

FIVE

# COMING OF AGE: 1958–1968



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Brisbane staff and drivers, c1959.



The Commonwealth car-with-driver services in the states and the Australian Capital Territory had become firmly established by the 1950s. The services expanded considerably during the economically buoyant and optimistic years that followed with few limits put on their size and composition. The new demands made of the services – particularly provision of transport for guests of government – also reflected the changing political relationship of Australia to its immediate region and the world at large.

Entitlements to use the service were largely formalised during the 1950s and 1960s across an extended range of clients. The Australian Broadcasting Commission began using the service, with a standing order for 200 jobs per week in Sydney in mid-1960, and the promise of using the service for all its travel requirements. The increased number of Colombo Plan students in Sydney had the Commonwealth Office of Education order an extra 30 jobs each week.

Vehicles were replaced regularly and fleets augmented to meet additional demands with few apparent budget restraints. The ever-increasing number of visits by international dignitaries provided the opportunity to acquire the latest models of vehicles for the distinguished visitor service and the regular car-with-driver services.

Increased demand for services meant the need for new premises. Neither the garage nor office accommodation at McElhone Street were adequate for the increasing demands made on the service in Sydney, which predicted the need for garage facilities for 200 vehicles within three years. Consequently, in early 1963 the minister approved reconstruction of the light transport depot at McElhone Street, Woollloomooloo; the ideal location meant there was no thought of relocating it.<sup>2</sup> During the depot's reconstruction, the light fleet transferred to the former workshop and heavy transport depot at Hansard Street, Waterloo, which had become vacant with the transfer of these functions to O'Riordan Street, Alexandria.<sup>3</sup> The New South Wales central office of the Stores and Transport Branch along with the workshops moved to the re-modelled premises previously occupied by De Havillands at O'Riordan Street, Alexandria, in early 1961.



Local drivers re-established their social club at the McElhone Street depot after their return. A Department of Supply Light Transport Social Club had been established in the 1950s, but it had functioned primarily as a welfare club. Jack Hutchinson was one of those responsible for having new rules adopted on 9 March 1961 and enhancing the club's social aspects, which now embraced the organisation of dinner dances for members and Christmas picnics for drivers' children. Jack Hutchinson remained treasurer until 1971 and became the club's first life member.



### Federal vehicle establishments by state, 1958<sup>1</sup>

	Medium and Light Fleet Drivers	Light Fleet Vehicles	Medium Fleet Vehicles
NSW	63	210	219
VIC	104	238	219
SA	41	108	110
QLD	42	77	118
WA	11	92 vehicles in total	
TAS	4	32 vehicles in total	

From top:  
Royal Visit of Princess Alexandra of Kent, Brisbane, 1959.  
Royal Visit of Princess Alexandra, Brisbane, 1959.  
Royal Vist of Princess Alexandra, Brisbane, 1959, featuring the newly acquired Ford Fairlane.  
Royal Visit of Princess Alexandra, Woombye, Queensland, 1959.

Stores and Transport operations in Victoria reflected those in New South Wales. Bob Sitch became a key manager there during this time. He had transferred from an administrative position at the Maribyrnong explosives factory to Stores and Transport in 1948. He then worked his way into the central office in Melbourne where he served as assistant manager of light transport for 18 years before becoming manager. During this period he spent time relieving in Western Australia and South Australia and gained a broad appreciation of the national scope of the service. He helped organise special services for many years from the 1950s.

Stores and Transport services in South Australia waxed and waned with the Joint Project and the fortunes of Woomera. The driver establishment at Woomera in 1961 stood at 64 and the vehicle establishment at 485. Preparations for the European Launcher Development Organisation (ELDO) project and testing of the British Blue Streak missile in 1963 called for 22 vehicles, of which only 13 could be provided from other establishments. The ELDO work also required the services of two additional drivers at Woomera for the operation of additional bus services; thus the Woomera driver establishment was increased from 64 to 66.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, in Adelaide, the light transport pool moved from a depot in Currie Street to another in Grote Street, in 1959.

The distinction between operations in the states and those in Canberra became less clear following negotiations between the Department of Supply and the Department of the Interior. These determined that the former would become the central storage authority in Canberra and take control of a new store due to be completed in November 1962.<sup>5</sup> That same year, the Department of Supply established a small transit depot in Kingston, Canberra, primarily to facilitate removal and storage of furniture of public servants being located in the capital.<sup>6</sup>

The drivers' uniform became an issue again in 1963 when that being worn in the states was no longer considered distinctive. By this time such uniforms – or virtually identical uniforms – were being worn by lift drivers and attendants employed by the Department of the Interior and drivers associated with other organisations.<sup>7</sup> The board endorsed the change to a single-breasted uniform of smoke-blue, similar to that worn by drivers during the Royal Visit that year.



A Rolls Royce being unloaded from a Hercules aircraft at Townsville, 27.8.1959, during the Royal Visit of Princess Alexandra.

The full uniform issue comprised two caps with crowns, two jackets with crowns, three pairs of trousers, four shirts, two black ties, a tie bar, a leather belt and an overcoat. There were to be annual issues of a cap, jacket, two pairs of trousers, four shirts and a tie, with new belts and overcoats issued at one to three year intervals.

