The History of Redland Hospital Auxiliary

By Ethel Bosher

First edition April 2007
Updated February 2012

How it all started...

Early in 1987 a public meeting was called by a group of residents to discuss how they could best assist the new Redland Hospital, then taking shape in Weippen Street, Cleveland.

A large and interesting cross section of the community turned up to the Cleveland Cultural Centre to lend support. Councillor Kevin Bengton who was assisted by Mr. L. Norris, a representative of the then, South Brisbane Hospital Board, chaired the meeting.
With the hospital pending completion and due for its official opening in June or July, it was decided to immediately form a Hospital Auxiliary to initiate fund raising and support hospital staff. The basis of a constitution was laid down and a founding committee formed of local residents.

President: Beryl Lahey  
Vice President: Connie Perkins  
Junior Vice President & Council representative: Alan Gardilla  
Secretary: Ethel Bosher  
Treasurer: Margaret Hazelwood

The committee members were Miriam Morton, Helen Wilson, J. Govey, Len Conway, Helen Bowskill, Steve Constable, Ruth Gillard, Barbara Davey, Annette Marsson, Mary Erbecker and Mavis Troadson.

On March 12th 1987 the Redland Hospital Auxiliary was registered and incorporated, beginning a process that over the past 25 years has raised over one million dollars to support patients and staff and donated to the hospital many significant pieces of medical equipment.

The Early Years

The Auxiliary initially found a home within the hospital, in a small room about three metres square, just inside the Main Entrance.

There was no water, no sink, and no air-conditioner, in fact there were no fittings at all and it quickly became known to some as the ‘hole in the wall’. A table, hot water urn and basic kitchen equipment was purchased and although the conditions were very hot and cramped the volunteers set about making tea and coffee, soup and sandwiches.

Fruit and other items requested by staff, patients and visitors were quickly added and over time, soft drinks, sweets, newspapers and donated goods were introduced.

Raffles, recliners and green frogs

At one time, for reasons that the Auxiliary volunteers were never able to fathom, red and green frogs were of particular interest to the nursing staff – they just couldn’t get enough of them!

In fact the proceeds from the sale of red and green frogs paid for many of the early items provided for the comfort of patients.
The very first item that was purchased for the hospital was a Jason recliner rocker chair that cost $320.00. One of the early fund raising activities was selling raffle tickets for a basket of seasonal goods, which at times was allowed to operate in the shopping centres.

At other times however, the pavement outside the Cleveland Westpac Bank was the best site on offer. Volunteers spent many hours sitting in the scorching sun, the howling wind, or sheltering from the rain. During hot Easter the poor little chocolate Easter Bunny’s ears were seen to melt onto their faces.

Also during those early years there was a volunteer ‘Volunteer Coordinator’ who directed the volunteers through the wards and outpatients dealing with tasks such as folding linen, entertaining the patients and providing general assistance to the staff.

A highlight of the early years was an invitation from the Minister of Health to all hospital volunteers, to an afternoon tea at Parliament House.

The volunteers toured the building, indulged in a cup of tea and a bun, and took the opportunity to talk to volunteers from other hospitals. It was considered by all to be a very nice gesture by the Minister.

Since then many hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised for the hospital, doctors, nurses, staff, patients and the community, for items like special under-blankets, doctor’s emergency kits, cameras for teaching staff, televisions, tables, chairs and much more.

The Redlands Hospital Dinner Dance

One of the most important annual fund-raising events was the Redland Hospital Annual Dinner Dance held in the Cleveland Cultural Centre.

At the time the Auxiliary President was Eve Jorgensen, who displayed great style and expertise in organizing this event, ensuring that half the town attended.

Eve made sure there was no free list and absolutely everyone paid for a ticket, raising about $7000 each year.

One year, soup was on the menu, so Eve requested that Ethel Boshers use her pottery skills to produce 12 large tureens, one for each table. Ethel still has most of the tureens, because as she says, what do you do with 12 large soup tureens?

The Friday night prior to the dinner dance was spent cooking and then on Saturday morning the hall was decorated and dozens of chairs and tables were laid out.

All Saturday afternoon and evening was spent cooking again and after the event, the volunteers washed up, cleaned up and staggered home in the early hours only to return first thing to finish clearing up.
The event was very successful and funds were raised, but it was very hard work for the handful of willing volunteers.

Towards the end of the dinner dance the local real estate agent would auction off all the floral arrangements that the local florist, Wendy Jones, had spent hours making to decorate the hall.

The Fashion Parade

One of the most popular fundraising ideas, which ran for a few years, was a fashion parade. Mostly the brainchild of Pauline Keneally and the Grand View Hotel in Cleveland, the fashion parade and luncheon entailed far less work, except for the volunteer models and was greatly enjoyed by everyone.

