there reasonably priced accommodation nearby?
4. Will there be any plenary sessions where a speaker is presenting to all delegates?
5. Is there a suitable breakout space for informal meetings/discussions and coffee/tea?
6. How many clinic rooms are needed? This will be determined by the expected number of delegates, the maximum number in each clinic, and the number of clinic streams,
7. Is there a need for a "wet" area for workshops? These include any event (such as spray painting) that will make a mess or have ventilation requirements,
8. How many vendors will be attending?
9. How many exhibition layouts will be invited?
10. What are the catering needs for the convention? Can meals be prepared onsite?
11. Are there suitably sized chairs and tables? Modelers do not sit well on kindergarten sized seats!
12. Availability of space for setup of convention registration?
13. Availability of bulletin boards, chalk boards, easels, lecterns, etc.?
14. Availability of secure provisions for overnight safekeeping of convention cash and other valuables.?
15. Provisions for mobility-impaired and handicapped guests?



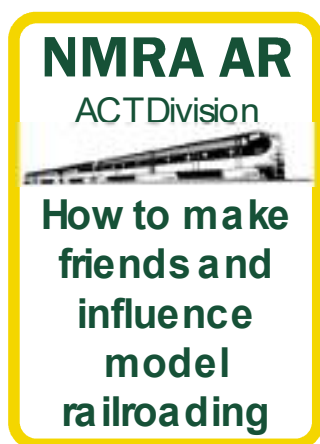
Convention Logo and Theme

It is often useful to select a logo and theme for the convention. This aids in branding the convention and to promote a purpose for the convention. Any logo and theme should reflect the environment and aims of the convention.

Prominent use should also be made of the current NMRA AR logo.

Past Convention Logos

These are shown as examples only. The Convention Committee should decide on any appropriate logo for their convention.



2005





Clinics and Workshops

It is important that clinics and workshops are relevant to the needs of the members/attendees. The best way to ensure the sessions are topical and relevant is to ask the members. An option is to grade the clinics / workshops into, say, Beginner, Intermediate and Expert levels to make it clear what sort of audience the session is aimed at.

Most conventions have concluded with a survey sheet asking for what was good, and what was not. These surveys also ask what should be different next time, and what sessions should be included.

With the internet, a general survey of members can also be used to ask what sessions should be presented.

The message is to make the convention relevant.

Clinic Guidelines

The following guidelines should be considered for the clinic rooms and the clinicians:

1. All noise must be minimised – conduct clinics in a closed room so ambient noise (such as other delegates talking) do not interrupt the clinic,
2. Have someone (a clinic host) introduce and close the clinic – this should start and stop the clinic on time. The clinic host is also to resolve any issues for the clinician,
3. Ask the clinician for their presentation requirements – Audio visual, slides, overheads, white board, lecterns, computers, projectors etc. Provide a slides template (that accords with the EduTrain template) and a Word template for the handbook. Advise the clinician of the due date for the handbook content (so it can be compiled into the handbook) and request that the handbook content comprehensively expands on the presentation.
4. Is the lighting adequate and can it be dimmed if required?
5. The clinic host to close with a thank you and a round of applause.
6. Will the clinic host present each clinician with a certificate/plaque?
7. Will the Clinician be required to provide a handout, in what format, and by when?
8. Have a meeting of all clinic and workshop hosts before the convention commences to remind them of their duties and responsibilities. This is an important role.
9. Restrict the size of the session to a manageable number.
10. Ensure there is a time gap between clinics to allow members to get from one



clinic to the next without any panicked rushing.

Workshop Guidelines

The following guidelines should be considered for the clinic rooms and the clinicians:

1. Are the workshop hands on where the delegate actually builds and keeps the item? Or is it a demonstration by the presenter to the attendees?
2. Have delegates pre-register for workshops (especially if hands on workshops) - numbers may need to be restricted.
3. There may be a need to pay a levy to attend a workshop to cover the cost of the supplies.
4. All noise must be minimised – both the workshop noise interrupting other sessions, and other sessions interrupting the workshop,
5. Have someone (a workshop host) introduce and close the workshop – this should start and stop the workshop on time. The workshop host is also to resolve any issues for the presenter,
6. Ask the presenter for their requirements – tools, power, ventilation, hard floor, audio visuals, slides, overheads, white board, lecterns, etc.
7. Is the lighting adequate and can it be dimmed if required?
8. The workshop host to close with a thank you and a round of applause.
9. Will the workshop host present each clinician with a certificate/plaque?
10. Will the presenter be required to provide a handout, in what format, and by when?