The cap remained a feature of the uniform, with precise instruction on how it was to be worn:

*The cap should be worn squarely on the head and not tilted to the side or to the back of the head. The peak should be one inch above the line of the eyes. This not only gives the best appearance but will assist you to keep your head up when driving ... Caps must be worn on all occasions while on duty outside your Depots ...*<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, there were strict protocols concerning the use of gauntlets:

*Drivers who are wearing gloves and are about to be presented, on the command "gloves off", shall on the executive word of command, remove the right hand glove by grasping the fingers thereof and shall hold it flat in the left hand with the wrist and pointing forwards and shall then come to attention.*<sup>9</sup>



Royal Progress cars awaiting departure of Queen Elizabeth from the Brisbane Town Hall, King George Square, 1963.



Passenger's view of the Royal Progress, 1963.

Pool cars averaged 700 miles per week in the major capital cities, much of it unproductive.<sup>10</sup> Efficient management of pool cars in the light transport fleet had always been an issue, particularly when drivers had to return to the depot to receive new instructions. This began to change in 1959 when the branch began trialling two-way radios in vehicles. The trials having proved successful, use of two-way radio control commenced in the last week of June 1960 in 47 of 65 pool cars in Melbourne and 23 of 40 pool cars in Sydney.

The radios had a range of about 25 kilometres from the transmitter. The Melbourne transmitter was atop the Commonwealth Centre building in Spring Street and was connected by land line to the base station at the light transport depot in Batman Street, South Melbourne. The Sydney transmitter was erected on Australia House, with the base station at McElhone Street, Woolloomooloo. The Melbourne control room was staffed on a 24-hour roster and handled as many as 350 orders each day from Monday to Thursday, rising to 500 on Fridays. The new system permitted savings of £250 per week after only six months of operation, as well as hastening turn-around time and permitting 20 per cent more jobs to be undertaken because of elimination of dead mileage.<sup>11</sup>

Drivers took some time to adapt to the new system, with some of them regarding the radios as unnecessarily intrusive; many radios were sabotaged as a consequence. Laurie Sullivan recalled the innovation and reflected the attitudes of some drivers:

*The radio changed the whole life of the driver ... somebody'd be looking over your shoulder all the time. It's not that you're doing something you shouldn't be doing or cribbing or something like that, but somebody's watching you all the time. OK, you have times ... you've been working an early start and you're out late at night, and you're getting a bit hungry, you want to go and get some fish and chips or something, so you think, 'Well damn it, there's a fish shop up the road, I'll slip up there, grab the fish and chips.' You're entitled to a break, but you don't take it, you just grab the fish and chips, and away you go. You've got somebody looking over your shoulder – you're not supposed to be half a mile up the road, because you're putting extra miles on for nothing ... And the radio can be a bloody nuisance. I've struck a couple of occasions when I've nearly had an accident because that radio won't shut up. The bloke on the other end can't gather that you're in a ticklish situation, even if you say, 'Don't talk to me now' ... they don't realise you're in a situation where you could be wiped out.'*<sup>12</sup>

However, procedures were established and accepted and, after some time, drivers reported less fatigue at the end of shifts because radios minimised the need to return to the depot through heavy traffic after each job.





The introduction of the radios led to changes to the charging system for the casual hire of taxi pool cars. Charges on a 'pick-up to drop' basis were introduced from 16 January 1961 in Melbourne and Sydney, and from 13 March 1961 in Brisbane and Adelaide.<sup>13</sup>

There was another innovation too, when the management board decided during financial year 1959-1960 that the light, medium and heavy fleets should be self-supporting, rather than cross-subsidise one another. The board also decided that Ford Customlines were to be replaced after 112,000 miles and after three years; Holden vehicles after 80,000 miles.



Arrival of Queen Elizabeth  
at the children's reception  
at the Brisbane Exhibition  
Grounds, 1963.

## Canberra services

Department of the Interior car-with-driver operations in Canberra reflected those of the states, with their established clients, increased demand on the service reflecting the growth of Canberra, and the greater concentration of head offices of federal departments there. The major difference was that servicing ministers and members of parliament was busiest when parliament was sitting. This spelled a requirement for many cars to be available at the beginning and end of each day with others – of what became known as the Parliament House Shuttle – available at Parliament House during the day. This was the reverse of the situation in the states, where demand on the pool cars was greatest when parliament was not sitting.

Cars for the parliamentary shuttle were ordered from the department by transport officers of the parliamentary departments. The cars and drivers waited outside either the House of Representatives or the Senate until required by members of parliament and Senators, or until directed by the transport officers to pick up members, or they were no longer required. Charges were based on the total time vehicles were required by the parliamentary transport officers rather than for each trip.<sup>14</sup>



The continued growth of the Canberra bureaucracy led to increased demand on the passenger service with the consequent increase in costs. This prompted an enquiry into use of official car transport in Canberra, after which it was decided that greater use should be made of private taxis to ease demand during busy periods. More specifically it was decided:

- (a) that the Transport Section of the Department of the Interior be authorised to arrange with Canberra taxi services for the supply of taxis when such is considered the more economical and convenient arrangement
- (b) that Departments be required to continue to order their transport requirements from the Transport Section
- (c) that, other than services required by Ministers, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and certain other Members of Parliament as specially approved from time to time by the Minister, the Transport Section be authorised to determine whether it meets an order for transport by official car or by taxi.<sup>15</sup>

While seeking economies in the day-to-day use of the passenger service, the government also felt the need for a more exclusive service to meet the needs of the greater number of distinguished guests visiting the national capital. This led to the Department of the Interior creating its own Special Car Service in 1959 to meet the requirements of departments when they believed services should be provided by a Commonwealth car and driver rather than a taxi. This was to cover the transport of distinguished people or departmental officers when special circumstances applied. The charges for the service were to be the ordinary rate plus a reservation fee.<sup>16</sup>

## Special services

Driving for special visits remained the high point for drivers, and to be chosen for such a task reflected a driver's seniority and standing within the organisation. Special visits continued to be managed by the Prime Minister's Department with the Stores and Transport Branch coordinating ground transport requirements.

