

# HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

## Rockhampton

Rockhampton was as reluctant as earlier centres (Charters Towers and Townsville) to form a branch of the City Ambulance and Transport Brigade, an organisation which had been operating in Brisbane since 1892.

The formation of a Rockhampton service had often been mooted, even urged by the local medical officer (Dr D.S. Macdonald), but many residents had the idea that an ambulance brigade would not have much to do, as accidents 'were not of frequent occurrence'.

At a public meeting held on 20 July 1901 the Rockhampton Branch Centre of the QATB was established. The Centre was opened by one of the pioneers of the Brigade and formerly a member of the Ambulance Corps of the Queensland Defence Force, Mr W.G. Daniel as Superintendent on 26 August 1901, which was the day of his arrival from Brisbane. The formal opening took place on 28 August 1901.

Dr D.S. Macdonald was Chairperson of the inaugural Committee and, following his death in January 1902, Mr J.A. Walsh was appointed in his stead. Other members of the Committee were L.S. Robertson (Hon Treasurer), J.A. Walsh (Hon Secretary), F. Emmett, Mrs E. Marivedel, Mrs Young, Miss Chester-Master and Dr Davidson.

The plant which Superintendent Daniel had brought from Brisbane consisted of a litter on wheels, a collapsible stretcher and a supply of first aid material.

The first paid bearer appointed to assist the Superintendent was Mr Peter Hutcheon a member of the Army Medical Corps.

Operations were conducted from rented premises in East Street between Fitzroy and Archer Streets.

Calls received in the first four months totalled 105 and included 34 accidents and 32 transports which caused foot travel of 335 miles. Net revenue for that period was £137 which was materially assisted by an Ambulance Sports Carnival which netted £52.

A few years after the formation of the service, the Committee contemplated the erection of a Brigade building of its own. When the work of the Brigade was more generally recognised and the financial position became stronger, the old dispensary site in Fitzroy Street, between Denison and Kent Streets, was secured from the Government in 1910 for the purpose.



*First Superintendent W.G. Daniel*

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When tenders were called, it was found that the cost was beyond the Committee's financial resources. It was then that the Charities Aid Committee, earlier known as the Friendly Societies and Sporting Clubs' Committee, lifted the ambulance body over the stile and enabled it to peg ahead. The foundation stone was laid on 24 June 1910 by the Mayor Ald H. Medcraf. The two-storey brick building was erected at a cost of £2,000. The staff moved into the new premises 7 December 1911. A successful social to celebrate the opening was held on 16 December.



*Premises erected 1911*

By the end of 1911 there were honorary centres at Railway Workshops, Stanley Street Station, Marmor, Bouldercombe, Deepwater Wharf and Many Peaks, each in the charge of a qualified Honorary Bearer and fully equipped with a collapsible stretcher and first aid material. Rubber-tyred litters and mining stretchers were placed at Mount Chalmers and Many Peaks while collapsible stretchers were installed at the Harbour Board Quarry and Emerald.

When the new premises opened, the plant included a rubber-tyred sulky and two horses.

Instead of embarking on the introduction of horse-drawn ambulance wagons, as had been done in other centres, the Committee made a move early in 1914 in the direction of motor traction. A Ford chassis was purchased and the body was built by a local coachbuilder.

After 15 years' service as Superintendent of the Rockhampton Centre, Mr W.G. Daniel resigned due to his appointment as Superintendent of the Brisbane Centre in March 1916. Mr J. Dolan, Honorary Bearer at the Ipswich Centre, was appointed to the vacant position.

Extensions to the Brigade building commenced in 1919 and were completed in October 1920, when a successful opening ceremony celebrated the occasion.

In June 1921, Superintendent Dolan, to secure more favourable climatic and other conditions for his wife and family, accepted the position of Superintendent and Secretary at the newly-formed Newcastle Ambulance Brigade. He was succeeded by Deputy Superintendent, Mr Evan Jefferies.

