

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Bowen

In his report of 8 November 1920 to the State Executive Committee, the General Secretary (Captain E.R.B. Pike) advised of his inspection of northern centres in company with the Superintendent of the Brisbane Centre.

Included in the report was the following statement:

'In Bowen, we endeavoured to establish a Centre, our experience was singularly unfortunate there being no response whatever to our efforts'.

In 1926 the General Secretary received a communication from Mr J. Mullins, late Officer-in-Charge of Millaa Millaa Sub-Centre stating that he had a good opportunity of opening an Ambulance Centre at Bowen. At a meeting of the State Executive on 11 November 1926 the General Secretary was instructed to visit Bowen as early as possible and take suitable steps for the establishment of a Centre there as it was considered one would be very valuable.

The Mackay Committee advised the State Executive in February 1927 that assistance would be given to the opening of a centre at Bowen but that the Committee would not undertake any financial responsibility.

On 8 April 1927, a public meeting was held in the Bowen Shire Hall with an attendance of approximately 120 people. The General Secretary was also in attendance. The meeting was chaired by Mr C. Burchill (Clerk of Petty Sessions). A motion was moved by Mr P. Dalton and seconded by Mr J. Crawford that a self-governing ambulance be formed. This was carried. Mr J. E. Kelly moved 'that the QATB Executive Committee be asked to approve the establishment of an ambulance centre in Bowen'. This was seconded by Mr. J. Whiteford and the motion was carried.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 5 May 1927 the General Secretary reported on his visit to Bowen and stated that representations had been made to the Home Secretary who agreed to the Bowen Centre being gazetted.

At this meeting on 13 April 1927 the Promotion Board of the Brigade discussed a report from the General Secretary that the desire for the appointment of Mr John Mullins as Superintendent was so strong that the local unions were prepared to run a separate ambulance service if his appointment was not agreed to by the State Executive Committee. The Promotion Board considered that it would be futile under the circumstances to call applications for the position.



First Superintendent J Mullins

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Mr Mullins was appointed Superintendent in May 1927 by the Provisional Committee which consisted of C. Burchell (Chairperson), P. Dalton (Honorary Treasurer), G. Gaffrey, W.H. Darwen, J.J. Kelly, G. Whiteford, A. Wicks, G. Richardson and D. Price.

The Provisional Committee remained in office until the first Bowen QATB Committee was formed in September 1927. Members of the Committee were J. Crawford (Chairperson), D. Price (Honorary Treasurer), P.G. Dalton, J. McMahon, J. Tannock, O. Tabulo and P. Landers.

The first annual report reveals that Superintendent Mullins was assisted by Honorary Officers H. Hood, G. Russell, G. Wood and W. Wright.

Mr P. McCaul was in charge of a first aid kit at Guthalungra and Ms Sayers and Mr P. Ryan were in charge of first aid chests at Longfield Creek and Don Delta Schools.



Centre Building 1934 Superintendent WJ Meecha middle of staff photo

The first vehicle operated by the Committee was a 1925 four-cylinder Dodge. This motor ambulance was purchased from Austral Motors for a deposit of £50,7s 11d. A shed to accommodate the vehicle was purchased from Mr C. Michael for the sum of £30,12s,7d. On 17 January 1929, the final payment was made on the Dodge vehicle - total installments amounted to £357,7s 6d.

The first ambulance quarters consisted of a small rented cottage with a portion set aside as an office and casualty room. The car was housed in a detached shed.

On 9 November 1929, the Committee purchased land on the corner of William and Gregory Streets from the Bowen Town Council for £260. An appeal was made to the public for funds for new buildings. The land was transferred to the Brigade Trustees on 24 June 1930, when an approach was

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made to the State Department of Works for the preparation of plans and specifications for the construction of an Ambulance Centre building and Superintendent's residence.

The contract to erect new premises was given to Mr C. Michael on 10 March 1933. The cost was £300,7s,6d for the Centre building and £442 for the Superintendent's residence.

On 27 June 1934, the new Centre was opened. The Ladies Committee which had been formed in August 1931 donated the sum of £33 9s to the Building Fund Appeal.

Superintendent John Mullins resigned from his position on 14 January 1937.

The next Superintendent was Mr Bill Meecham who had been Superintendent at Mount Coolon.

Superintendent Meecham commenced duty in March 1937 when the Honorary Staff consisted of F.R. Andrews, E.W. Bannerman, R. Bramwell, R.C. Ryan and W. Wright.

On 13 November 1947 members of the Committee visited Home Hill to discuss the establishment of a centre in that town. Superintendent Meecham had earlier visited Ayr to discuss the formation of an Ambulance centre there to service both Ayr and Home Hill. It would appear from a report in *The Home Hill Observer* at the time that Ayr was not interested in Home Hill, and Bill Meecham was asked to sponsor a scheme whereby the Bowen Centre would father a Home Hill centre, sending it a car and a bearer to begin with, and make an interest-free loan in an effort to start the new centre on a sound footing until it could fend for itself. A public meeting followed which stimulated a lot of interest and subsequently a Sub-Centre attached to the Ayr Centre was established in 1951.

With the increases in staff, plant and workload, the Committee decided that the Centre building should be remodeled. Plans and specifications were prepared and subsequently approved by the Health Department on 24 May 1951. The new Centre building was officially opened by Mr Hugh Millar, President of the State Executive Committee on 3 July 1953. Those present at the opening were very impressed with the new concrete building which had been skillfully built to incorporate the previous wooden construction. The design was almost wholly the work of the versatile Superintendent Bill Meecham who had been a builder before he became a permanent ambulance officer.

Superintendent Meecham tendered his resignation 17 May 1973 and his son, Deputy Superintendent Maurice Meecham became his successor. Maurice resigned in November 1977 and was followed by Superintendent Ray Trenaman who transferred from the Mount Larcom Centre.

With the building of a new port and coal loading facilities at Abbot Point, the Bowen Committee was requested to provide the necessary ambulance service. Fluor Constructions, the contractors responsible for the construction of buildings, were approached regarding the purchase of a new vehicle to service the site. A Holden Ambulance vehicle was subsequently provided by the company. In February 1982, a first aid post was established with a permanent ambulance officer in charge and this facility operated for a period of approximately three years.

On 18 August 1983, the Committee made application to the Lands Department for a parcel of land suitable for new ambulance premises. In August 1984, the Department advised that an area of land in Leichhardt Street was available for ambulance purposes. Following the transfer of land to the Brigade, architects McIntyre & Associates were instructed to call tenders to develop the land in October 1986. It was estimated that the site would be ready to commence building operations by March 1987.

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However, it was not until early 1989 that permission was received to call tenders for the construction of the new centre and Superintendent's residence.

In November 1986, Superintendent Trenaman resigned to take up his appointment as Superintendent of the Mackay Centre and Superintendent Carl Coleman of the Collinsville Centre was appointed in his stead.

The new Centre building was officially opened by the Committee Chairperson, Mr Howard Connors on 9 June 1990. Mr Connors joined the Committee in March 1945 and was elected Chairperson in April 1970.

Since the establishment of the Bowen Centre the following persons have served in the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

1927 – 1929	P. Crawford
1929 – 1931	J. Tannock
1931 – 1937	C.J. Jones
1937 – 1942	H. Currie
1942 – 1948	G. Holland
1948 – 1965	V. Class
1965 – 1970	C. Glass
Present occupant	Chairperson Mr H. Connors