Special visits increased in frequency, with Royal Visits considered to be the most special. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, visited in 1958 – the first time since 1927 – prompting the addition of a 54 Daimler open tourer to the VIP fleet in 1957. EJ Millett was appointed Commonwealth Transport Officer to oversee the motor vehicle transport operations associated with the visit. Vehicles used included: the Daimler tourer owned by the Department of Supply; a Daimler limousine previously used during the 1954 Royal Visit; along with a Daimler Landaulette, later allocated to the Governor-General, and another later acquired by the South Australian Government; and a Humber tourer owned by the Victorian Government. A large number of heavy transport drivers were used as additional car drivers during the 1958 Royal Visit.<sup>17</sup>

A lesson learned during the course of the Queen Mother's Royal visit was the advisability of having four limousines and two open tourers available for future visits of this nature. Consequently, the following year the government acquired four Rolls Royce limousines and two Rolls Royce open tourers which were to be used for visits of heads of state.<sup>18</sup>



The next major challenge was the need to cater for the March 1959 meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. This was held at Broadbeach, Queensland. As many as 500 international delegates attended the conference that had the distinction of being the first of the major governmental meetings supported by the government's passenger car fleet. Sixty vehicles were required to provide transport for delegates.



There followed the Royal Visit of Princess Alexandra of Kent from 14 August 1959 as a guest of the Australian and Queensland Governments in association with the centenary celebrations of that state. Planning began in June 1959 under direction of the Superintendent, Transport Operations, with the formation of a Royal Visit Car Unit comprising 16 administrative, operational and technical officers, three baggage officers, 60 drivers and 13 mechanics. This visit was challenging because of visits to country towns some distance from one another, especially in outback Queensland, as well as visits to the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria during two months. Hercules aircraft were used to transport the Rolls Royce and Daimler vehicles about the country.<sup>19</sup> This visit was noteworthy for being the first in which Ford Fairlanes were used. They attracted wide and admiring attention, but they had been rushed into service and created problems. Laurie Sullivan recalled:

From top:

The Queen at the children's reception at the Brisbane Cricket Ground, 1963.

The Royal Progress moving along Queen Street, Brisbane, 1963.

*One of them was they introduced into the car a new foot-handbrake system where you put your brake on with the foot and you release it with your hand. Now that was a brilliant idea, as far as I was concerned, but they didn't make their cables strong enough, and damn near everybody broke the cable; as soon as you pushed the brake, the cable breaks and you've got no foot brake. Mine broke the day before we were to do a 60 mile tour [100 km] from Caloundra to Brisbane ... The garage said they'd fix it ... I took delivery of the car five minutes before the progress was to leave, headed off, and the Princess is just coming out as I get into line there, but before I reach that stage I realise they've adjusted my brake too tight ... Well, as we're driving along I think – Oh God. I hate to think what's going to happen ... sometimes you're going hell for leather, and then there's a few people on the side of the road so you hit the brakes and just casually glide past. And then away you go again to make up time. But on this day I can smell my rear brakes starting to pack up ... I've got a couple of important characters from the Royal household in the back there, and they are saying 'What's that funny smell?' I said, 'Oh. It's nothing, just a new car.' ... I burnt out the differential, the brake drums, and I think, the rear axle. All finished up ruined because of the heat that was generated. And how the hell we didn't catch fire, I don't know.<sup>20</sup>*

Other major visits at this time included: Vaughan Morgan, United Kingdom Minister of Trade, and party in August 1959; the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in October 1959; the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman in October 1959; and retiring Governor-General Sir William Slim and Lady Slim on their final tour of states before leaving Australia in January 1960.<sup>21</sup>

The Transport & Stores Branch of the Department of Supply established a Special Car Unit prior to each major visit by seconding branch personnel for the purpose. Consequently, 'Special Car Unit 1962' was established because of an anticipated flurry of special visits in the immediate future. Beginning with the World Poultry Conference in August 1962, there was to follow a visit by the King and Queen of Thailand in September, delegates to the World Power Conference in October, the Colombo Plan Foreign Ministers' Conference also in October, the Asian Regional Conference of the ILO in November, followed by the visit by the Duke of Edinburgh in November and December for the Empire and Commonwealth Games.

The unit was established in March 1962 and had at its disposal a fleet of 70 'good class cars' and the existing small fleet of Rolls Royce and Daimler vehicles. Drivers were to be recruited from the light transport fleets, with other drivers, garage attendants and storemen replacing them for routine driving commitments. The unit took advantage of the anticipated demands on its resources to acquire immediately 76 Humber Super Snipe sedans in advance of the anticipated replacement of 76 Ford vehicles; 70 of these Humber Super Snipes were to be allocated to the Special Car Unit.<sup>22</sup>

A feature of the new acquisition was the fitting of two-way radios to the 76 Humber Super Snipe sedans along with Rolls Royce and Daimler ceremonial vehicles to be used by the Royal Visit Car Unit.<sup>23</sup> Two-way radios had already been fitted to ministerial vehicles and had improved the efficiency in the use of these vehicles when not used by ministers. The use of the two-way radios was anticipated to increase the productivity of vehicles and reduce the number required for the Royal Visit.