Clinic and Workshop Hosts

The smooth running of clinics and workshops will go a long way making the overall convention experience a good one for attendees. The following guidelines for the hosts who will be introducing clinics and workshops may seem a little draconian but they have been proved over many years and have stood the test of time.

A copy of these guidelines should be given to each host well before the clinic or workshop.

If you have a willing writer, it can be very useful to have him or her write all the introductions beforehand, thus ensuring they are of the right length and have a common theme. These can then be given to the hosts to help them in their task.

Before the Clinic

1. Meet the speaker. Make sure you have a basic understanding of what he/she



AR Convention Handbook National Model Railroad Association

aims to cover during the clinic.

2. Reach agreement on whether clinic is to be a talk/demo right up to the end of the allotted time, or whether it is to stop a little earlier, in time for questions.
3. Reach agreement on how you will advise speaker discreetly of 10 minutes to go, then 5 minutes, 2 minutes, 1 minute and then **STOP!** It is important that clinics end on time, regardless of whether the presenter has actually finished.
4. Put a few words together, ready to introduce the speaker and his/her topic. Choose your words carefully, to make the most of 15 to 20 seconds. Under no circumstances exceed 25 seconds.

During the Clinic

1. Keep track of time and ensure speaker is aware of the time.
2. Think about how you will thank speaker at the end.
3. Control questions at the end.

At the End of the Clinic

1. Thank speaker. Do not exceed 10 seconds.
2. If applicable, present the "In Appreciation" memento.
3. Recruit members as necessary from audience to help tidy up quickly.



Convention Documentation

Convention attendees want to know what is on when and where, so some form of documentation should be available to them as they register. This might include a clinic / workshop timetable, a local map showing the venue and the dinner location a map of the venue itself showing sales room, clinic rooms etc., a list of layouts available for visiting (with driving directions) and perhaps some local information.

Note that some of this information may be required by attendees before they arrive, such as the local map.

Handbook

The following guidelines should be considered for the Convention Handbook:

1. Will a convention handbook be produced? (while there is no formal requirement, a handbook is a very useful way of combining all of the necessary information into one document.)
2. What format will the handbook take (Hardcopy, electronic)?
3. When will the presentations be included in the handbook or will they be provided on a DVD or memory stick?
4. What format (Hardcopy, electronic etc.) is required by the team assembling the handbook? Guidance should be provided to presenters. The presenter's handbook content should elaborate on the PowerPoint slides so that future readers understand the presentations.

Layout Tour Guide

For contents, see the preceding section on Layout Tours.

Program Timetable

For smooth running of a convention, it is important that delegates know what is on, and where and when it will occur. The program timetable is a critical document that must be available to all delegates.

Some thoughts and ideas on the timetable:

1. An up-to-date timetable should be available in all member packs.
2. A large version of the timetable should be clearly displayed at venues around the convention centre.
3. Name each room – the Alco Room, the GM Room, RED room, BLUE room etc.
4. The timetable should clearly show:



AR Convention Handbook National Model Railroad Association

- Start and stop time
 - Presenter
 - Name of session
 - Room
5. Have an internal only version that will identify tasks and people for the organisation of the sessions. These may include:
 - Session Host
 - AV requirements
 - Special needs
 6. Show all convention activities, including contest viewing, auctions, clinics, workshops, meals, breaks, etc.
 7. Colour coding clinic rooms or clinic streams can be helpful in clarifying the timetable



