

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE TASMANIAN MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICE

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The Early Days

Meals on Wheels began in Australia in the early 1950s based on the service introduced in Britain following the Second World War.

One of the first Meals on Wheels services established, with few resources, was in the city of South Melbourne in 1952 which operated from the Senior Citizens' Centre, and which was run entirely by volunteers. Meals were delivered using a specially designed tricycle, which was capable of carrying sixteen meals. Almost at the same time a Meals on Wheels service was started in Adelaide under the guidance of Mrs Doris Taylor.

The Meals on Wheels service in Tasmania started in 1955 with the formation of Hobart Meals on Wheels on Service, at the instigation of Mrs E M Cuthbert. Meals were initially from a commercial source for delivery to a small number of elderly and sick members of the Hobart community. Mrs Cuthbert originally intended the service to be developed into a Home Care Service.

When the group was firmly established it started to cater for elderly citizens' parties, and by doing so identified a need for a centre with kitchen facilities where the more mobile elderly in the community could meet and share a meal.

In 1963 Hobart Meals on Wheels transferred its source of meals from the commercial caterer centre, now known as "Fifty and Better" Club. In the same year a second Meals on Wheels group was formed, at Glenorchy, with meals being prepared and cooked by volunteers using a small kitchen made available by the Glenorchy City Council.

As the need for the service grew, the late Mrs G D Cheesman, then President of Hobart Meals on Wheels, initiated negotiations with the Tasmanian Minister for Health which eventually resulted in sufficient meals being provided by the Hobart Chest Hospital for both Hobart and Glenorchy Meals on Wheels. A joint office was established at the Chest Hospital and a part-time Co-ordinator appointed in 1967 to organise deliveries for both groups. Official recognition of the Meals on Wheels service in Tasmania was therefore accorded in 1966.

Following further representation by the President of Hobart Meals on Wheels, agreement was reached with the Department of Health Services that, in future, five of the twenty-five cents

received from clients for each meal could be retained to meet the two groups' administrative and equipment expenses, and only the remaining twenty cents was paid to the Health Department to cover the cost of the meal.

Further negotiations, finalized in October 1969, resulted in a State Government financial grant towards equipment costs. Following a visit to Tasmania in mid-1969 by the Minister of Social Services, contact was also established, by correspondence, with the Commonwealth Government Department of Social Services on the needs identified by Meals on Wheels.

The 1969 State Grant was not renewed but the requirement for financial assistance was met by the adoption of the **1970 Delivered Meals Subsidy Act**, by the Commonwealth Government which ensured that Meals on Wheels groups throughout Australia would receive in future a regular income. At that time the grant was based on ten cents per meal paid retrospectively to "assist in the establishment, expansion, improvement, and maintenance of Delivered Meals Services".

The Subsidy Act was welcomed by Hobart Meals on Wheels executive committee as it encouraged their embryo vision of the creation of an Association of individual Meals on Wheels groups in Tasmania for mutual benefit, exchanging ideas and assistance, the formation of new groups and ensuring uniformity of service and price.

In 1971 there were twelve Meals on Wheels groups operating in Tasmania: Hobart, Glenorchy, Ulverstone, New Norfolk, Smithton, Devonport, Latrobe, Launceston, Beaconsfield, Burnie, Portland/St Helens and Scottsdale, the latter five groups operated by the Red Cross Society. Following a series of visits to the Groups by the then President of the proposed Associations' Steering Committee, Mrs G D Cheesman and Hobart Meals on Wheels Honorary Secretary, Mrs A MacFarlane, an Inaugural Meeting to form a Meals on Wheels Association was called for 6th March 1971 in Campbell Town. All the above groups were contacted the previous year, and all agreed that an Association would be desirable. However, seven groups eventually attended the inaugural meeting, including Burnie and Portland/St Helens, although Smithton and New Norfolk joined soon afterwards.