Despite the benefit of radios, provision of passenger transport facilities for the VIIth British Empire and Commonwealth Games in Perth, from 22 November to 1 December 1962, proved another challenge because of the major logistical issue of relocating cars and drivers to Perth from the eastern states. Cars made available from the eastern states were driven to Port Pirie, where they were loaded on to a train for carriage to Kalgoorlie, from where they were driven to Perth. The drivers were flown between Port Pirie and Kalgoorlie. The return of the drivers to Port Pirie by air aboard the Department of Civil Aviation Fokker Friendship aircraft caused much local interest – it being the first time an aircraft of that type had landed at Port Pirie.

The Duke of Edinburgh opened the games on behalf of Queen Elizabeth. He proved popular with drivers and, when travelling by himself, always insisted on being provided with a map so that he could follow his journey.



Commonwealth cars at Mascot airport, 6.3.1964.

Immediately after the Empire and Commonwealth Games drivers looked forward to the 1963 Royal Visit of Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. Confirmation of a Royal Visit by Queen Elizabeth in February and March 1963 prompted an extension of the life of the Special Car Unit to April 1963 and provided the opportunity to bring forward the acquisition and replacement of vehicles. In this instance the government acquired another three Rolls Royces, six Daimlers, four Pontiacs and 76 Humber Super Snipes for the occasion. Early planning suggested the need for an additional two Rolls Royce cars, seven Daimler limousines and four Pontiac sedans.

The branch already had 15 Armstrong-Siddley Sapphires that had been used on previous visits, with some of them since being used by ministers. However, they were nearly six years old and no longer considered suitable. The idea was to use these as reserve vehicles during the visit and sell them immediately afterwards.<sup>24</sup> The demand for eight Land Rover station wagons justified the acquisition of the vehicles, which were later used to replace older vehicles at Woomera.<sup>25</sup> Two Humber Super Snipe sedans and a Pontiac Paurentian used in the Northern Territory (and notionally part of the South Australian establishment) were later sold to the Northern Territory Administration rather than freighted south.<sup>26</sup>

The 1963 Royal Visit was organised by a special unit within the Prime Minister's Department, with the Royal Visit Car Unit within the Stores and Transport Branch being responsible for the provision of Commonwealth cars, baggage vehicles and drivers, and procuring additional vehicles when required.



Competition among drivers to be included in the team was fierce and training was extensive and rigorous. Seventy-nine Royal tour drivers were chosen with another 43 reserve drivers and a team of mechanics with support from pool drivers in the states. The fleet of about 120 cars was divided into three groups, with particular groups being positioned in localities in anticipation of the arrival of the Queen and Duke. The Rolls Royces were carried by air in two RAAF Hercules aircraft, while a fleet of semi-trailers conveyed the other vehicles from one locality to another.

Care was exercised to appoint drivers from all states. Melbourne driver Doug Sibbison was one of those chosen as a member of the Royal Visit Car Unit. His commitment began on 16 February, when he travelled to Canberra for training, and continued until 31 March 1963. The demands of the tour took him from Melbourne to Canberra for training, then from Melbourne to Yass, Muswellbrook, Brisbane, Alice Springs, Perth, Kalgoorlie, Perth, Merredin, Kalgoorlie, Port Pirie, Adelaide, and finally returning to Melbourne. All travel was by road except that by air from Brisbane to Alice Springs and Perth, and returning from Kalgoorlie to Port Pirie.

All drivers appointed to a Royal Progress were trained in ceremonial driving, convoy procedure, radio telecommunications, radio call signs, vehicle maintenance and procedure, and administrative arrangements. They were also trained in protocol procedures. They learned that members of the Royal Family or the Royal Household travelled in a 'Royal Progress' rather than a motorcade. There would be painted crowns on a shield fixed to the front and rear bumpers in place of registration plates, that drivers were to ensure the plates were uncovered when the vehicle was being driven to or from a pick-up point, but covered whenever the Queen was in the vehicle when standards and shield would be fixed and displayed instead; the standards were not generally flown at night. They learned about driving so as to ensure the correct space between vehicles; and the need to be careful when door openers were provided for official functions; and that they ensured that door handles were in line with the openers when the vehicle stopped. The speed at which vehicles were to travel was determined by the visit co-ordinator in accordance with the wishes of the Queen, who liked to drive slowly past crowds gathered to welcome her.

There was particular emphasis on the correct wearing of the uniform, with a particular drill for the cap, when the Royal visitor was entering or leaving the vehicle:

The Royal Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Melbourne, 1963.  
The driver is B Callahan.



### (i) Entering a Car —

- (a) When the Royal Person/s approach the car, the driver will sit at attention with cap on.
- (b) As soon as the door opener opens the door for the entry of the Royal Person/s into the car, the driver will remove his cap with his right hand and hold it by the peak across his left breast.
- (c) When the Detective or Equerry travelling on the front seat next to the driver has taken his seat, the driver will place his cap on his head and drive off.

### (ii) Leaving a car —

- (a) On arrival at destination, the driver will bring the vehicle to a halt and immediately remove his cap carrying out the same drill as described in (b).
- (b) When the Royal Person/s alight from the car, the driver will replace his cap.

