

February 2019

RAAV Ravings



Volume 6, Issue 1

ABN: 77 829 511 359

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Southern Aurora Commemorative Committee and the Violet Town Community invite you to

The Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary
of the Southern Aurora Rail Tragedy

Thursday 7 February 2019 - 6.30am
Vigil & Religious Service at the corner
McDiarmids & Primrose Street
(Enter from High Street)

Followed by a Community Breakfast at
Violet Town Community Hall Cowslip Street

Sunday 10 February, 2019 - 10am
Dedication of the Memorial Garden
14 Cowslip Street, Violet Town



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An account of the lead up to and the accident is on page 7



Several scenes of the Southern Aurora following the crash, including Fire, Rescue and Ambulance personnel in attendance.

It is not full possible to state who the personnel are.



Presidents Report



Welcome all members to another year and hope all enjoyed Christmas and the New Year. It's hard to believe that we are already near the end of January.

We hope 2019 will be as good as previous years and that our membership continues to flourish.

Just to remind members that we have been invited to attend the Southern Aurora 50th Anniversary commemoration on Sunday 10th February 2019 in Violet Town 11am until 1230 followed by a VIP lunch at the Ellen Francis Hotel

16 Cowslip Street, Violet Town.

We hope for a good representation of interested members.

This event will be held in honour of the Southern Aurora overnight express passenger service that ran between Melbourne and Sydney from 1962, and tragically collided head on with a northbound freight train in Violet Town on 7th February 1969 killing nine people and injuring 120. Please contact myself or Ian Cameron for any further details.

We now have access to staff from AV who are near retirement and are about to retire, we have been given an opportunity to meet with these groups and present ourselves at Transition to Retirement Seminars which has helped dramatically with our recruitment.

RAFE Peer Support Pilot programme has now been running for 6 months and appears to be on track and has had good reviews.

A special thanks to Steve Mulligan and all involved with the pilot program

We look forward to further progression of the support program

The Committee are still looking for articles to submit to our RAAV Ravings newsletter.

Would love to hear from our regional branches with any interesting information or stories.

Ian Donaldson

President



Ballarat Member lunch - November 2018

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following New Members to our Association.

- Anthony Deenen - Echuca
- Brett Clark - Frankston South
- Christopher Casey - Cullulera
- Tim Kay - Mt Martha
- Pauline Leask - Ventnor
- Jeffrey Allan - Wheelers Hill
- Michael Rienits - Old Beach, Tasmania
- Warren Moulton - Camberwell
- Don Gillies - Outtrim

We look forward to seeing all our new Members at a meeting soon.

RAAV Caravan & RV Club

Our first Caravan and RV Club travels will be at:

Paynesville

Resthaven Caravan Park 2-14 Gilsenan Street, Paynesville Victoria

Phone: 0351566342

Internet: www.resthavenpaynesville.com

Email: resthaven@wideband.net.au

Cost Per Night: \$35 Less 10% = \$31.50

Cost of Cabins: \$120 with On suite

Dogs Allowed – Must have current immunisation, i.e. Parvovirus, Kennel Cough, Ticks etc.

4 Star Rating

Large Camp Kitchen

Gas Heater Spar

Dates April: 5th 6th 7th 8th

Please advise our Co-ordinator Noel Mirtschin on either his mobile: 0419 538 301 or noelmir1@yahoo.com.au Should you be wishing to attend so that if extra sites are needed he can organise same

The second trip has been scheduled for:

Buronga Riverside Tourist Park

71A Buronga NSW

Phone: 0350233040

Internet: www.burongacaravanpark.com.au

Email: info@burongacaravanpark.com.au

Cost Per Night – No Seniors Card. \$35

Cost Per Night – Seniors Card. \$33

Cost of Cabins: No On suite. \$60

Cost of Cabin: With On suite. \$85

Dogs Allowed – Must have current immunisation, i.e. Parvovirus, Kennel Cough, Ticks etc.

Dates: October 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th

Please advise our Co-ordinator Noel Mirtschin on either his mobile: 0419 538 301 or noelmir1@yahoo.com.au

Should you be wishing to attend so that if extra sites are needed he can organise same

We look forward to seeing as many members as possible attend these events.

District Meeting Dates

Our first District Meetings for 2019 are:

Central & Northern Victoria - Tuesday 12th February at the Bendigo RSL commencing at 12 noon.