The meeting was attended by representatives of seven of the twelve groups and a formal constitution for the Meals on Wheels Association of Tasmania was adopted. The first Executive Committee was elected to hold office until April 1st the following year and consisted of Mrs G D Cheesman as President/Chairman, Mrs A MacFarlane as Honorary Secretary/Treasurer, and

three members: Mrs Dunham (Ulverstone), Mrs F C Nicholls (Red Cross, Burnie) and Mrs Busby (Red Cross, Portland/St Helens).

Unfortunately, during this inaugural year the two groups that had been formed under the auspices of the Red Cross Society gave notice of secession from the Association as a result of the Society's Charter precluding Red Cross groups from being affiliated to another organisation. As a result two of the three elected committee members resigned, and as Mrs Dunham was seriously ill and the President was absent from Tasmania overseas until the first Annual General Meeting of the Association the following year, the sole remaining Executive Officer, Mrs A MacFarlane, conducted the affairs of the association until a full Executive Committee was once again elected and took office in March 1972.

At that meeting Hobart, Glenorchy, Devonport, Ulverstone, Latrobe, Fingal Valley, Deloraine, Longford, Penguin and Smithton formed the nucleus around which the Meals on Wheels Association of Tasmania grew to its present day membership of thirty two groups.

Member Groups and their year on formation

Bicheno	1986	Longford	1971
Brighton	1978	Latrobe	1970
Cygnets	1976	New Norfolk	1969
Deloraine	1971	Oatlands	1982
Devonport	1966	Penguin	1972
Dodges Ferry and District	1986	Port Sorell	1972
Dover	1993	Railton	1977
Dunalley (now in recess)	1985	Richmond	1991
Eastern Shore	1975	St Helens*	1970
Fingal Valley	1971	Scamander***	1985
Flinders Island	1993	Sheffield	1983
Forth Valley	1985	Smithton	1969
Geeveston	1979	Spring Bay	1974
Glenorchy	1963	Swansea	1986
Hobart	1955	Tasman Peninsula	1989
Huon Valley	1979	Ulverstone**	1967
Italian Kitchen	2006	Wynyard	1972
Kingborough	1974		

- * St Helens (formerly Portland/St Helens, Red Cross which withdrew in 1972) re-formed, re-named and re-joined in 1979.
- ** Ulverstone, formally withdrew in 1972, and re-joined in 1974.
- *** Scamander merged with Fingal Valley in 2000.

Red Cross Meals

Launceston

Launceston Meals on Wheels commenced delivering six meals a day on March 1 1960. The inaugural office bearers were Mrs Marjorie Parker (who later became Dame Parker) and Mrs White (Mayoress of the City of Launceston).

Meals were delivered three times a week from the Cosgrove Park kitchen, and the volunteers who delivered the meals were expected to help wash up the containers on their return to the kitchen.

In the early 1980's meals were made available from the Queen Victoria Hospital and the Launceston General Hospital, and were no longer obtained from Cosgrove Park.

In January 1990 the new hospital kitchen at Launceston General Hospital was installed and meals cooked by the cook/chill system were produced. A computer programme to assist with the Organisation of the Meals on Wheels deliveries was installed soon afterwards.

Launceston Delivered Meals delivered 79,500 meals in 1994 and had approximately 580 volunteers involved in the Meals on Wheels service in the Launceston area.

Burnie

The Burnie Meals on Wheels group held its inaugural meeting on September 21 1967 and the executive members of the Burnie Red Cross Citizens Committee at that time were Mr B Trebilco (Chairman), Mesdames Dick, Haywood, Stevens, Hardman, Heazlewood, Nicholls, Warden W T Young and Mr J Spinks.

Service Organisations in the Burnie area were approached to assist in the delivery of the meals and on February 13 1968 a trial run delivering eight meals was organized. That first year, for Easter, the clients were given an Easter egg, a small pot of jam, and a hot cross bun.

By April 1968 a second delivery vehicle was needed and two Red Cross members were rostered to help wash up in the hospital kitchen. At the Annual General Meeting of the group in 1978 it was noted that 12,652 meals had been delivered during the past year. In March 1987 a luncheon was held to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Burnie Meals on Wheels group, and attended by approximately 140 past and current drivers and helpers. Burnie was delivering 18,201 meals per annum and the cost to the clients was \$1.60 per meal.