### (iii) Changing Cars —

- (a) When for any reason it is necessary for the Royal Person/s to change cars, the driver of the Royal car will carry out the procedure as in (ii) above.
- (b) Attention is drawn to separate instruction regarding changing cars. It is stressed that the driver of this car wears his cap when he leaves the car to remove the standard and cover Shields as appropriate.

- (c) The driver of the Reserve Royal car will carry out drill for display of insignia as shown in the instructions referred to in (b). It is stressed that this driver shall wear his cap when he leaves his vehicle to display insignia.
- (d) By the time the driver is again seated in his car, it is likely that the Royal Person/s will have already entered the vehicle. In this case, the driver does not remove his cap, but drives off. If however, the Royal person/s are not already in the vehicle, he removes his cap and carries out the same procedure set out in section (i) above.

### (iv) When the Anthem of any country is played —

- (a) any driver not seated in his vehicle will stand to attention and remove his cap and place it under his left arm at a position between shoulder and elbow with the peak nearest the body. At the completion of the Anthem the driver will replace his cap.
- (b) Any driver sitting in his vehicle will remove his cap with his right hand, hold it by the peak in a position over his left breast. At the completion of the Anthem, the driver will replace his cap.<sup>27</sup>



The Queen Mother, Queen Elizabeth, greeting drivers at Government House, Melbourne, 1966.

Light Transport Depot, 50 Murray Street, Perth, 1960.



Herbert Emerson 'Herb' Smith, the regular Sydney driver of the Governor-General and Prime Minister, had the privilege of chauffeuring the Queen while in Sydney. He had been a driver since 1942 and had previously driven the Duke of Edinburgh during the Olympic Games in Melbourne in 1956 and the Empire and Commonwealth Games in 1962. He had driven other royal visitors before, but never the Queen.<sup>28</sup> He shared this new distinction with three other drivers, two from Victoria and Max Bradford in South Australia.

Drivers welcomed the chance to drive royalty. Herb had become familiar with the Duke of Edinburgh during his earlier visits and treasured the gold tiepin given to him in 1956, and the set of gold cufflinks embossed with the Duke's personal monogram given to him on the occasion of the 1962 visit. He considered these to be on a par with his award of the British Empire Medal in 1958 for his services as a driver.<sup>29</sup>

The kudos associated with driving royalty compensated for the inconvenience of driving the royal vehicles, which were invariably uncomfortable to drive. They were heavy vehicles that took much effort to stop at a precise spot close to door-openers.

The department's Royal Visit Car Unit had been disbanded after each visit and the value of lessons learned and experience gained dissipated, except for advice contained in files. However, the increased number of distinguished visitors prompted the Department of Supply to establish a permanent consultative and coordinating Special Services Unit in 1964 to plan and supply car and coach transport along with baggage services for royalty, heads of state, heads of government, dignitaries and missions. The new unit coordinated nationally those transport functions that had previously been performed by those in the states. At one stage it employed 8-10 people.

The changing nature of special visits and the need for a dedicated unit became evident in 1966 when the Special Services Unit was called upon to meet special demands. These included 'Operation Fastbuck', the secret distribution of decimal coinage throughout Australia and the movement of the Gemini 10 space capsule. There was need to plan for another Royal Visit in 1966 when Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, returned to Australia, while other visits that year included that of the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Air Vice Marshall Ky and Madame Nguyen Cao Ky; and also a visit by the Duke of Edinburgh.<sup>30</sup> Soon after, there followed visits by the Crown Prince of Laos, the President of Malagasy (the first official visit by the Head of State of an African nation) and American astronauts Walter Schirra and Frank Borman.<sup>31</sup>

## Travel entitlements

Drivers looked forward to special visits but there always remained the need to serve a wide variety of regular clients. Key clients of the car-with-driver service in order of business generated were the Prime Minister's Department, then the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Trade, Defence, Navy, Treasury, Repatriation and the Bureau of Census and Statistics.

There remained, too, the need to serve Prime Minister Robert Menzies. He travelled in a Buick in 1958 and until at least 1961, when C\*1 was a Cadillac sedan. A black Bentley Saloon was acquired for the Prime Minister's use in October 1964, with similar vehicles maintained in Sydney and Melbourne. Though C\*1 was in Canberra and driven by Ray Coppin of the Department of the Interior, the car remained on hire to the Prime Minister's Department from the Department of Supply.

The policy of the Central Transport Authority was to provide transport costs at rates that would recover costs and provide a small surplus. In 1966-67 the mean daily demand for jobs in Melbourne had risen to 900, sometimes peaking in excess of 1000 per day.<sup>32</sup>



Motorcade, late 1950s, Western Australia.

Procedures and use of the Commonwealth car service had been long established with strict formulae having evolved by the 1960s. Unrestricted car privileges for the leader of the opposition in the House of Representatives were equivalent to those of a senior minister. Entitlements of the deputy opposition leader in the House of Representatives and the leader of the opposition in the Senate were akin to those of a junior minister, with almost unrestricted use but no specific car and driver. Wives of the leader and deputy leader of the opposition in the House of Representatives had the same entitlements as ministers' wives.<sup>33</sup>

However, entitlement to the car service continued to evolve. Senators and members of parliament had access to car transport while in Canberra on parliamentary business. But not until 15 September 1965 were they given access to car transport between their homes and the nearest airport or railway station at any time when travelling on parliamentary business. This extension of the entitlement eradicated some anomalies that had developed.