AR Convention Handbook

National Model Railroad Association

Example Timetable #1



From:	To:	Engine House	Car Shops	Paint Shop	Waiting Room	
8:45	9:00			8:45 Welcome	Non-Rail Program	
9:00	10:00			Clinic 1 Planning and Building a Prototypical Layout in the 21st Century Phil Moore		
10:00	10:30	Morning Tea				
10:30	11:15	Clinic 2 Practical DCC Marcus Ammann	Contest Models	Clinic 3 Kitbashing Cornerstone Buildings Phil Collins	Workshop 1 Connecting Connifers John Eagles	Non-Rail Program
11:15	12:00			Clinic 4 Frocks - Foam Rocks Mario Rapinett		
12:00	13:00	Lunch				
13:00	14:00	Sideshow Alley 1 - Decoder Pro (Marcus Ammann), Rolling stock tuneup (Sowerby Smith), Resistance Soldering (Alex Danilov), Building Construction (Steve Pettit), Scratchbuilding NSW railway prototype buildings (Phil Calvert)	Contest Models	Clinic 5 Tuning Athearn Locos Erik Bennett	Workshop 2 Painting and Air Brushing John Montgomery Maximum 8	Non-Rail Program
14:00	15:00			Clinic 6 Casting Plaster Buildings Frank Godde	Workshop 3 Painting and Air Brushing John Montgomery Maximum 8	
15:00	15:30	Afternoon Tea				
15:30	16:15	Workshop 4 PVA Scenery John Montgomery Maximum 8	Contest Models	Clinic 7 Digital Photography Gerry Hopkins	Workshop 6 and 7 Hand Laying Points Alex Nadalini Maximum 10	Non-Rail Program
16:15	17:00	Workshop 5 PVA Scenery John Montgomery Maximum 8		Clinic 8 DCC Friendly Turnouts Peter Jensen		
17:00	18:00	Pre-Dinner Break				
18:00	21:30			Dinner Speaker: Ted Mullett Valley Heights Locomotive Heritage Museum		



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

Example Timetable #2

Clinic Schedule

Saturday, 21 September 2013

Time	Clinic Stream A	Clinic Stream B	Clinic Stream C
08:00-08:55	Arrival and Registrations		
09:00-09:15	Opening & Introduction in Main Hall – Non-rail program bus departs		
09:20-10:05	Phil Badger MMR Beyond The Fence	David Low WW 1 Narrow Gauge	David O'Hearn Fences for Layouts
10:10-10:55	Erik Bennett Digital Command Control	Chris Minahan Communications and Model Railway Operations	Eddie Gallier 3D Printing and Rapid Prototyping
11:00-11:20	Morning Tea		
11:25-12:10	Peter Shum Airbrushing	Rob Nesbitt Electric Railways and Catenary	Allan Garbutt & Phil Collins Building A Better Mouse Trap
12:15-13:15	Lunch		
13:20-14:05	Bob Best Making Plans from Photos	Geoff Langridge Colour isn't Colour	Brad Hinton Modelling the prototype from afar: The Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern
14:10-14:55	Jess Brisbane The Maine Two-footers	Erik Bennett Digital Command Control	David Low WW 1 Narrow Gauge
15:00-15:20	Afternoon Tea		
15:25-16:10	Eddie Gallier 3D Printing and Rapid Prototyping	Phil Badger MMR Beyond The Fence	Stephe Jitts MMR The Science and Fiction of Wheels
16:15-17:00	Allan Garbutt & Phil Collins Building A Better Mouse Trap	Gavin Hince MMR Prototype Freelancing	Chris Minahan Communications and Model Railway Operations
18:30-for 19:00	Dinner (see page 7)		

Sunday, 22 September 2013

Time	Clinic Stream A	Clinic Stream B	Clinic Stream C
09:00-09:45	Gavin Hince MMR Prototype Freelancing	Peter Shum Airbrushing	David O'Hearn Fences for Layouts
09:55-10:40	Brad Hinton Modelling the prototype from afar: The Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern	Bob Best Making Plans from Photos	Rob Nesbitt Electric Railways and Catenary
10:45-11:05	Morning Tea		
11:10-11:55	Stephe Jitts MMR The Science and Fiction of Wheels	Jess Brisbane The Maine Two-footers	Geoff Langridge Colour isn't Colour
12:00-12:30	Wrap up and Convention Close in Main Hall		



Catering

Convention Meal Service

The following guidelines should be considered for the event catering:

1. What meals will be catered?
2. In what format will they be catered – lunch pack, fast-food service, BBQ, etc.
3. Tea and coffee facilities – can we provide these and is their appropriate facilities?