Geelong & Surf Coast - Wednesday 13th February 12 noon at Geelong RSL Belmont

Gippsland Region - Thursday 14th February 12noon at Morwell Club

Metro - West District - Friday 22nd February 12noon at Sunshine RSL

North East Victoria - Saturday 23rd February 12noon at Benalla Bowls Club

Metro - South District - Tuesday 26th February 12noon at Steeples Restaurant,

Ballarat & Central West - Wednesday 27th February 12noon at the Golf House Hotel

South West Victoria -

Monday 4th March 11.15am at Portland Tourist Tram

North West Victoria - Tuesday 19th March 12noon at Mildura RSL

Metro (General Meeting) - Wednesday 13th March - 10.30am at AV Headquarters, Doncaster

Geelong & Surf Coast - Wednesday 10th April 12 noon at Geelong RSL Belmont



Birthday Greetings

February:

Peter Dent	1 st
Alfred Monk	3 rd
Bruce Hyatt	4 th
Colin Gaskell	5 th
Linton Johnstone	6 th
Lindsay Mc Coy	8 th
Danny Lumby	13 th
Alison Campbell	14 th
Terry Taylor	14 th
Neil Hall	15 th
Rhonda Oliver	16 th
Roger Vidler	16 th
Graham McRae	17 th
Ian Martin	19 th
Warren Moulton	20 th
Malcolm Zadow	20 th
Arthur Manning	21 st
Wendy Barry	22 nd
Gunther Moses	23 rd
Goffrey Cousins	24 th
Glenn Solomano	25 th
John Ellerton	26 th
John Moss	27 th



Joseph Spronken	27 th
Leanne Russell-Jones	28 th
Max Brooker	29 th

March:

John Bosfelds	1 st
Eddy Kay	1 st
Bill Streegstra	1 st
Charles Mc Lean	2 nd
Ian Donaldson	4 th
John Parkinson	5 th
Stephen Hutchins	8 th
George Prolonguae	8 th
Valerie Morgan	12 th
Anthony Deenen	13 th
Bernie Morrellini	13 th
Daniel O'Connor	15 th
Kevin Poole	15 th
Stan Sandford	18 th

Tony Davis	19 th
Howard Smith	19 th
Ray Neil	20 th
Len Starkey	20 th
Paul Chase	23 rd
Eric Schanessma	23 rd
Ray Tringham	23 rd
Jon Edwards	24 th
Ross Eastwood	25 th
Ted Giddings	25 th
Graham Ryan	25 th
Glenn Solomano	25 th
Chris Varley	25 th
Robert Hood	27 th
Zitamae Dobson	27 th
George Hood	28 th
Charles Martin	28 th
Jim Yandle	29 th
John Brown	30 th
David Gawne	30 th
Stewart Blackburn	31 st

April:

Paul O'Toole	3 rd
Karen Young	4 th

Peter Croker	5 th
Bob Curzon-Siggers	5 th
Ian Cameron	7 th
Tim Kay	10 th
Pauline Leask	11 th
Frank Bonser	12 th
Keith Lloyd	12 th
Glenn Robertson	13 th
Ted Mawby	14 th
Peter Moroney	15 th
Allan Jackson	16 th
Michael Mc Grath	16 th
Neil Barrett	17 th
Neale Johnson	19 th
Gregory Taylor	19 th
Merilyn Raft	20 th
John Allen	22 nd
Keith Humptrey	24 th
James Osmotherly	26 th
Robert Gosden	28 th
Frank Abela	30 th
Laurie Campbell	30 th

With sadness we record the passing of:

Gordon O'Keeffe
Fred Kann
Ian Seaman



South West Members Lunch
December 2018

Members not in good health

Steven Hutchins
Zitamae Dobson
Howard Smith

We wish all Members a speedy recovery

District Reports

South West Victoria

The final meeting in the SW was held on Monday 3rd December 2018 at the Warrnambool Football Club rooms commencing at 1200hrs, this of course being our Christmas get together.

The meeting was well attended with 26 people attending, including Members and partners, and there were 7 apologies. State President, Ian Donaldson and his wife Christine, attended the meeting and Ian brought everyone up to date with the latest news from Melbourne.

During the course of the afternoon it was discussed as to where we should hold our meetings next year and some very innovative ideas were put forward. As a result of those discussions the SW group will meet at the Portland Tourist Tram site on Monday 4th March and Casterton on September 2nd. Thank you to all participants.

In 2019 we look forward to another year of meetings throughout the SW district.

Ray Loughheed
Convener

Gippsland District

North West Victoria

Tuesday 3rd December saw 6 members attend the final lunch and gathering at Mildura RSL. We were privileged to have Christopher Casey join us and during the lunch he elected to become a member, to which we were very pleased. A warm day saw us remain in the Club for some time and finally we made our way home having offered each the compliments of the season and looking forward to seeing all again in 2019.