The policy prevailing until this change had been introduced in October 1951. This earlier decision permitted use of official cars between home and the nearest airport or railway station only when the journey was made before 8.00 am and after 8.00 pm, though this constraint did not apply to Western Australian senators and members, former ministers entitled to a Life Gold Pass or party whips; the exception for Western Australian senators and members had stood since 1946. However, senators and members soon learned that they could obviate the time constraints by arranging their travel to depart and arrive at times when they could avail themselves of the official cars.<sup>34</sup>

Even then the general use of official cars for transport between home and from airports and railway stations was limited to 50 miles, except with prior approval of the Prime Minister or Minister of the Interior.

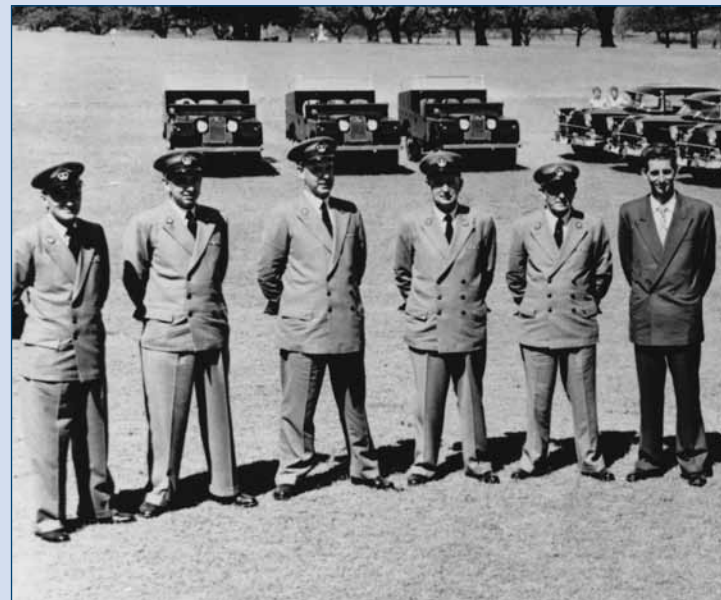


## End of innocence

Much of the drivers' work was routine; even special visits were anticipated and carefully planned. There were times, however, when issues could not be anticipated. Such an event occurred when Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell was shot while sitting in his Commonwealth car immediately after he attended an anti-Vietnam political meeting at Mosman in suburban Sydney on 21 June 1966. The shot from a sawn-off rifle, fired by factory hand Peter Raymond Kocan, shattered the window of the car and showered Calwell with glass, but fortunately for him, occasioned only minor injuries to his face, jaw and throat. He was saved because of his departure from his habit of winding down the window of the car to gain fresh air. Calwell was taken to Royal North Shore Hospital where he remained overnight. A detective accompanied him in his Commonwealth car and he had a police escort to Sydney Airport next day, as well as from Essendon Airport to his Ascot Vale home.<sup>35</sup>

Antagonisms generated by Australia's participation in the Vietnam War and the need for enhanced visitor security formed the background for the Australian visit of American President Lyndon Johnson in October 1966.

Johnson had made known his interest in making a goodwill visit to Australia and New Zealand as early as 1962 when Vice-President – along with an aircraft load of between 30 and 40 people. The Australian Government was somewhat embarrassed because of the size of the task of hosting such a visit on the dates proposed that did not take into account the work being undertaken to frame the budget. In the end the planning never proceeded.<sup>36</sup>



In the meantime, Vice-President Hubert Humphrey visited in February 1966 to explain to the Australian Government current decisions taken concerning the Vietnam War. The Humphrey visit was only the second visit of a serving United States' Vice-President and was considered by many to be the most imposing political mission ever to come to Australia. It certainly gave Australian drivers an insight into American expectations. It came as a surprise to Australians preparing for the visit that arrival and departure details remained unknown less than a week beforehand – and were announced only three days before Humphrey's arrival.<sup>37</sup> The Vice-President arrived in Canberra for a two-day visit on the evening of Friday 18 February amid the tightest security for any distinguished visitor up until that time; he departed for New Zealand on the following Sunday morning. Even so, Humphrey was the subject of a demonstration as he and Prime Minister Harold Holt left Parliament House after discussions on the Saturday morning.

The Humphrey experience meant that preparations for the Johnson visit, at the height of Australian opposition to the Vietnam War, proved a major challenge because of the need for high security and particular demands that differed greatly from the Royal Visits, which by now largely conformed to an established pattern. The first challenge was to respond to the announcement of the visit on 7 October, only 13 days before it was to occur, rather than have the luxury of several months of planning, as was the normal case with visits by heads of state. Details were not known until 9 October, when White House staff met with Sir John Bunting, Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department.

There was the need to cope with the sheer magnitude of the official party that was to arrive aboard a fleet of four aircraft. The President and immediate staff travelled on one aircraft; there were two aircraft for media and another for White House officials. A fifth aircraft, a massive Starlifter cargo plane, transported the President's armoured limousine and three other vehicles for his key staff. These had to be transported by Hercules C130 aircraft within Australia to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.



Royal Visit supervisor and drivers at  
Albert Park Barracks, 1959.

Though the President was accompanied by vehicles of his own, there was a need to relocate 125 vehicles from all parts of Australia to Canberra, together with 185 supervisors, drivers, baggage officers and maintenance crew. This represented the largest movement of vehicles and drivers undertaken by the Stores and Transport Branch up to this point.<sup>38</sup> The complete visit involved the coordination of 383 personnel by the Special Services Unit to manage the movement of 750 people and their 1200 pieces of luggage. The President was to spend only a short time in both Brisbane and Townsville – where he had visited during World War II – but there was a need for 87 drivers and 11 baggage loaders in Brisbane and 23 drivers in Townsville, with two Rolls Royces being flown to Townsville and other vehicles being hired for the visit.

