

Jim Ballard

I am part of an ambulance dynasty with my father (John Sr), my brothers (Pete and John) and my brother-in-law Darrell Douglas all having worked in the Victorian ambulance industry. My Uncle Chas was an ambulance officer in London, as was my father before we emigrated to Australia, and my sister Jackie was a registered nurse.

I started work in 1974 at age 17 as a cadet ambulance officer at the then Peninsula Ambulance Service. My introduction to ambulance was with Senior Station Officer Peter Watson walking into the boardroom and giving us the rounds of the kitchen and frightening the heck out of us as young kids. It obviously didn't work as my association with ambulance lasted 42 years.

I stayed at 'PY' for 10 years before moving to Sale in East Gippsland. During my time in Gippsland I worked mainly in Sale. I was appointed as SO Comms in 1986 and during the 'Kennett' years the control rooms were amalgamated, from this our Sale Comms was closed and I was subsequently appointed Station Officer at Sale an on-road position I shared with Ken Curtis.

Due to government initiatives a push was on for Ambulance to become involved in Quality Assurance, each region required a representative on a VASA committee and I was Gippsland's representative. I went on to study Business Management at Monash and QA at RMIT becoming RAV's Quality Manager in Ballarat after the regional ambulance services were amalgamated in 1998.

In 2003 I returned to Gippsland as the Team Manager at Maffra, this was a single officer response branch with ACO accompaniment and a real learning curve for me. After many years of pushing, we finally achieved more staff which blossomed from initially myself as the only permanently appointed officer at the branch to the present day where 10 is the minimum and many more attached to the branch on admin status.

I retired in 2016 and look back on my career with fondness and some of the characters I have met along the way, in particular those at 'PY'.

My current position with RAAV is as Secretary. I have taken over the mantle from Ian Cameron who did a sterling job for so many years, he truly is a hard act to follow. Our new committee is focused on delivering a service for our members, that is, democratic, supportive and reactive to our members' needs. This means that we need everyone in our organisation to participate in making our Association great.

As a by-line, like many of our members I couldn't have achieve any of this without the support of my wife and family, this is why I place great value in our spouses coming along with us to our luncheon meetings, they truly deserve our adoration as they've been there with us and they understand the foibles, hardships and intricacies of the job.