Alan Cooksey
Convener

Ballarat & Central West

South Metro District

Tuesday 4th December saw a great turn up for our first Christmas at Steeples Restaurant in Mornington. Attendance was made up 26 Members and 13 Partners thus having 39 in attendance. All enjoyed the fantastic atmosphere of the restraint and the various conversations and memories.

The meeting finished with a very informative talk by Steve Mulligan from Peer Support and my later feedback was very positive from members on this issue.

Bryan Cass
Convener

Central & Northern Victoria

The last meeting for the year was held on Tuesday November 13th at the Bendigo RSL.

As usual we had a good rollup with 18 members and partners attending. We also welcomed a new member, Alan Bray and his wife Maree from Wedderburn. It was also a pleasant surprise to have Bob Gosden from Ballarat attending. Great info provided by John Clancy on Peer Support programme. John's wife Mary Anne also attended. Good to see them both again as a fair number of our contingent are ex PAS and we all knew each other when our hair was a different colour. As usual the stories and reminiscences were free flowing and a good day was had by all.

Wishing you and your families all the best for the festive season and hope we are all around in 2019. I would say don't eat or drink too much but everyone knows ex Ambos don't drink!

Pete Briscoe
Co-ordinator

North East Victoria

We again had a good turnout for lunch at the BBC. Ian Cameron was with us. It's lovely to see wives & partners in attendance, as we all know how important these people are in our working lives. I attend as an ex-admin person, Pays

Leanne, and I listen to the stories from the guys, many of whom did work in Melbourne, some around the same time as I was in Latrobe Street so I recognise names. Bob Spencer attended, and I hadn't seen him since I left to further my payroll career in 1985. Frank and Anne Bonser also attended our meeting. Members ask after Eric Edwards, who I used to bring to the meeting, he's now 93 years young and residing at Granite Hill in Euroa. We discussed other members who seem to have fallen off the radar so they will be contacted to try to get more people attending which in turn raises awareness of the programs, eg, Peer Support, that are offered. Sadly Fred Kann was not with us for this meeting, and in December lost his battle with cancer after a short illness. Vale Freddy! Next meeting will be on Saturday February 23.

Leanne Russell-Jones
Convener

Geelong and Surf Coast District

December 05 was our last get together for 2018 held at the Geelong RSL. A busy end of year kept usual Committee representation away, plus had three members seek early departures on hard to catch medical appointments. Ten members enjoyed our usual luncheon fare.

Having no short term business to discuss plus no conduit of information from

Committee all departed after hearing Ray Neal recall over lunch, on his arranged visit to Ballarat

28 November to meet with George Prolongeau their 101 year old veteran. Ray & George had both attended the early 1960's AOTC sessions in St. Margaret's Geelong.

Thanks Mark for organising this meeting & John Parkinson for your photography skills toward logging a permanent record of the meeting.

For me, I had met George & other Station Officers at their 1977 Ballarat

Of Vision and Determination

A worthy story for R.A.A.V. caravaners.

The resilience of some people, even with the experiences of our profession, never ceases to amaze me.

Whilst caravanning and staying at the beautiful shady tourist park in picturesque Orbost, my wife Barb and I were having a morning coffee at our van under a shade tree. At this interval, a caravan pulled in beside on a vacant site. Normally nothing unusual, however this was! On the roof of the Ford sedan was a motorised wheelchair and fishing rods.

With the new arrival located in position, the driver manipulated himself from the vehicle seat into a conventional fold-up wheelchair provided by his wife. From here the setting-up of the van on site began, this was achieved by the wheelchair occupant giving the relevant instructions to his partner when he could not contribute himself. From start to finish, our offer of assistance was declined and the end result of their efforts delivered a fine set-up, awning, guy ropes and all.

This done, the motorised wheelchair was removed from the roof and our new neighbour transferred himself into the more comfortable chair for a well-earned brew, (hot type)

The couple were Malcolm and Jean McPherson from Sussex Inlet, NSW and apparently regular interstate caravaners, spending approximately three months annually

caravanning. After a period, we learned that Malcolm had become a paraplegic due to motor car accident in Moura, Queensland in 1969, fracturing his T11 among other injuries, and spent three months in hospital at Rockhampton and a further twelve months convalescing in hospital in Brisbane. Confined to a wheelchair, Malcolm was determined to move on with his life. He obtained employment repairing lawn mowers prior to beginning his own motor-bike repair business.