Happy Hand Day

Volunteers stapled together thousands of ‘happy hands’ for streamers to hang in a variety of McDonald’s outlets.

The day was spent serving and talking to the children and their parents and although enjoyable was also rather exhausting by the end of the day. A selected charity was given a percentage of the day’s takings.

KOALA KIOSK

12 years on

By 1999 the Redlands area had grown exponentially and outgrown its hospital.

A bigger and more up-to-date Hospital had been built further up the hill. The old hospital became ‘Yuglipa’, the mental health unit.

The Auxiliary moved into the new hospital, again just inside the entrance. Initially they had two rooms and although still fairly cramped, they at least had a room for the volunteers.

Local names were being used for the many rooms throughout the hospital so it was decided to call the shop the ‘Koala Kiosk’.

In 2001 it was considered that the existing kiosk was just far too small to function conveniently and so after protracted negotiations with the hospital administration, a plan was drawn up to refurbish the kiosk to provide more serving counters, display areas and cupboards for storage.

Also at this time the Auxiliary proffered a major donation of $26,000 to furnish one of the new maternity units.

The Koala Kiosk proved to be very successful, however as all the profits were being used to purchase equipment for the hospital, so a decision was made to apply for a grant from the Gaming Fund.
When the grant was received the project to extend the kiosk began, however it was 2003 before the extensions were completed.

At the same time vending machines were installed which have been of great benefit to the Auxiliary, with commissions banked every three months whilst the company does all the maintenance of the machines.

Rita Morris, the President of the Auxiliary at the time, dealt with all the meetings with the architects and hospital administration, chose tiles, colours and cupboard layout and coordinated the whole project.

The Auxiliary paid for the architect's fees and other expenses, out of the total project cost of $25,300.

During the conversion, the Auxiliary operated the kiosk from under the stairs in the main foyer, so it was a joy for the volunteers to move into the new kiosk.

Too soon however, the kiosk filled with even more stock including flowers, magazines, toys, basic necessities for incoming patients and staff and much more.

The Koala Kiosk is open every day from 9am to 4pm and staffed by loyal Auxiliary volunteers, except for two weeks at Christmas when members get a much-deserved rest.
The Koala Kiosk continues to be the major income source for the Auxiliary and could not continue without the dedication of its loyal volunteers. The Koala Kiosk can be contacted on 3488 3114.

From left, Mrs. Doreen Nichols, Secretary of the Redland Hospital Auxiliary, Brett Bricknell, Executive Director of Redland & Wynnum Hospitals and Rita Morris, President of the Redland Hospital Auxiliary, at the Koala Kiosk.

The Last Decade

In 2003 the hospital administration decided it was time to employ a paid coordinator to direct the many volunteers who were now working in all the departments of the hospital and at the front information desk.

Initially this was staffed every weekday.

In 2007 the Auxiliary used $42,000 to purchase new Hi/Low Bed and $216 tables and chairs for the Emergency Department.

For the last five years the Auxiliary has donated a bursary to the ‘Top Nursing Graduate of the Year’ and it is hoped this will continue into the future.

Fundraising over the past five years has also been very successful and has been bolstered by craft stalls and raffles in the hospital foyer for Easter, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day and Christmas.
Orchid Society Redland

Another event held twice a year for the past 11 years, is a craft stall at the Orchid Society Redland, who also make a donation to the Auxiliary and are great supporters of the work they do.

Trauma Teddies

Trauma Teddies are lovely hand knitted teddies with safety eyes and filling kindly donated by our supporters. Trauma Teddies are used to calm children down when they are upset or frightened and go home with the child. Teddies are supplied to Pathology, the Fracture Clinic, Birthing Ward and Children's Ward. Since May 2011, the Auxiliary has supplied unprepared patients who have come into the Mental Health with toiletries.

Peanut Pillows & Love Blankets

In the birthing unit small babies receive 'Peanut Pillows' for headrests and Crib Covers in single and double sizes.

'Love blankets' are also supplied and play an important part in the protection of new babies in the birthing unit.

Foundation members

There are still two loyal foundation members with the auxiliary after 25 years, Ethel Bocher and Miriam Morton, seen below with the Redland City Mayor, Councillor Melva Hobson, after receiving their Foundation Member badges in November 2011, during the United Nations International Year of the Volunteer.
There are further members with 20 years, 17 years, 10 years, 7 years and so on loyal commitment to the Auxiliary, so they must be doing something right.

A special thank you
And a word on community support from Ethel Bosher

The Redland community has always been very supportive of the hospital - from the Orchid Society to the Victoria Point Senior Citizens and the many other organisations in the area.

But mostly it has been the help of ordinary people in the street who give without asking and to the many volunteers over the years that have helped to keep the Redland Auxiliary running - we wish to say a sincere thank you.

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Over the past 25 years up to the end of this financial year, the Redland Hospital Auxiliary will have donated over one million dollars.