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Superintendent Jefferies filled the position for eight years until early 1929 when Mr Edward Clark, who had been in charge of the Clifton and Mount Morgan Centres, was appointed Superintendent of the Rockhampton Centre.



*Centre building 1920*

In 1938 in accordance with the Committee's effort to keep abreast of the times, contact was made with the organisation responsible for an aerial ambulance service from Duaringa, with a view to collaboration with the QATB Service. After some months of negotiations, a service was established. This aerial service was the forerunner of today's efficient Central Aerial Ambulance Service. Following a succession of meetings with local residents, the Yeppoon-Emu Park Honorary Centre was established and commenced operations with its own vehicle in September 1951. Early in 1954 the service located at Yeppoon was raised in status to that of a Sub-Centre with a permanent officer (Mr T. Seaman) in charge and in 1975 Yeppoon-Emu Park became an independent Centre.

Superintendent Edward Clark passed away in 1952 and was succeeded by Superintendent Les Clark of the Cairns Centre. Superintendent Clark was responsible for the establishment of the Cairns Aerial Ambulance in December 1945 and was keen for the Rockhampton Committee to institute a similar service. He retired for health reasons in 1954 and Superintendent Tom Teale of the Roma Centre was appointed in his stead.

Following conferences with other QATB Committees in the Central Zone, the Central Queensland Aero Club and the Rockhampton Aero Club, the Central Queensland Aerial Ambulance Service was established and commenced operations in November 1957. Unfortunately, on 7 June 1958 the Cessna aircraft crashed with the loss of the Pilot/Bearer Edward Macleod, Bearer James Tranent and two patients, after it was caught in bad weather when darkness set in much earlier than was anticipated. Today this service operates with three aircraft.

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In 1969 an Honorary Centre was established at Duaringa and in May 1990 Sir Douglas Fraser, President of the QATB State Council officially opened the new premises. The building had been almost completely constructed through voluntary, local effort. Six local residents donated timber, gravel and sand for concreting. Log timber was donated and log felling, loading and haulage to the sawmill and conversion into timber was done free of charge by many spirited people. Working bees consisting of about 80 people then engaged in the actual construction work over a number of months. The land upon which the building stood was donated by Mrs J. Andrews, the local postmistress. This Honorary Centre became a Sub-Centre with a permanent Officer-in-Charge by 1985. The new Sub-Centre was officially opened by Mr Russell Cooper MLA on 3 November 1985.

The Marlborough Honorary Centre which had been established in 1966 was also raised in status to a Sub-Centre in 1984. The new premises for the Honorary Centre were opened in 1975 and the Sub-Centre was officially opened by Councillor R.W. Wall on 8 December 1984.

To keep pace with the increases in work load, plant and staff the Committee realised the need for larger premises. After acquiring land adjacent to its existing premises, the Committee erected new premises on the site of the old building and the official opening performed by Keith Wright MP took place on 20 August 1983.

When Superintendent Tom Teale retired in 1980 he was replaced by Superintendent K.J. (John) McPherson of Kingaroy Centre. In 1989 Superintendent McPherson was appointed to take charge of the Brisbane Centre and was succeeded by Superintendent C. McKay of Mount Isa. The present Superintendent is Mr M. Hampson.

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

Dr D.S. McDonald	J.A. Walsh
L.S. Robertson	Dr South
A.T. Parrot	F.O. Foster
R.G. Tucker	T.W. Kingel
C.E. Crocker	T.B. Renshaw
P. Donaghey	H.W. Withers
J.C. Spence	T.W. Kingel
J. Spence BEM	F.W. Gent
T. Bencke	T.V. Wright
Dr W.J. Christie	B. Hare

The longest serving member of the Committee has been Mr Joe Spence BEM who gave 40 years of service to the Brigade as Committee Member and Chairperson. He also represented the Rockhampton on the State Executive Committee and was Deputy President of that body from 1963. When the State Council was established in 1967 Mr Spence was elected to represent Committees in the Central Zone.