He met Jean, a nursing sister while hospitalised with pressure sores in 1979 and they later married. Malcolm's disability was not to be a barrier to lifestyle. He became a champion rifle target shooter, winning The C Grade National Queens 1987 with nine medals at Canberra and also The Queens Gold Medal 600 Metre Melbourne 1987. – He is a past president of the local men's shed and a keen fisherman.

Malcolm and Jean's van not being a shower/toilet van meant Malcolm had to utilise the park amenities via wheelchair. He did this cheerfully despite him also having C.A. of the bladder.

To top it off, both of them fished together from the banks of the Snowy River opposite the caravan park– and caught fish! So, fellow colleagues and wives, next time while caravanning and get a twinge of arthritis? —————?

The Dents

Seeking Information

A similar article appeared in the Spring edition of "The Beacon"

The only information we have thus far regarding this small case which carried two ampules of morphine is not definitive as to the year they were placed into the Ambulance and perhaps the year they were removed.

We believe that they were carried on Rural Ambulances with the distinct "Warning - For Emergency Use By A Medical Practitioner Only".

Any information would be gratefully appreciated, eg.

- Was there a particular incident/event that brought the morphine onto the Ambulances.
- Presumably such an initiative would have had the approval of the Hospital and Charities Commission.
- Does any Member remember being in attendance when the morphine was in fact administered.

Our intention is to mount the case onto a descriptive wall board and place it for public display within the Museum.

Please provide any information to:-

John Clancy Mobile: 0425 452 071

Peter Dent Mobile: 0427 508 888



District Reports continued

Retirement Dinner,
refreshing this contact with George
last August.
Friendship & Fellowship re-awakened.
Members of the G & S C Branch wish
all Executive Committee plus other
State Branch members

All the Best of Good Wishes for 20119

Metro Central

December 12th was the final General
Meeting for 2018 which was conduct-
ed at A V Headquarters, Doncaster.
We were fortunate to have 48 mem-

bers and guests in attendance and
following the meeting we honoured
the following Members with Life
Membership.

Keith Lloyd
Col Saunders

CEO Tony Walker officiated and gave
each Member a certificate as well as
his thanks for services to Ambulance
and the Association.

Tony then presented retiring Presi-
dent, Ray Lougheed and Treasurer,
Darrell Rintoule with a plaque and
certificate. He also presented Peter

Leek and Dennis Meek with a plaque
each in recognition of their service to
the Committee over many years.
Following the presentations and
speeches we adjourned for a well
catered lunch provided by Ambu-
lance Victoria..

Ian Cameron
Secretary



The Doncaster Presentations

CEO Tony Walker presenting:
(Left to right, top to bottom)

Col Saunders Life Membership
Keith Lloyd - Life Membership
Darrell Rintoule - Retiring Treasurer
Dennis Meek - Retiring Committee Member
Peter Leek - Retiring Committee member
and Ray Lougheed - Retiring President



President, Ian Donaldson and his
Lovely wife Christine

December 2018

The Southern Aurora Crash at Violet Town

On the night of the accident, 7 February 1969, the *Southern Aurora* from Sydney departed with fourteen carriages, and was carrying a near-capacity load of 192 passengers and 22 crew by the time it reached Violet Town.

Its driver was Jack Bowden, a highly experienced 52 year-old VR employee; its fireman was 30 year-old Mervyn Coulthard; and its guard William Wyer. A fast freight train of 22 wagons, mostly containing new cars, had departed Melbourne at 1.25 am travelling north, driven by Lawrence Rosevear and supported by relief driver Arnfried Brendecke.

The southbound *Aurora* and northbound freight train were scheduled to cross at Benalla, north of Violet Town, at 6.44 am, with the freight train scheduled to enter the crossing loop there at 6.15 am. However, at 6.30 am, McDonnell observed that both the *Southern Aurora* and the goods train were running behind schedule, and decided to instead cross the trains at Violet Town. The driver of the goods train was instructed to prepare for a "running cross", with the freight train diverted through the loop line at slow speed while the *Aurora* continued on the main line.

As the *Southern Aurora* passed through Benalla, driver Bowden increased its speed to the limit of 70 mph (110 km/h), and this speed was maintained up to the point of impact. Shortly afterwards, the train passed an automatic signal set at "normal speed warning", which indicated that the following signal may carry a "stop" indication. Although it was standard practice to slow the train by at least 10 mph (16 km/h) for such an indication, Bowden did not respond in any way. It was later established that Bowden had died some 6 mi (9.7 km) away from the crash site, and had probably not been in effective control of the train for some time before that.