In 1994 Burnie Meals on Wheels delivered 20,626 meals involving 50 volunteers per week provided by churches and service clubs in the Burnie area.

Beaconsfield

The Beaconsfield Municipality's Citizens Committee for Red Cross was the next group to undertake Meals on Wheels deliveries in the area, and the group was formed on September 29 1969. The inaugural members of the Citizens Committee were Mr E Mullen (Chairman), Mr E Barrett, Mrs M Wardlaw, Mrs G Walker, Mrs M Parker and Dr P Grant.

Ten meals per day, seven days a week, were delivered to the Park Home units when the service in Beaconsfield first commenced.

In 1994, 4,899 meals were delivered in the Beaconsfield area, five days a week, involving approximately 24 drivers and helpers every month.

Campbell Town

The Campbell Town Red Cross and Citizens' Meals on Wheels Association came into being on September 20 1971, formed by Mrs C Muirhead (President), Mesdames P Bennett, Mrs Evans, Mr E Morgan, and Roster Secretary's, Miss M Young (at Ross) and Mrs Firbuis.

Meals were first delivered three days a week and cost the clients 25c per meal.

In 1994, 3,400 meals were served in the Campbell Town/Ross area and 20-25 volunteers were involved in the deliveries, assisted at times by one or two students from the local schools.

Evandale

Meals on Wheels deliveries in the Evandale area commenced in July 1971 following the formation of Evandale Meals on Wheels Citizens' Committee. Thirty-five meals were delivered in the first month on Tuesday and Thursday each week.

The Evandale group in 1994 delivered a total of 1273 meals with 12 volunteers involved in the deliveries, some of them husband and wife teams.

The formation of Evandale Meals on Wheels was assisted by donations from the late Mr W J Hawley, the Evandale Child Health Centre and staff have always been very supportive of the Meals on Wheels service in the area.

George Town

When the George Town Meals on Wheels service was inaugurated in 1971, the source of meals was a Bush Nursing Hospital and no records were ever kept although it is known that the

deliverers washed and cared for their meals containers. In 1976 George Town became a division of the Launceston General Hospital.

For many years Comalco supplied the Friday meal for clients free of charge, but this practice ceased in June 1993. 4,081 meals were delivered by George Town Red Cross Meals on Wheels in 1994, and there were approximately 36 drivers and helpers on the roster.

Westbury

In June 1972 the inaugural President of Westbury Red Cross Meals on Wheels was Mrs P Ingamells, and the secretary was Mrs B Gibson. Four meals were delivered three days a week when the service in Westbury commenced, which was increased to five days a week in 1986.

4,362 meals were delivered by this group in 1994 involving both individual volunteers and service organisations in the delivery roster.

Queenstown

The first delivery of meals in the Queenstown area was made on April 1, 1974, when the delivery of twenty three meals, five days a week, was undertaken by the inaugural committee. The office bearers at that time were Mr B Pearce (Chairman), Mary Hamilton (Secretary), and W Hamilton (Treasurer).

Meals were available to clients seven days a week, although not all required meals every day.

In 1994 the committee celebrated twenty years of service to the community, and the service has grown to include Strahan and Zeehan. A total of 2,750 meals were delivered in 1994, with forty volunteers on the delivery roster.

Scottsdale

December 1978 was the date a Meals on Wheels service began in the Scottsdale area, formed by the inaugural President, Mr K C Haas, and the Secretary/Treasurer, Mr P McLennan.

Seven meals per day, three times a week, were first delivered but after the first three months this was increased to five days per week.

During 1994, 5,392 meals plus 3,206 frozen meals were delivered by this group, which involved approximately forty volunteers on the delivery roster.

King Island

The King Island Meals on Wheels group was started in 1970 by the King Island Council on the Ageing. The service delivered meals seven days a week and also receives HACC funding.

