

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Kingaroy

QATB services commenced in the Kingaroy district in May 1911 when the Brisbane Centre Committee established an Honorary Centre at Manneum Creek. The officer in charge was Mr Fred Palethorpe a former ambulance officer at the Toowoomba Centre who had settled at Manneum Creek.

The following report of the opening of another Honorary Centre appears in the minutes of a meeting of the Brisbane Committee held 22 May 1914:

“The Secretary reported having corresponded with Mr P.J. Hughes, late officer in charge of Lion Town and Bruce Honorary Centres and recommended that an honorary centre be established at Coolabunia, a farming town of 300 inhabitants within a radius of four miles on the railway line six miles from Kingaroy and ten miles from Nanango with Mr Hughes in charge. The recommendation was agreed to.”

Early in the year 1915 Mr Palethorpe moved to Kingaroy and the General Secretary Mr R.B. Barrett made a visit to the town with the purpose of inquiring into the advisability of establishing an honorary centre there.



First premises

A representative public meeting of citizens, presided over by Mr T. O'Neill, Shire Chairperson, was held in the Shire Hall to meet Mr Barrett, who explained the aims, purpose and workings of the QATB and the procedure to be followed in establishing new centres. A unanimous resolution was then passed asking the Brisbane Centre to open an honorary centre at Kingaroy, and a small advisory committee was appointed to assist the Honorary Bearer in charge (Mr F.G. Palethorpe). Dr J.W. Heaslop was appointed Chairperson and Mr W.T. Smillie Treasurer, the other committee members being R.B. Cavaye, Arch Blue and J. Jeffries.

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Following the transfer of Mr Palethorpe, Honorary Bearer R. Kefford was appointed Officer-in-Charge of the Honorary Centre at Manneum Creek. By the close of 1916 the Manneum Creek service had ceased.

The annual report of the State Executive Committee for the year 1915 shows that an Honorary Centre was opened at Kumbia.

In late 1916 the Kingaroy Advisory Committee made an application to the Brisbane Committee to convert the Honorary Centre into a Sub-Centre with a permanent officer in charge. The Brisbane Committee decided to defer the matter.

By the end of 1919 the only QATB Honorary Centre operating in the district was Kumbia and this one was last mentioned in the 1921-22 annual report of the State Executive Committee.

At a public meeting held in the Shire Hall on 27 February 1920 it was decided to form an ambulance service in Kingaroy with a paid officer. On the recommendation of the Maryborough Ambulance Transport Brigade (with which service Kingaroy affiliated) Mr M.P. Loth of Biggenden was appointed Superintendent and Secretary. The Home Secretary's department had advised the Shire Council that it was the Minister's opinion that Kingaroy should affiliate with the QATB.

The public meeting was chaired by Mr O.S. Bond and other citizens present were A.F. Johnson, C. Gill, D. Carroll, A.H. Adermann, B.S. Venman, W.J. Lang, J.S. Considine, C. Galloway, Dr Meade and C. Bacon Hon Secretary. A meeting two weeks later saw new interested members T.J. Hancock, W. Young, A.B. Crapp and J. Watson.

A house owned by a Mr Schultz in Edward Street was purchased for £420 as a temporary centre and Superintendent's quarters. This house was later sold.

At the meeting of 11 June 1920, it was resolved that the Superintendent's salary be £4 15s per week plus a free house.

Later in the year, the Committee decided to do all in its power to assist the Soldiers Settlement at Burrandowan. Mr Corser, MHR would be asked for support in the provision of a telephone to enable the residents there to secure the services of a doctor and ambulance in cases of accident and sudden illness.

Also in 1920 the Committee resolved to ask the Returned Servicemen's League for support in building an Ambulance Centre which could also be used by the League as its headquarters.

