

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Innisfail

In August 1911, R.G. Dalrymple and R.D. Condon, noticing a sick person being taken to Hospital in a spring-cart, decided that some better means of transporting the sick and injured should be provided for the residents of Innisfail, with the result that a public meeting was called.

Arrangements were made for the Chairperson, Dr C. Baxter Tyrie and Superintendent M.J. Hogan of the Cairns Centre to attend this meeting, which was presided over by Mr F.E. Shaw. A Committee was formed comprising of R.G. Dalrymple, R.D. Condon, H.G. Ladbrook, T. Nisbet, R.H. Tann, H.R. Garbutt, J. Vaughan, L.J. Duffy, Mr Cowan, M. Gallagher, W.E. Desplace, Mr Stephens, Drs E.P. Leavy and Holmes and Rev H. Woodger.

At the monthly meeting of the Cairns Centre Committee held on 8 November 1911, it was decided to adopt the recommendation of Superintendent Hogan that a Sub-Centre be opened at Innisfail with Ambulance Officer Jack Johnson in charge. The Innisfail Sub-Centre was officially opened by Superintendent Hogan on 7 December.



Premises 1912, with Deputy Superintendent J. Johnston and Superintendent M.J. Hogan of Cairns

Temporary quarters were secured on the Esplanade in the Commonwealth Hotel buildings with telephone communication and all the necessary equipment. The first Honorary Officer appointed was Mr R.H. Tann.

By 1913 the Sub-Centre was situated in Edith Street, and it was decided to secure a suitable parcel of land and erect comfortable quarters for the Deputy Superintendent. Early in that year Deputy Superintendent Johnston was transferred to the Gordonvale Sub-Centre and he was succeeded by Ambulance Officer L.E. Dempsey of Brisbane.

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In 1914 Deputy Superintendent Dempsey resigned to return to the Brisbane Centre and Ambulance Officer Wm Hoban of Friesland (via Cloncurry) Honorary Centre appointed to the vacant position.

The erection of the new sugar mill at South Johnstone in 1915, and the opening up of new lands in and around the district of Innisfail made the work of the Brigade heavier than usual. Mr J.A. Loth (late of the Babinda Sub-Centre) took up residence at South Johnstone and joined the Innisfail Honorary Staff. He made many sacrifices in order to help sick and injured residents of South Johnstone.

At the end of 1915, because of the vast number of calls and the number of people employed in the district, the Cairns Committee sent Honorary Bearer Henry Anderson to Innisfail in order to assist Deputy Superintendent Hoban in his work. Officer Anderson was attached to the Sub-Centre for a period of eight months, being stationed at Japoon Valley where a number of employees were constantly the two-foot tramway. Mr John Hendry became attached to the honorary staff at South Johnstone in 1916 and assisted in the work along the Japoon and Liverpool Creek tramline.

Up-to-date quarters were erected in Innis fail in 1916 at a cost in excess of £500.

The Innisfail Sub-Centre became an independent Centre on 14 April 1917 and Deputy Superintendent Hoban was appointed Superintendent and Secretary. At this time the Provisional Committee comprised R.D. Condon (Chairperson), W.M. Vandeleur (Hon Secretary), J. Hoskins, J.W. Mills, P. McCool, J. McCool, D. Driscoll, S. Bridge, J.W. Burnand, P.J. O'Donahue, A.J. Franklin, W. Ely and T.J. Farrell. On 9 June 1917, it was decided to establish a Sub-Centre at South Johnstone with Officer J. Hendry in charge as Deputy Superintendent. This Sub-Centre gained self-government on 12 October 1919 and Mr Hendry became its first Superintendent.



1928 Superintendent M.A. Whittington with car on roadway

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The first staff member appointed to the Innisfail Centre was Ambulance Officer E. Von Alpen who commenced duty in July 1923. Officer Van Alpen later became Superintendent of the Ingham Centre and lost his life during the 1927 flood whilst on an errand of mercy.

In the period 1923-24 the Committee had to provide ambulance services along the North Coast railway at El Arish and Banyon districts. As there was no road from Innisfail to those districts, the Committee decided to convert its motorcycle and side car into a Rail Ambulance. This was done at a cost of £217. The Honorary Centre at Banyan (Tully) which was opened in July 1923 was formed into a Sub-Centre on 6 January 1925, with Ambulance Officer A.J. Wingate in charge. This Sub-Centre became a Centre on 1 July 1926.

Superintendent Hoban passed away on 13 March 1928 and Superintendent M.A. (Dick) Whittington of the Mossman Centre was appointed to the vacant position. Four generations of the Whittington family have served the Queensland Ambulance and at the present time one grandson is serving at the Brisbane Centre. Another grandson and great-grandson resigned from the Tully and Winton Centres in 1990. When the Brigade was first established in Innisfail, it occupied premises adjoining the present ambulance building. In 1916 the first ambulance building was erected on the Esplanade opposite the Sawmill. Because of the demand for increased accommodation, this building was sold and the present concrete structure erected in 1937 at a cost of £7,567. In 1988 major alterations costing approximately \$112,000 were made to the building to provide for extra rooms for office staff, in-service training and computer equipment.

Superintendent Whittington retired in 1961 and was succeeded by Superintendent H. Trainor of the Silkwood Centre. Superintendent Trainor passed away in December 1970 and his Deputy Superintendent, Mr Jack Dolan, who was then appointed retired in 1985. He was replaced by Superintendent Bert Toogood.