However, upon noticing the warning indication, fireman Coulthard claimed to have left his seat and went into the nose of the locomotive to fill the electric kettle with water, anticipating a lengthy stop at Violet Town. While performing this task, he heard and felt the train pass

over the points at the start of the crossing loop and observed that the *Aurora* had not reduced speed. Upon re-entering the main driving cab, he saw the "stop" signal and the headlights of the freight train, shouted at Bowden to stop the train, and took shelter in the engine room.

Meanwhile, the freight train had approached Violet Town at 50 mph (80 km/h), with driver Rosevear observing the approaching headlight of the *Aurora*. Rosevear slowed the train to 35 mph (56 km/h) in preparation to enter the crossing loop, but realised the oncoming passenger train had not done the same. He applied emergency braking and began flashing the locomotive's headlight in an attempt to warn its driver, then opened the door and assisted fireman Brendecke to jump off the train, before seeking refuge in the engine room.

The trains collided head-on at a closing speed later estimated at 172 km/h (107 mph), shortly before 7 am. According to the reports of Brendecke, who survived the fall and subsequent crash, and passing motorists on the Hume Highway, the force of the collision propelled the locomotive of the *Aurora* and several of the goods wagons into the air. Six of the passenger carriages were derailed, and one was completely crushed by other wreckage. Of these, the leading two carriages had telescoped into the rear of the locomotive, and two had jack-knifed over the top, suspending them some 30 ft (9.1 m) in the air.

Immediately following the crash, spilt diesel fuel caused the locomotive of the goods train to catch fire. The flames quickly spread to the derailed *Aurora* carriages, where passengers were already attempting to escape through broken windows.

A stone cairn was erected on the 25th anniversary of the tragedy by the Public Transport Corporation at the site of the accident. Hundreds attended the commemoration in the early morning, which was followed by a morning tea. In early 2018, a local group announced plans to expand the memorial significantly, saying that the existing cairn naming only a "public transport official"

was an inadequate tribute to the disaster. The plans include signage listing the names of both the dead and local rescuers who were awarded for their bravery, and organisers anticipate their completion prior to the 50th anniversary of the crash on the 7th February 2019.

The *Southern Aurora* bore the brunt of the collision because the goods train was heavier. Nine people were killed (2 drivers, 1 electrician, 1 conductor and 5 passengers) and 117 passengers were injured. Most deaths and casualties occurring in cars 7 and 8.

The Southern Aurora Incident

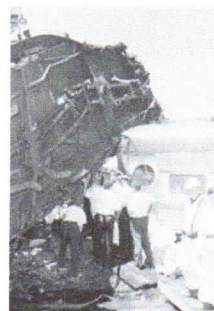
Editors Note:

Although many reports were written at the time and since the accident. None appear to name the attending Ambulance Officers.

What is known is the first Ambulance Officer on scene was the Station Officer from Euroa followed by Station Officer, Joe Gervasoni, from Benalla. Followed by crews from Shepparton and Wangaratta..

It is known that Peter McMurtrie, attended with a St. Johns rescue unit and Les John, now residing in Haywood also attended.

Any further information would be appreciated.



The Back Page

Retired Ambulance Association of Victoria Inc.



Committee of Management

President: Ian Donaldson
Vice President: Erik Schanssema
Secretary: Ian Cameron
Treasurer:

Committee Members:

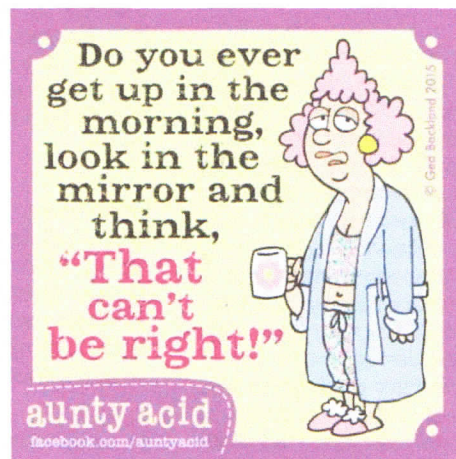
Bill McKnight
Les Wood
John Clancy
Ray Loughheed
Steve Mulligan
Greg Wood
John Head

All Correspondence to:
The Secretary
Unit 2 / 20 Brooks Street
Bentleigh East
Phone: 03 8503 7945
Mobile: 0435 010 943
Email: raav.secretary@gmail.com

www.retiredambulancevictoria.org.au

Some words of Wisdom

Some people want it to happen
Some wish it would happen
Others make it Happen



Facebook: Retired Ambulance
Association of Victoria Inc.