At the first annual general meeting of the Kingaroy Ambulance Transport Brigade held on 24 January 1921, those present were O.S. Bond (President), Douglas, Gill, H. Patterson, Considine, Park, Lang, Venman, Johnson, Bacon, Carroll, Hogan, Smart, Poulsen, Brown and Superintendent Loth. Following the annual meeting country members added were J.M. Tompkins, W.J. Parker, F.G. Palethorpe, R.J. Rowston, J. Ferguson and J. Yappa.

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The Superintendent reported the very marked lack of consideration when travelling on the roads. Subsequently a bell was fitted to the ambulance car.

At the June meeting of 1921 it was decided to purchase a new vehicle, namely a Dodge. At the December meeting Mr Gill was requested to prepare plans for a new Centre building, and in May of the following year the Committee accepted the tender of Mr T. Bourke for £248.

The Superintendent was given permission to run dances in the new building.

The work load soon increased and in 1922 Mr W.G. Yappa was appointed as a Driver Bearer. Also in 1922 Mr J.P. Considine became President and an honorary centre was opened at Inverlaw with Mr Murphy in charge.

In 1923, the Wondai Chamber of Commerce requested that a car be placed in their area. However, at the time all cars were fully warranted in Kingaroy. However, it was decided that a bicycle would be purchased for the Wondai Honorary Centre at which three members of the railway work force acted as honorary bearers.

Consideration was given in 1924 to the amalgamation of hospital and ambulance services, but the idea was soundly defeated.

During 1925 with Mr F.G. Wilson as Committee leader the Superintendent's salary was increased to £7,10s and the bearer's to £5,2s 6d.

A change of format saw the annual meeting in July of 1926 when Mr C. Gill was appointed. Bearer Harders was appointed to replace Bearer Yappa, however he resigned at the April meeting in 1927. The next officer appointed was an 18-year-old in the person of Bill Geary. At the time of his retirement from the ambulance in 1978, Mr Geary was Superintendent of the QATB Centre at Yarraman.

In 1927 Superintendent Loth tendered his resignation after accepting a position at Wagga Wagga, NSW and Mr Herb Biddle an ambulance officer at the QATB Toowoomba Centre was appointed to the vacant position.

On November 1927, the Kingaroy service which had commenced operations as part of the Maryborough Ambulance Brigade decided to affiliate with the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade when the Maryborough Service was absorbed by the newly-formed Maryborough Hospital Board. The first QATB Committee consisted of Dr N.E. Davis (Chairperson), C. Gill (Hon Treasurer), A.F. Johnson, L.N. Freeman, J. Watson, S.E. Hogan and J.P. Considine.

A new Centre building was erected in 1953 and officially opened by the Hon J.A. Duggan MLA, Deputy Premier on 20 November. Since that time extensive renovations and extensions have been made to the Centre buildings.

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Centre building 1953

The first eisteddfod in Kingaroy in 1932 was launched and promoted by Superintendent Biddle. In the 1971 Queen's Birthday Honours List, Mr Biddle was awarded an MBE for his outstanding community service.

In June 1972, Herb Biddle died after collapsing in a Kingaroy business office. The resulting vacancy was filled by Superintendent John McPherson who served ably until his transfer to the Rockhampton Centre in 1980.

The next Superintendent was H.C. (Cec) Butler (a former member of the Kingaroy staff) who at the time of his appointment was Superintendent of the Pittsworth Centre.

Cec Butler retired in 1990 and was succeeded by the present Superintendent Mr M.W. Sweedman who transferred from the Miles Centre.



First Superintendent H. Biddle

Since the establishment of a permanent ambulance service in Kingaroy, the following people have served in the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

1920 – 1922	O.S. Bond
1922 – 1925	J.P. Considine
1925 – 1926	F. Garde Wilson
1926 – 1927	C. Gill
1927 – 1930	Dr. N.E. Davis
1930 – 1952	L.N. Freeman
1952 – 1955	A.C. Connors
1955 – 1961	Dr. C.H. Wood
1961 – 1965	J.A. Ott
1965 – 1967	T.H. Cornish
1967 – 1976	G. Jackson
1976 – 1988	G. Mackereth
Present occupant Chairperson	J. Dundas