Stores and Transport Branch General Manager Keith Bennett had overall charge of the operation, with Gerry Somers appointed Commonwealth Transport Officer and Kevin O'Brien as his assistant. The triumvirate established an office in Canberra on 11 October to oversee the arrangements. Bill Grey-Reitz was appointed to oversee arrangements in Canberra; John Doyle and Bob Sitch were responsible for those in Melbourne; Frank Freeman and John Griffiths having the task in Sydney; and Les Kerr, Mick Metcalf and John Boorman in Queensland. The short time frame meant that these officers worked long hours in association with Commonwealth and American authorities. Additional drivers had to be found from among heavy vehicle drivers, mechanics and storemen who had Commonwealth authorisation to drive; they were asked to wear dark trousers and provided with an issue tie and cap as the basis of a uniform.<sup>39</sup>

Special Services Unit staff also had to contend with some unusual requests, including the provision of two 'camera' trucks. These were conventional tray-top trucks with tiered platforms for media and camera crews that would travel immediately in front of the President's car. In addition, there was need for special radio equipment to be installed in some cars and a radio-link repeater van positioned in Canberra to permit radio-telephone access to Washington at all times.<sup>40</sup>

The visit began in Canberra with an official reception at RAAF base Fairbairn on the evening of 20 October 1966 – little more than a month before federal elections.

The conduct of the visit differed markedly from that of Royal Visits, with the President disdaining protocol and determined to greet as many in the waiting crowds as possible. His unpredictability became a headache for organisers responsible for the schedule, security staff responsible for his protection – and anti-Vietnam War demonstrators who waited to confront him. Soon after landing in Canberra and visiting Government House, Johnson departed from the schedule when he accepted Prime Minister Harold Holt's offer of dinner at the Lodge and did not arrive at the Hotel Rex, where he was to stay, until two hours after schedule.

He travelled to Melbourne on 21 October 1966 to be greeted by vast enthusiastic crowds – and protesters.



United States President Lyndon Johnson's motorcade at Government House, Melbourne, 1966.

## President Johnson's Melbourne motorcade

Driver	Car No.	Reg No.	Vehicle	Personnel
Police Motor Cycle Escort				
B Hogg (Pilot Car)	1	ZSF.218	Pontiac	Police Commissioner, State Police, State Transport Officer
I Sumner	2	ZSP.322	Inter Truck	US Secret Service, State Police, Cinecameramen at rear
M Stuart	3	ZSP.258	Inter Truck	US Secret Service, State Police Cinecameramen at rear
	4		Lincoln	President, Prime Minister Premier, American Ambassador
	5		Cadillac	US Secret Service, Medical Officer
C Hogg	6	ZSF.422	Pontiac Press Car	Mr Moyes + 3 Press Representatives
	7		Cadillac	Mrs Johnson, Mrs Holt, Lady Bolte, Mrs Clarke
B Callahan	8	ZSF.266	Pontiac	Security Car, US Secret Service Police
D Sibbison	9	ZSF.423	Pontiac	Mr & Mrs Waller, Mr Coulthard, Ambassador Symington
S Cochrane	10	ZSF.418	Humber Press Car	Australian/American Pool Press
G Putney	11	ZSF.419	Humber Press Car	Australian/American Pool Press
C Trinnick	12	ZSF.219	Pontiac	Mr Watson, Mr Scholtens Mr Carter, Mr Jennings
	13		Consul General's Car	Mr Eggleston, Mr & Mrs Wieland
	14		25 Passenger Bus	Presidential Staff
	15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20		Buses	Press party
C Tanner	21	ZSF.134	Pontiac	Spare Car (RJ Sitch)
Police Motor Cycle Escort				



The Melbourne visit was marred by a demonstrator throwing two plastic bags of paint at the President's car that covered the roof and windscreen, causing the motorcade to stop while the windscreen was cleaned. The President returned to Canberra that evening while the car was completely repainted. It was rushed to the Ford plant at Broadmeadows, where staff believed it easier to strip the car down and repaint it rather than retouch the painted areas. The job was completed in little more than an hour and the car flown to Sydney by the United States Air Force Starlifter aircraft ready for the President's arrival next day.<sup>41</sup>

Johnson's visit to Sydney proved to be another challenging occasion. However the President remained unfazed by the demonstrators who were a constant source of concern for his security staff. A helicopter flying overhead warning staff of potential trouble spots where anti-war demonstrators were concentrated on his motorcade route – and the experiences of the day before in Melbourne – convinced his security detail of the need to depart from the scheduled route to avoid demonstrators near the University of New South Wales, and to speed through parts of the city.

Many of the vast crowd that lined his route, and dignitaries who had gathered in front of the Town Hall, were disappointed to see nothing but the flash of his car as it sped past; though it stopped six or seven times when security staff considered it safe for Johnson to greet well-wishers. There was concern on one occasion when streamers blocked the radiator and caused the air-conditioning to malfunction. Staff called up the reserve car, a Pontiac from the Commonwealth car pool driven by John Dunning, and the President completed his journey in that vehicle. Soon afterwards, the passage of this vehicle was blocked at the corner of Oxford and College Streets, where several protesters lay down on the road blocking the motorcade. Others did so in Liverpool Street, prompting Premier Robin Askin to tell the driver to "run over the bastards".<sup>42</sup>

Johnson returned to Canberra from Sydney to attend a barbeque at Lanyon Station. Later that evening he flew to Brisbane and next day to Townsville, where he had visited in 1942. This called for some hasty organisation:

The Townsville visit was originally scheduled in the President's itinerary as a 'technical stop' (for aircraft refuelling purposes).

