CTA 2024 AGM Website Report

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Management and operations of the website were mostly uneventful during 2023. However, there were 3 significant failures:

1. no automatic email reminding members to renew, &
2. emails claiming that the member hadn't renewed when they had, &
3. website exceeding allocated storage due to spam

The first 2 involve the membership software. This is a "plug-in" (a bit like an app) that processes the club's membership. It's free & mostly does a reasonable job, but when it fails, it can create very messy situations. This was exemplified in the 2nd failure, where multiple emails were sent out erroneously stating that the member hadn't paid (even though they had).

Fortunately, the previous Webmaster, Gus, was available to fix it, but that process took time. During that process, more emails were sent to certain members. I can appreciate that people don't like being "spammed", but I would like to make members aware that this is not intentional. Fortunately, many members were understanding, perhaps knowing that technology doesn't always work the way you want it, & that those fixing it are doing their best.

The 3rd failure highlights the vulnerability of the website. For some reason, a member had sent an 18MB email 117 times! It had occurred at 4 distant times over 2 days, for about 40 minutes each time. The solution was to identify the receiving mailbox & delete the 116 emails, but it took time to find the right mailbox. Fortunately, too, it was spotted the next day, & remedied similarly.

I guess my main point is to just be understanding of the website & its failures. It uses 43 "plug-ins", like PMPro (the membership processing system). Behind the scenes, it can require a good deal of work to keep things running smoothly.

A case in point is the "plug-in" that handles displaying the club's events. Like any software, updates are required from time to time, to fix bugs & to deal with updates made to other software. However, in this case, the updated "Event" "plug-in" didn't work. To fix this, Gus duplicated the website on his home laptop, then looked at each "plug-in" to see where the issue lay. He found that the "plug-in" that displayed the slide show at the top of our webpages was the culprit, & so found an alternative "plug-in" that did the same job but without the conflict, installed it, configured it (so it looked the same) & updated the Event plug-in. All of which goes unnoticed if he does it correctly.

As Gus said last year: "I encourage all members to explore the website to discover some of the content gems". I would especially recommend "Rides" -> "Find a Ride - Tracks List".

If there's any issues you have with accessing the website or where you could see further improvement please drop me an email at webmaster@ctawa.asn.au."