

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Caloundra

The Nambour Committee established an Honorary Centre at Caloundra in July 1933 staffed by local Honorary Bearers C. Fristrom and G. Dilger. At that time it was the practice of the Nambour Committee to have Honorary Bearers on duty at the seaside resorts during Christmas and Easter periods. In December 1933 a tent was purchased and erected next to the Surf Clubhouse at Kings Beach and the honorary staff conducted a casualty room.

By 1937 it was customary to station an ambulance vehicle at Caloundra during the Christmas period. In 1938 a parcel of land was acquired through the Landsborough Shire Council and a building was erected. The official opening of the building was performed by His Excellency the Governor, Sir Leslie Orme Wilson on 26 August 1939.

On 11 September 1951 the Kings Beach Progress Association made application to the Nambour Committee for the establishment of a Sub-Centre. In May 1953 a temporary Sub-Centre was commenced, staffed by an ambulance officer and a vehicle for a period of 18 weeks.

In view of the number of cases treated, mileage travelled and the financial support received from the local residents it was decided to establish a full-time Sub-Centre from 1 August 1953. Ambulance Officer H.L. (Len) De Vene of Nambour was appointed Officer-in-Charge.

At the request of the public of Caloundra, the Minister for Health and Home Affairs approved of the Centre being self-controlled from 1 July 1955. The Committee then appointed comprised R.H. Robinson (Chairperson), G.M. Mackay (Hon Treasurer), C. Ireland, S. Ford, B. Bennett and Dr D. Wilson. Mr Len De Vene was appointed Superintendent and Secretary.



First Superintendent L. De Vene

The Centre had not been in operation long before it was found necessary to appoint a second officer to assist Mr De Vene and on 5 March 1956 Honorary Bearer Wes Williams was appointed to the permanent staff.

In March 1956 Mr R.H. Robinson left the district and Mr Ben Bennett was elected Chairperson and filled this position with distinction until his death in 1987.

In October 1957 a block of land with two flats in Bulcock Street, was purchased as a site for a new centre building for £5,150. This was financed from the Building Fund and a loan from the ES&A Bank. The Committee found that the expenses of maintaining the flats were very heavy and that the return was unsatisfactory. Following a demand to standardise the flats, the Committee decided to call tenders for their purchase and removal and negotiated a sale for the sum of £700.

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After the removal of all buildings from the Bulcock Street property the site was used for conducting carnivals.

On 1 October 1965, prior to becoming an inmate of Eventide Home, Sandgate, Mr Conrad Reiners donated his house and land in Bingera Terrace to the QATB Committee, to be sold, and the proceeds to be used to assist in financing the cost of a new centre building.

In 1967, the Committee decided that the erection of a building in Bulcock Street would so reduce the area of land necessary for the carnival that this source of income would be seriously curtailed. As the carnival provided the majority of the finance for the Centre, the Committee decided to reserve the land wholly for the purpose of fundraising. The Committee then approached the Lands Department requesting some adjoining land next to the existing centre building in order to effect extensive building additions and alterations.

The land in Bulcock Street was sold in 1970 and the proceeds used for the erection of a new centre building at Kings Beach. The carnival was relocated on the property at the rear of the ambulance premises.



First building

On Saturday 16 January 1971, the new building was opened by Sir Douglas Fraser ISO, President of the QATB State Council, in the presence of about 200 invited guests. The official party included Sir Francis Nicklin, Sir Thomas and Lady Hiley, Mr Jack Beausang (Chairperson of the Landsborough Shire Council) and Mrs Beausang, the State Secretary Mr E.C. Bradley and Mrs Bradley, the Chairperson of the Brisbane Committee Mr J.A. (Bert) Turner and many past Committee members. Superintendent De Vene retired in September 1971 and was succeeded by Superintendent George Reynolds of Winton.

On 7 October 1978, Sir Douglas Fraser officially opened the extensions to the Centre building.

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By 1980 the Committee saw the need for ambulance facilities at the northern end of its boundary and acquired two allotments of land at Kawana Waters for the sum of \$13,500. A Sub-Committee was formed in the area and fundraising commenced in order to erect a Sub-Centre building.

The Kawana Sub-Centre building costing \$119,586 was officially opened by the Premier of Queensland, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen on 17 September 1985.

In September 1985 the Caloundra Committee hosted the State Conference of QATB Committees. On 7 May 1987, Mr Ben Bennett, Chairperson for 31 years, passed away and the Deputy Chairperson Mr Ivo Rooke was elected to the vacant position.

Superintendent George Reynolds retired on 6 July 1987, due to ill health and Superintendent Hugh Barclay of Gordonvale was appointed in his stead.

In September 1987 representatives of the Committee met with the Hon Mike Ahern, Minister for Health regarding a site to erect new premises. The existing building had major structural damage and was inadequate to accommodate the vehicles, equipment and staff necessary to cope with the increasing demand on the service. As a result an area of approximately 0.405 hectares of land was excised from the Hospital Reserve for ambulance purposes.

New premises costing \$1,178,305 were officially opened by the Honorable Terry Mackenroth, Minister for Police and Emergency Services on 9 March 1991.

Honorary Officer Len Young passed away on 21 September 1989. Len was on the honorary staff of the Caloundra Centre from its opening in 1953 until his death in his 99th year. His family graciously agreed to have his ashes placed in the brickwork of the new building and a plaque has been mounted in his memory.