

September 2016

Volume 3, Issue 4

ABN: 77 829 511 359

REG No: A00214235

RAAV Ravings



History of MICA in Victoria

Victoria's MICA (Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance) concept was initially established in Victoria in 1971 under a trial program running out of the Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) with a single vehicle staffed by an Ambulance Officer and a Medical Registrar (from the hospital's Emergency Department). It was the first MICA system in Australia and the 3rd such system to be set up in the world, following behind Belfast & Seattle.

The concept of Mobile Intensive Care Ambulances (MICA) was a development that was realised during the Vietnam War, where it appeared to show that the early stabilisation of seriously injured soldiers at the battlefield by highly trained field medics, and the rapid transport to front line hospitals by medivac helicopters significantly increased survival rates. Cardiologists during the early 1960's believed that patients were dying before reaching hospital. Untreated coronary patients usually died within 2 to 4 hours, and often before arriving at Hospital. Moves were made for the establishment of "flying squads" or Mobile Coronary Care Units in conjunction with the then Victorian Civil Ambulance Ser-

vice, emphasising the treatment of ventricular fibrillation following cardiac arrest or electric shock

A Dodge Day Care Clinic Bus - 208 was converted for the trial as it provided additional space and head room compared to the current Ford F100 emergency ambulance vehicles in use. It was converted by the local Ambulance workshop to keep costs down as funding was extremely limited. All equipment purchased for the trial was to be privately funded by the Strathmore Lions Club.

A review of the first six months of work demonstrated that the majority of work were cardiac cases. It was also realised that the increasing caseload was placing significant pressure on the Doctors, who also had their normal duties to perform in the Hospital, thus delaying the Unit from responding immediately as the Ambulance Officer would have to search for an available Doctor to respond. The Doctors involved in the trial felt that Ambulance Officers with appropriate training were more than capable of replacing the Doctor on the unit.

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As a result, 5th March 1973 saw the introduction of a second trained Ambulance Officer on each shift, replacing the Doctor. This allowed for improved response times and greater flexibility of the MICA Unit, knowing that a Doctor did not need to be found. This also saw a significant increase in the workload with dispatching to cases increasing by 500% in

the month of March as Control Officers were more willing to activate the Unit knowing it would not require a Doctor to be found.

Melbourne's newly established MICA was the second "paramedic only" service in the world. In 1967 a similar service using Doctors was established in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and a paramedic-only service began in Seat-

tle, Washington, USA in 1969. The first vehicle was joined by a second based at the Alfred Hospital, then a third at Western Hospital - Footscray.

NOTE:
This article has been edited to fit this space. The full article can be found at: [MICA Paramedics - Colac Ambulance](#)



Original 1971 Trial MICA Unit 208 based on a Dodge chassis

