

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Mareeba

QATB services commenced in Mareeba in May 1922 when the Atherton Committee appointed Richard Rowland Dawson of Mareeba to its Honorary staff and issued him with a first aid kit. The status of the service was that of an Honorary Centre.

On 3 November 1938, a public meeting was held in the Mareeba School of Arts building to ascertain if sufficient funds could be raised to proceed with the establishment of a self-governing centre. At this time, there were three honorary bearers in the town, R.R. Dawson, A.E. Hoeffler and H.S. Lilywhite.

During the early portion of 1939, acting under the authority of the Atherton Centre Committee, a Provisional Committee was formed with a view to raising funds to establish an independent centre. In less than one month the sum of £130 was raised by contributions and the public generally was most enthusiastic to acquire a service which had been a long-felt want in the area. In the two-year period while awaiting permission of the Minister for Health and Home Affairs to proceed with the establishment of a centre, the enthusiasm displayed by the public was noticed and over this time the sum of £348 was held on behalf of the Mareeba Provisional Committee by the Atherton Centre.

The independent Centre at Mareeba was gazetted by Order in Council of 7 December 1940. The Mareeba Committee, consisting of C.G. Ollson (Chairperson), W. Gardner (Deputy Chairperson), J.S. Murray (Hon Treasurer), D. Lawson, R. McNicol, R. Newberry and W. Fielding, met at the Shire Office on 27 January 1941 and appointed Mr Norm Parker of the Ingham Centre to the position of Superintendent. Superintendent Parker had also served as Superintendent of the Chillagoe Centre before its closure and as Senior Bearer at the Atherton Centre.

The Committee arranged for an interest free loan of £250 from the QATB State Executive Committee to assist in the purchase of a new ambulance vehicle. A Chevrolet Pullman Sedan was purchased and converted into an ambulance transport vehicle. The plant also included a rail car that was stationed at Mount Molloy. In the following year, a second rail car was acquired and stationed in Mareeba.



First Superintendent N.H. Parker

The Committee secured suitable premises in the business section of the main street at a nominal rental with the lease extending over a period of two years and with the option of a further twelve months.

In his first year of service at Mareeba Superintendent Parker was ably assisted by Honorary Bearers P.J. Killoran and T.E. McElhinney.

During a visit to the Centre by the State President and General Secretary in 1945 the Committee was advised to consider the purchase of a suitable residence and utilise it for brigade operations rather than continuing to occupy the rented premises which proved to have many disadvantages. The Committee subsequently purchased a building in Walsh Street from Mrs Jessie Barrett and engaged an architect to

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prepare plans to have the necessary alterations and additions made. The completed building had ample room to house the plant and provide the Superintendent and his family with a comfortable residence. In 1946 the Committee purchased a Citroen rail car from the Dalby Centre to replace the JAP unit. The distance travelled by rail ambulance each year was in excess of 3000 miles.

Also, in 1946 a decision was reached for the employment of a Bearer to assist the Superintendent with the greatly increased call on the service. Applications were called and Mr Ernie Bradley of the Ingham Centre was appointed. Later in his Brigade career Mr Bradley became the State Secretary.



Premises 1946

In 1966 new ambulance premises were erected at the corner of Lloyd and Walsh Street to keep pace with the rapid expansion in the town and district. The cost of the new Centre building and Superintendent's residence was \$38,820. Since that time a number of alterations and additions have been made to the buildings.

Superintendent Parker retired in 1967 and was succeeded by his Senior Bearer Mr J.G. Beams who served in the positions of Superintendent and Secretary until his death in 1971. Deputy Superintendent John Panebiango of Mareeba was appointed to the vacant positions.

Following representations over a number of years from the residents of Dimbulah a Sub-Centre was established in that town. A new Sub-Centre and a residence for the Officer-in-Charge were constructed at a cost of \$105,000. The official opening by Mr R. Scott MLA took place on 20 March 1982.

Superintendent Panebiango resigned in 1989 and was replaced by Superintendent Resham Singh of Ravenshoe.

Since the establishment of the Mareeba Centre the following people have filled the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

1940 – 1943	C.M. Ollson
1943 – 1947	W.G. Woolley
1947 – 1948	W. Ward
1948 – 1957	T. McElhinney
1957 – 1961	E. Ryle

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1961 – 1964	C. Davies
1964 – 1971	M. Borzi
1971 – 1976	M. Tenni
1976 – 1982	D. Jones
Present occupant Chairperson	B. Healy