Tea and Coffee / Morning and Afternoon Tea

General access to tea and coffee making facilities:

1. Is there a suitable venue for tea and coffee making?
2. Is there a suitable break out area where it can be consumed?
3. Appoint someone to be responsible for replenishing supplies and cleaning up
4. Will cakes and biscuits be supplied? All day?
5. Will cakes and biscuits be supplied just at morning and afternoon breaks?

Convention Dinner

A Convention Dinner has become a tradition at the conventions. There are no rules about the format of the dinner. The following are guidelines only:

1. Catered dinner - less work and more enjoyable by the convention committee
2. Guest Speaker – needs to be good, light hearted entertainment. Usually an invited guest along with their partner.
3. Lucky door prizes,
4. BYOG or in-house bar
5. Live Auction of a “few” interesting items
6. Ask about special food requirements
7. Pre-register to assist with catering requirements – only allow pre-registrations
8. Should there be a head table, or should “officials” be dispersed across the tables
9. Podium and microphone for guest speaker and any announcements
10. Announce contest winners and make any presentations



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

Friday Evening BBQ

Depending on the convention arrangements, a Friday evening welcome BBQ can start the convention well. Some thoughts:

1. Pre-register attendees,
2. Welcome the interstaters,
3. Get helpers in for the setup.



Financial Arrangements

Good financial management is critical as these are the membership's funds. The Convention Treasurer should work closely with the Region Treasurer.

1. Cash float required? How much?
2. How will registrations be collected? Online? Credit card, cash, etc.
3. How will refunds be made?
4. How will expenses be paid? Cheque?
5. Who are the cheque signatories? Will they be available?
6. Any cancellation fees; penalty charges?
7. Do you expect any hidden charges – insurance, security, maintenance, cleaning, etc.?

Remember: The distribution of funds for AR conventions is documented in the appropriate policy.



AR Convention Handbook National Model Railroad Association

Insurance and Public Liability

As the convention will be a NMRA sponsored event, it will be covered by the Public Liability Insurance that the organisation is required to hold under its Rules of Association. A copy of the certificate describing this insurance cover is available for the AR Committee Secretary as required.

Vendors who are retailing products at the convention are not covered by the NMRA's public liability insurance policy so they must obtain their own cover to meet the requirements of the venue provider.



Convention Publicity/Advertising

The prerequisite for a successful Convention is adequate publicity to build up the interest. For the most part, the publicity is achieved through articles in the AR magazine, the MainLine, and the AR web site.

The first major decision is to understand the audience to be addressed by the publicity/advertising. Importantly, ***will this convention be seeking non-NMRA attendees?*** If yes, a different advertising strategy will likely be needed. (Often, our conventions are a good way to attract new members).

The primary considerations for Convention publicity are:

- When and Why
- Why should I attend?

It is important to provide as much advanced information and publicity to potential attendees as possible. Particularly if the core attendees will be traveling some distance.

Why should I attend?

To build the “Why should I attend?” information, there are many points that should develop an interest in attending. These include:

1. Layouts that will be on display – place on the website and in mainline
2. Information about the clinics / workshops, and the presenters
3. Information about any guest speaker
4. Information about other activities:
 - Contests
 - Auctions (Live or Silent), bring and buy
 - Layout Tours
 - Outside activities
 - Non-Rail activities

Other Publicity Decisions

There are other decisions to make on the publicity. This will usually depend on the targeted audience. Will only members be targeted? Will non-members be targeted?