This was suddenly turned into a full-scale visit, when the President – while still in Canberra – decided to attend Divine Service at Townsville.

Three Humber sedans and two camera trucks with drivers were sent by road from Brisbane; and additional cars required were obtained locally.

The goodwill of Townsville people was demonstrated by Mr. C. Williams, of Austral Motors, who made his own Dodge Phoenix car available and provided another new similar car from his showroom plus five Valiants – all free.

In addition, two members of his staff drove the Dodge cars gratis. Similar generosity was experienced from Avis Rent-a-Cars (one car).

The CMF [Citizens' Military Force] at Townsville provided voluntary drivers for the five Valiant sedans.

Bill Peel (Brisbane) was in charge of this operation. Much of the success in Townsville was due to his organising ability.<sup>43</sup>

Here President Johnson's Australian visit concluded and he departed for Manila in the Philippines.

Jack Canny had been involved in the Melbourne motorcade, driving for the President's press liaison officer. He recalled long hours and considerable stress driving amid vocal demonstrators. He recalled, "You just keep driving, keep the windows up and the doors locked". He recalled having to change wheels on 'one or two' occasions after they had been let down by demonstrators.<sup>44</sup>

The challenge of the 1966 Johnson visit stood the Special Service Unit in good stead when it had to prepare for the memorial service for Prime Minister Harold Holt, following his loss in the surf off Portsea while swimming on 19 December 1967. Acting Prime Minister John McEwen announced that a memorial service would be held at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, only three days later. The departmental magazine recorded:

*It is history now that among the overseas visitors were Prince Charles, Prime Minister Wilson, President Johnson, President Park Chung Hee (South Korea), President Marcos (Philippines) and President Nguyen Van Thieu (South Vietnam).*

*It is perhaps not so well known that the four presidents were accompanied by staffs totalling 398, 48, 22 and 10 people respectively.<sup>45</sup>*

Branch officers acted as transport liaison officers to meet delegations from 26 nations, most of whom arrived in Sydney and visited Canberra before proceeding to Melbourne. Arrangements had to be made for their transport and that of their baggage. On the day of the service there was also the need to provide transport for Mrs Holt and members of the family, the Governor-General, federal ministers, members of parliament and other official guests.

The first major challenge was providing transport for all guests. Twenty-five Stores and Transport drivers and vehicles travelled from South Australia. There were eight drivers and cars from Sydney, with 50 drivers and cars from Sydney transferred to Canberra to release drivers and cars from there for the occasion. The Victorian branch pressed into service many heavy fleet drivers using the self-drive fleet and hire cars; two heavy drivers acted as door openers at the cathedral. Ultimately, as many as 245 Commonwealth cars and 253 drivers and staff were required for the operation. There was also the need to marshal and dispatch vehicles and arrange for arrival and departure of passengers at the cathedral within a limited time frame and in order of precedence.

The list of foreign dignitaries attending the Holt Memorial Service highlighted Australia's changing role in the region and the world. Successive visits of guests of government reinforced this sense of change. South Korea's President Park Chung Hee visited Australia from 16 to 19 September 1968. His was the fourth state visit to Australia since that of President Johnson, and the fifteenth arranged by the Special Services Unit of the Stores and Transport Branch.

The branch managed the visit, though Canberra was its main focus and the Department of the Interior provided ministerial and public service transport. Thirty-two drivers and vehicles were sourced from Melbourne and eight drivers and vehicles from Adelaide on the occasion of the visit. They were based at the branch depot in Kingston while in Canberra and moved off from there on 16 September to proceed to the RAAF Base at Fairbairn to meet the presidential party. Fred Farrar from Victoria and Ray O'Toole from South Australia drove the President while in Canberra.



## Relocation

The Department of Supply had been responsible for relocating many departments and their personnel to Canberra. It became the turn of the department to relocate its head office to the national capital in the late 1960s in accordance with government wishes.

Robert Menzies, Australia's Prime Minister from 19 December 1949 until 20 January 1966, had long been concerned at the lack of enthusiasm of parliamentarians for Canberra and the reluctance of public servants to transfer to the bush capital. In 1957 he insisted on centralising departments in Canberra to ensure its physical development. The relocation of defence personnel from Melbourne to Canberra began in 1959 and continued until 1963, when attention turned to other departments. It became the turn of the Department of Supply in 1967, with the central office elements including the Stores and Transport Branch scheduled to relocate to Canberra in January 1969. The new central office was located in the Anzac Park West Building on Constitution Avenue at Parkes, where the Stores and Transport Branch formed part of the Planning and Procurement Division.

The relocation caused something of a crisis within management and administration of the Department of Supply, with many senior officers comfortably settled in Melbourne and preferring to retire rather than move to Canberra. There was no appreciable effect on day-to-day operations of the car-with-driver operations within the capital or the states, but the relocation highlighted the anomaly of two virtually independent services. It was an issue to be resolved.



Cars and drivers outside St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne.





From left:

Flooded road outside the McLachlan Street depot, Brisbane.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip greeting children at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, 1963.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip departing Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, Camperdown, 1963. Their driver is Herb Smith.