Lilydale/Karoola

The latest Meals on Wheels group to form under the auspices of Red Cross undertook to deliver ten frozen meals once a week in September 1994.

Although there was only a small number of clients there were approximately twenty volunteers involved. The local store supplied the soup and sweet, either at cost or sometimes below cost.

The Start of Change

In 1990 a Review of Meals on Wheels groups in Tasmania was conducted by consultants Touche Ross, and the review report was approved jointly by the Commonwealth Minister for the Aged and the State Minister for Community Services in 1991.

A number of recommendations included in the report were directed towards establishing a management structure and processes as a basis for improving the current delivery service statewide, and encouraging services to develop in line with the Home and Community Care principles. Initially no action was taken to implement the review recommendations, then in December 1991 representatives from Red Cross, Meals on Wheels Association Inc. and HACC met to form a Food Services Planning Committee (FSPC). Representatives from the Tasmanian Advocacy Information Service Inc. and the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services augmented the membership of this body.

Terms of reference were established and a Project Officer employed to identify the levels of support required by MOW and Red Cross to implement the changes recommended by a draft Strategic Plan for Delivered Meals Services in Tasmania 1993-1995 was developed by the committee.

The Strategic Plan covered the objectives comprised in the National Service Standards and Guidelines for HACC services, and specifically formulated some strategies to meet those objectives. One such strategy was the development of a Guidelines Manual for Delivered Meals Services in Tasmania.

In 1994 a total of **473,345** meals were delivered in Tasmania, by MOW Groups and Red Cross, to the frail/elderly and/or disabled members of the community by approximately 3,900 volunteers with the assistance of a small number of paid staff, who are employed by some member groups to help with the co-ordination of deliveries and rostering of volunteers.

In 2007, the Delivered Meals Service in Tasmania incorporated thirty-three member groups affiliated with the Meals on Wheels Association of Tasmania Inc. and eleven groups operating under the auspices of the Australian Red Cross.

1999-2000 – Mow Groups delivered a total of 245,788 meals.

2006-2007 – 32 Groups delivered a total of 240,191 meals.

(The Cygnet group commenced deliveries in July 2007)

The Changes Continue

On the 1st July, 2015 the Australian Government introduced the Commonwealth Home Support Program which brought together the following:

- Commonwealth Home and Community Care (HACC)
- National Respite for Carers
- Day Therapy Centres
- Assistance with care and housing for the Aged.

The Commonwealth Home Support Program is an entry level home help program funded by the Australian Government. Its objective is to help older, frail people living in the community to maximize their independence. Through the timely delivery of timely, high quality entry-level support services taking into account each person's individual goals, preferences and choice – and underpinned by a strong emphasis on wellness and reablement – the Commonwealth Home Support Program helps frail, older people stay living in their own homes for as long as they can and wish to do so.

Under the CHSP assessments are now done through Regional Assessment Service (RAS) and Meals on Wheels lost our funding for our Assessment Officers. After much negotiation with the Government we acquired an amount of funding to be able to employ Client Service Officers in the South and North West. The role of the Client Service Officers is to be the initial point of contact for referred clients or potential clients of Meals on Wheels services and to be the liaison between Meals on Wheels Branches and their clients.

As part of the Australian Governments changes to the Aged Care system the My Aged Care website was established. This was designed for clients and their carers to navigate the Age Care system and give people more choice, more control and easier access to a full range of aged care services which includes the Meals on Wheels service.

What is the Service?

Meals on Wheels is a voluntary, community-based organisation delivering meals to people of **all ages**, who, through sickness, age and/or disability, cannot reasonably get a meal for themselves, and who remain with dignity and independence in their own homes.

There is no Means Test as eligibility is based on need, and clients can receive meals for a long or short-time period. They can also request the delivery of meals to be tailored to their needs, such as deliveries two or three times a week, or the provision of extra meals if they have no other means of obtaining a meal during the weekend.

Clients are referred to their local Meals on Wheels group by doctors, community health sisters, welfare workers, ministers of religion, hospitals, family or neighbours can request delivery of meals themselves.