1. Where will the convention be advertised? Options include:
 - Mainline, Scale Rails



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

- NMRA web sites
 - Paid advertising in the hobby press (such as AMRM, Narrow Gauge Downunder, MR, etc.)
 - Will non-paid advertising be used (such as MR, AMRM, etc.)
 - Community What's On radio announcements
2. Hobby shop flyers.
 3. Inserts in magazines
 4. Letters/flyers to other model clubs and organisations



Example of a Past Convention Flyers



National Model Railroad Association Sydney Convention 2001

2001 Convention

Modelling with the Masters

June 9th - 11th

Venue: - Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School
Coe's Road North Ryde. Monday 11th Layout Tours

- Come and Join in the fun
- Extensive Clinic Program
- Learn from Local Experts
- Model Contest and Display Models
- Trade Stands and Silent Auction
- Convention Dinner on Saturday Night
- Guest Speaker for after Dinner
- Self Drive Layout Tours on Monday

Cost - NMRA Members \$75.00 Less \$ 10.00 for early Registration
Non Members \$80.00 Less \$ 10.00 for Early Registration
Home Rail Program for Partners \$ 15.00 (incl 1 per delegate
Family (CHW) 1 per delegate \$ 10.00
Single Day Registration Members \$ 40.00 Non Members \$ 45.00
Accompanying Person Program \$ 10.00 Family (CHW) \$ 10.00
Non Members registration includes temporary NMRA Membership
Early registration prior to May 18th Dinner \$ 21.00 per person

Enquiries - Peter Garbett, 20 Orchard Avenue, Winston Hills, NSW 2153
P 02 9884 4770 or Email: pm@hobbyland.net.au



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association



**NMRA Australasian Region
Convention 2013**



Capital Rail 2013

The 2013 NMRA Australasian Region Convention, "Capital Rail 2013", will be held in Canberra at the University of Canberra High School Kaleen over the weekend of 21 and 22 September 2013, during Canberra's Floriade Festival.

Planned Activities include:

Clinics

Demonstrations

Display layouts

Model and Photo contests

Bring and Buy sale

Non-Railroad program

Dinner with Guest Speaker

Layout tours

Layout Operating

(yet to be confirmed)

You do not have to be an
NMRA member to attend ***but..***

Registration is essential .. all details, including
Registration forms, can be found on the NMRA website
at:

<http://www.nmra.org.au/Convention13/convention%202013.html>

or by contacting the Convention Registrar:

John Gillies 14 Earle St Lyneham ACT 2602

Tel (02) 6248 8408



Vendors

It is usually advantageous to have several vendors at the convention as a service to the delegates.

When inviting vendors, there must be something in it for them (the vendors). It is a lot of work for them to set up. As a convention committee, it is your responsibility to provide enough customers to make it attractive.

Traditionally, vendors have not been charged to attend the convention. Instead, a request has been made for a raffle prize of at least \$50 value. In this way, the convention and vendors both win.

Vendors may be required to demonstrate they have the appropriate public liability insurance required by the venue hirer as they are not covered by the NMRA's public liability policy.

Points to consider:

1. Offer to vendors should include
 - The expected number of delegates,
 - The space they have been allocated
 - When they can have access to the area
 - Request for raffle prize
2. Offer to read a commercial over the PA system
3. Raffle prizes will be acknowledged publicly
4. Offer free lunch (up to two staff)



Overseas Speaker

Previous conventions have had overseas guest speakers. These have included:

- Tony Koester
- Bruce Walthers
- Allan McClelland
- Frary and Hayden
- Jack Burgess
- Charlie Getz

These people can be a huge draw card to the members and the public alike. It has also, from some local members, been seen as a negative because of the cost and the fact that we have just as good modelers here.

Any intention to invite an overseas speaker should be reviewed in detail first with the AR Committee.

Points to consider:

1. Guest speaker to be invited early. Preliminary commitment should be made more than 12 months out.
2. Estimate budget. This would include:
 - Cost of airfare
 - Any accommodation
 - Any other expenses
3. Formalise the invitation and our commitment to them,
4. Ensure that they are good and entertaining speakers'
5. Use as a draw card on the advertising of the convention,
6. An overseas speaker would be treated as the key note speaker. They should be used for the opening (and possibly closing) plenary sessions and as the after dinner speaker,



Auctions / Bring and Buy

A key attraction and service to members is the “bring and buy” stalls. These can be run in one of many ways, such as:

1. Live auction,
2. Silent auction, and
3. Organised “Bring and Buy” stalls / room
4. Owner managed “Bring and Buy” stall.

In the first three methods, the Convention Committee may charge a levy on the sales as they would be handling the moneys involved.

On the last method, it is a one on one sale, the Convention Committee is not involved all responsibility resting with the seller.

