

HISTORY OF THE

Queensland Ambulance

Coolangatta - Burleigh Heads

The ambulance service for the twin towns of Coolangatta and Tweed Heads had its origin on 13 September 1911, on Greenmount Beach with the opening of the first clubhouse for the Tweed Heads and Coolangatta Surf Life Saving Club. This service took the form of a simple first aid kit installed to enable the treatment of minor injuries, particularly blue bottle stings.

On 27 March 1922 a QATB Sub-Centre of the Brisbane Centre was established in Coolangatta and was opened with the arrival of Senior Bearer Ernie Fuller and a fully equipped 1920 Buick motor ambulance. The service was operated from rented premises in McLean Street.

At that time the St John Ambulance had established itself in the town and had rendered a service since 1918. Shortly after the opening of the QATB Service an agreement was reached between the two bodies whereby the controllers of St John Ambulance in Queensland decided to withdraw from Coolangatta and other towns wherein it had established services.

Following the gazettal of Coolangatta as a self-governing Centre, Mr Fuller was appointed Superintendent. However, it was decided to accept the generosity of the Brisbane Centre to administer the Coolangatta Centre from Brisbane until such time as the new Centre was on a firm footing.

The first Committee at Coolangatta comprised P.J. Fagan (Chairperson), T. Kieft (Honorary Treasurer), Dr F.G. Power, A.T. Bick, J. O'Rourke, R. Teske and J. Walker. The first representative appointed to the State Executive Committee was Mr Alex Mayes.



Centre building 1936

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In March 1923 Mr Fuller decided to return to the Brisbane Centre. The Brisbane Committee, acting upon the recommendation of the General Secretary, sent Mr W.H. Tomkins formerly Deputy Superintendent of the Kidston Sub-Centre to Coolangatta to take charge pending the appointment of a permanent Superintendent.

Following a meeting of the Promotion Board Mr Tomkins was appointed Superintendent/Secretary. In 1925 the service was transferred to rented premises in Dutton Street just above the present Church of England. These premises were retained until June 1930, when the Committee entered into a lease of property in McLean Street (opposite Beach House) owned by the Robson family, then one of the leading fruit merchants of Brisbane. The first meeting of the committee in the new headquarters was held on 26 June 1900.

With the approval of the two employing committees, Superintendent Tomkins swapped positions with Superintendent Tom May of the Dayboro Centre in July 1926.

In 1934 the Committee decided to purchase a block of land in Griffiths Street from Mrs A.H. Skinner. The QATB State Executive Committee advanced an interest free loan of £300 to enable the Committee to meet the purchase price of £720.

By July 1935, Tweed Heads Architect, C.W. Edds, had completed plans and specifications for a brigade building. Builders Girvan and Modini contracted to construct the building for a tender price of £2,654, the final cost after variations working out at £2,932.

The Chairperson, Mr R.T.B. Peak laid the foundation stone on 15 October 1935 and the new building was officially opened by Mr J.D. O'Hagan, Assistant Undersecretary, Department of Home Affairs on 29 February 1936. The completion of the building marked the attainment of a long-desired objective and removed from the Committee the stigma of being the only one in the state not occupying its own premises.

On 21 June 1952 Superintendent Tom May was killed in an accident whilst on holidays on Hayman Island. Superintendent Jack Glasheen assumed the vacant office on 1 September 1952. Like his predecessor he came from the Dayboro Centre.

On 3 June 1971 the Coolangatta and Burleigh Heads Committees and Areas were dissolved by Order in Council and amalgamated to become the Coolangatta-Burleigh Heads Area under the jurisdiction of the QATB Coolangatta-Burleigh Heads Committee. Burleigh Heads Centre became a Sub-Centre and the Superintendent Mr Tom Tipper carried on after the amalgamation as Officer-in-Charge until his retirement in 1972.

Superintendent Jack Glasheen passed away in 1977 and Deputy Superintendent Len De Vene was promoted to fill the vacant position.

Len De Vene resigned in 1982 and was succeeded by the present Superintendent Mr Henry Weeks who transferred from the Mount Isa Centre.



Superintendent J. Glasheen

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In 1981 the Committee decided to vacate the Burleigh station situated in Justin Park because of the difficulty in driving from the building onto the busy highway. A new Sub-Centre building was erected on West Burleigh Road. This new building costing \$180,000 was officially opened in February 1982. The old headquarters in Griffiths Street Coolangatta became too small to service the growing Twin Towns area and the present Centre building at Bilinga was erected in 1986 for a contract price of \$757,357. As in the case of the Burleigh Heads Sub-Centre this building was officially opened by the Honourable Russ Hinze MLA.

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

1922 – 1923	P.J. Fagan
1923 – 1924	A. Mayes
1924 – 1926	E.P. Moore
1926 – 1928	R.C. Graham
1928 – 1930	S. Hislop
1930 – 1936	R.T.B. Peak
1936 – 1952	W.F. Higgins
1952 – 1955	A.G. Winchester
1955 – 1962	S.W. Winders
1962 – 1976	W. Davies
1976 – 1983	A.G. Spencer
Present occupant	
Chairperson	R.H.J. Bake