

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Pittsworth

In 1908 the operations of the QATB Toowoomba Centre were extended to Pittsworth by the opening of an Honorary Centre with Honorary Bearer A. Baker in charge. A building was erected to house a litter and first aid material. This building cost £13,10s and this money was raised by public contributions through the local Chamber of Commerce.

Honorary Member J.W. Collins took over from Mr Baker in 1909 and remained in charge of the Honorary Centre until 1911. Brigade records show that from 1911 until the early 1920s a rubber-tyred litter was located in Pittsworth; no specific individual controlled its usage.

The Toowoomba Centre continued to render a service to the residents of Pittsworth and district and although the service was a very good and efficient one, it was felt generally by the residents that a self-governing Ambulance Centre could be established and maintained at Pittsworth.

To ascertain the views of the residents in this direction a public meeting sponsored by the Pittsworth Sub-Branch of the RSSAILA and convened by the Chairperson of the Pittsworth Shire Council was held on 29 September 1949. This meeting was presided over by the Shire Chairman (Councillor A. Fletcher) and was attended by 70 residents. Superintendent E.J. Llewellyn of Toowoomba Centre who was present by invitation, outlined to the meeting the steps to be taken to establish a self-governing Centre, and supplied information regarding the financing of a Centre. A motion 'That application be made to the Minister for Health and Home Affairs for a franchise to form a local self-governing Centre at Pittsworth' was put to the meeting and carried with only two dissenters.

At this meeting a Provisional Committee comprising J.C. Lomas, K. Smythe, A. Leyden, D. Austin, L. Eising, R. Swensen, W. Ziesemer, M. Daly, G. Roche, Mrs C. Hartmann and Mrs L. Picot was appointed. However, as it was later ascertained that only seven members were required to form a Provisional Committee, R. Swenson and W. Ziesemer and Mrs Hartmann and Mrs Picot withdrew of their own accord to save a ballot being taken.

Approval by the Minister for Health and Home Affairs to the appointment of the Provisional Committee was advertised in the Government Gazette on 1 April 1950. This Committee was to remain in office until next triennial elections in 1952. At the first meeting of the appointed Provisional Committee, the following office-bearers were elected: J.C. Lomas (Chairperson), G. Roche (Deputy Chairperson) and A. Leyden (Honorary Treasurer).

Mr N. McKenzie had previously offered his services to make a canvass of the district for donations and as soon as approval for the establishment of a centre was received, Mr McKenzie commenced collecting. As a result of his endeavours, donations totalling approximately £2,000 were obtained. Applications for the position of Superintendent-Secretary of the Centre were called through the State Executive Committee and 18 applications were received. The successful applicant was Mr Eric Bannerman who at the time of his appointment was Superintendent of the Millmerran Centre. He commenced duty at Pittsworth on 1 August 1950.

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The Committee was fortunate in securing a Studebaker utility chassis, to which was fitted an up-to-date ambulance body. The total cost on the road was approximately £1,500. This vehicle was fitted to be capable of carrying four stretcher patients on the one trip.

While the Committee was awaiting the delivery of its own ambulance vehicle, the Toowoomba Centre gave assistance by transporting patients within the Pittsworth area at a cost of one shilling per mile. With a view to erecting a modern ambulance building, the Committee purchased an allotment of land in Yandilla Street, Pittsworth, adjoining the Imperial Hotel.

Ambulance operations commenced from a dwelling in Hume Street which the Committee rented from Miss Will. The western verandah was converted into a casualty room and office by Superintendent Bannerman with materials purchased with Brigade funds. In February 1951, the Committee purchased the property from Miss Will at a cost of £1,350 after an allowance of £100 had been made by the vendor for the work carried out by Superintendent Bannerman.

Mr Allan Boyes was appointed as the Committee's first representative on the State Executive Committee.

To meet the increase in ambulance work and attendant organisation as well as clerical work involved, the Centre became a Staff Centre by the appointment of Ambulance Officer T.V. Green in January 1952. Also in 1952 the Committee purchased a second ambulance vehicle.



First Superintendent E.W. Bannerman

After nine months' service at Pittsworth Officer Green left to take up the position of the Officer-in-Charge of the Dirranbandi Sub-Centre, a sub-centre under the control of the St George Centre. His place was filled by Mr Ray Newitt who is presently Superintendent of the Warwick Centre.

In the financial year 1954-1955 Mr K. Smythe replaced Mr J. Lomas as Chairman and a change of Superintendents was made necessary by the appointment of Superintendent Bannerman to the Wynnum Centre.

Mr H.W. (Bert) De Vene, Officer-in-Charge of the Moorooka Sub-Centre in Brisbane, was chosen to replace Superintendent Bannerman and commenced duty in September 1954.

In 1956 the Committee thought the time was ripe to start planning a new building, and much research and planning was carried out to ensure the best possible type for local conditions. Land was acquired in Short Street.

It was finally decided that only brick would do, and in 1957 Mr M.C. Williamson was engaged to prepare plans. This was done and after Departmental approval tenders were invited. Mr J.M. Kelly was entrusted with the task of building.

By arrangements with Mr Kelly and the Committee, materials were purchased where possible from local stores, and every local man who applied was employed.

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After nearly eight years of endeavour the Centre was a reality and would stand for many a day as a tribute to those who supported the Brigade over the years. The building was officially opened on 6 September 1958 by the Hon Alan Fletcher MLA, Speaker of the House of Parliament.



Centre building 1958

Considerable alterations and additions to the building have been made in the subsequent years.

Superintendent De Vene retired in June 1970 and since that date the following officers have filled the positions of Superintendent and Secretary:

1970 – 1971	R.G. Newitt
1971 – 1980	H.C. Butler
June – November 1980	J.L. Kraft
1980 – 1984	P.A. Crawford
1984 – 1987	G.E. Schmierer
Present occupant Superintendent	L.M. (Mick) O'Mara

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

1950 – 1955	J.C. Lomas
1955 – 1960	K. Smythe
1960 – 1979	R.R. Langton
1979 – 1988	R. Holzberger
Present occupant Chairperson	Mr R.K. Thomas