It is important that the Convention Committee establish the method that they will employ should a “bring and buy” be offered. The first three can involve a lot of additional work for a little additional return. Most recent conventions have used some variation of the last two methods.

Points to consider:

1. Decide whether a “Bring and Buy” will be offered,
2. Decide on the process for conducting the “Bring and Buy”
3. Publish the rules for the “Bring and Buy” in the delegate pack plus on the convention web site
4. Ensure adequate security of all items in the sale area
5. Ensure adequate security and collection of the funds (if the NMRA is collecting the funds)
6. Set the percentage of each sale transaction retained by the Convention on each sale. This is typically 10% and it is used to defray the costs of the “Bring and Buy”.
7. Arrange for a cash float if the NMRA is collecting the funds
8. Publish the timetable for when the “Bring and Buy” is open and when any monetary resolution needs to be complete



Model / Photo / Non-Rail Contests

Model and Photo contests will be held according to the current rules set out by the NMRA and available in their current forms on the national website. Entry forms are also available on the websites and a copy of each should be included with the documentation sent to every registrant.

The following provisions should guide the preparation and conduct of the Model, Photo, and Non-Rail Contests at Region Conventions.

Room Requirements

- The room should be large enough for enough tables to handle the expected number of contest models.
- The Contest room should be well lighted.
- White, or light-colored, table covers should be used on the tables.
- The room should be capable of being locked during the night, and at other times when not in use.



Non-Rail Activities

A Non-Rail program is a strong incentive for people to attend a convention as it can provide some interesting or attractive activities for partners

Non-rail activities are best organised by a sub-committee. Ideally, the sub-committee should be led by someone who will be involved with the program.

Points to be considered include:

1. Is a non-rail program needed? How many are likely to attend?
2. Activities occurring in the area (such as art, flower shows)
3. Local tourist attractions
4. Local shopping
5. How will the non-rail be transported to the activities? Should a bus be rented?



Miscellaneous

Opening Address

Someone needs to open the convention, perhaps the Guest Speaker or the Region President and then the Convention Chair should welcome attendees and present any late breaking information and any housekeeping that might be needed, such as signage, toilet locations and any special requirements of the venue itself.

The presenter should introduce any ARC members and other dignitaries that are present.

Interstaters

Some interstate visitors arrive without transport. Such attendees need to be identified early and local volunteers arranged to transport them to and from the convention venues.

This also applies to any pre- and post-convention layout tours.

Convention Photographer

1. Have an official or nominated photographer to record the event.
2. It is a good idea, if it all possible, to provide an AV presentation of scenes and delegates as an introduction to the convention dinner and/or closing session

Convention Memorabilia

1. Will there be any convention branded merchandise?
2. Will there be a convention car? What scale? What type? Is there time to produce the car?
3. Will there be convention decals? What scale? Is there time to produce the car?
4. How will convention memorabilia be sold/disposed? As part of registration, at the convention?
5. How about convention "show bags"?

In Appreciation

It is a good idea to have some "In Appreciation" mementoes to give to those who have helped produce and run the convention, such as little plaques. Enough should be produced to allow one to be given to each clinic and workshop presenter (by the host), also to the guest speaker, the personality opening the show, each vendor and sideshow alley presenter and to each convention committee member.



AR Convention Handbook National Model Railroad Association

Other than the clinic / workshop presenters, these can be presented during the closing address.

Public Address

Use of a public address system can aid in organising delegates at the convention by announcing special activities but make sure that the PA system is tested and working *before* the convention

1. Announce that lunch is served?
2. Read an advertisement from each vendor – part of the service to vendors.
3. Ask vendors for any specials and announce them – As an example, at the afternoon tea break, xyz has all Athearn cars at 20% off.
4. Program changes
5. Lost and Found

Closing Address

A closing address is necessary to bring the convention to a formal close, rather than letting everyone drift off. This is the time to thank all those who have helped and also the time for a member from the following convention committee to introduce that convention. Perhaps contest winners can be announced and any presentations made, such as the latest MMR.



Post-Convention Activities

So we have had a successful convention. It is essential all those that helped and were involved is adequately thanked.

The Convention Chairperson needs to:

1. Send a thank you letter to all vendors,
2. Send a thank you letter to all presenters:
 - This could also be a plaque at the closing session where the presenters are formally acknowledged,
 - This could also be a certificate presented by the clinic host at the end of the session,
3. Send a thank you letters to all helpers – including the non-rail host,
4. Present a full report to the AR Committee
5. Propose any amendments needed in this handbook based on lessons learned.



Lessons Learned

The following points have been noted from past conventions. Some of the pitfalls may be unavoidable due to circumstances beyond the committee's control but where this is so, make extra efforts to minimize their negative impacts. Many of them are just sound management practice.

They are presented here as a way of passing on experience. While following this advice will not necessarily make for a good convention, it can certainly provide a sound basis for success.

Registration	Get everything ready in plenty of time – when the doors open, the first attendees will be queuing to come in and you have to be ready. Bad organisation here will start everything off badly.
Punctuality	Everyone involved needs to be in the right place at the right time. Sounds obvious but it still needs to be said.
Cross Training	Try to ensure that all committee members and helpers have a good idea of others jobs so that they can step into the breach in and emergency (probably easier said than done!)
Equipment 1	Make sure that all equipment to be used has been set up and successfully tested before the convention and then again at the convention venue before it has to be used. If possible, have spare tested equipment handy to replace last minute failures. For example, a spare laptop with all presentations pre-loaded.
Equipment 2	Make sure that there is more than one person who can operate the equipment to be used.
Introducers	Follow the guidelines given earlier in this book. There is no excuse for an introducer waffling on about the wrong presentation or presenter.
Help Desk	Set up a table or similar in the breakout area where committee members will gather and where anyone can come to get information and any time. Great place for spare documentation and the master copies of timetable and layout tour guide.
Signage 1	Fact: Model Railroaders do not read! Put up plenty of large clear signs labelling clinic, workshop and sales rooms etc. and more signs pointing to these from the breakout area. If in doubt, put up another sign! Anything smaller than A3 will be ignored.



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

Spelling	In spite of the above, any spelling mistakes or missing or duplicated words in your documentation will be pointed out to you with glee several times. Absence of such errors goes a long way to giving a professional feel to your efforts.
Signage 2	Keep a large master timetable available, perhaps at the help desk, and ensure that this is up-to-date at all times. Should any significant changes occur, use the public address at coffee breaks.
Layout Tours	Keep a master list of layout tours available, perhaps at the help desk, and ensure that this is up-to-date at all times. Again, should any significant changes occur, use the public address.
Room Names	Perhaps colour code the rooms in the timetable and carry this through to the signs to these rooms.
Non-Rail Program	Essential – make the partners happy and model railroading benefits.
Promises	If you say you'll do something, DO IT. Better to do it badly than not to do it at all.
Breakout Area	This is the place for coffee and tea, vendors stands, sideshow alley and mingling / networking. It will always be noisy and is NOT the place for a clinic if at all possible. If a clinic has to be held there, then effort needs to be expended to reduce all other activity during that clinic.
Clinic Repetition	If possible, give clinics more than once to give more attendees the chance to see all they want. Both Timetable examples given earlier in this book include this feature.
Clinic Notes	If you are unable to get all of the clinic notes onto the DVD issued to each attendee, make sure that the missing clinics are posted to the NMRA AR website as soon as possible after the convention and let all attendees know.
Timing	You have made a timetable – stick to it. Make sure presenters know what time they have and that they will be cut off if they try to go over.
Punctuality	Once again, everyone involved needs to be in the right place at the right time. This cannot be repeated too often.
GPS	Pre-registration details given to attendees before the convention need not only the name of the venue but also its street address, which is often all that GPS units can recognise.



AR Convention Handbook
National Model Railroad Association

- After Dinner Speaker** He or she **MUST** be either interesting to most of the dinner guests or funny, and preferable both. You will need luck to get this right but it will be worth it.
- Identity** Ensure that the committee members are easily identifiable perhaps by giving them brightly coloured name badges.
- Enjoy** The task of managing a convention, while a lot of hard work, is very fulfilling. Have fun and enjoy it.