



SEVEN

CHANGE OF DIRECTION:

1976–1982



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The return of a coalition government on 13 December 1975 promised to hasten change within departments. This was so primarily because of the new government's avowed policy of smaller government enterprise and a preference for use of contract rather than in-house services. At the opening of the new parliament on 17 February 1976, the Governor-General indicated that the government had appointed an Administrative Review Committee to review administrative expenditure, achieve maximum administrative efficiency, and eliminate waste and duplication within and between Government departments. The new efficiency drive certainly had an effect on the provision of car-with-driver services. The most recent intake of new drivers in Sydney had been in February 1975; there was to be no new recruitment generally until May 1984.

There had already occurred several administrative changes in the last year of the Whitlam Government. The Stores and Transport Division of the Department of Manufacturing Industry became the Transport and Storage Division of the Department of Services and Property in July 1975 and, in October 1975, with the addition of Purchasing and Policy functions, became the Transport and Stores Division of a new Department of Administrative Services. Additional functions were transferred to the new department under a new Administrative Arrangements Order announced by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser on 22 December 1975.¹

Though administratively part of the new Department of Administrative Services, the amalgamation of the state and territory functions of the Transport and Stores Division was postponed, pending the report of the Inter-departmental

Committee on Motor Transport. Finally, in October 1976, the government accepted the inter-departmental committee's recommendation and created a single central transport authority. This move merged the storage and transport functions in the Australian Capital Territory with those of the states and formed the basis of the modern Commonwealth car service.

At this time, the Commonwealth car fleet remained part of the Transport and Storage Division that had broader responsibilities than that of car-with-driver services. These included goods transport services and the acquiring and disposal of all motor vehicles for all departments except the Departments of Housing and Construction, and Aviation, which had their own specialised fleets. RWB Davies became the First Assistant Secretary with responsibility for the Transport and Stores Division within the department.

The new arrangements had an immediate effect on the rationalisation of union issues. Previously drivers in the states and the Australian Capital Territory, though members of the same union, were covered by different awards with different conditions. This created issues when interstate drivers were required in Canberra. And there were always issues when a minister sought to have a Canberra driver work in the states.

The new arrangements took time to wash through the division, though most changes were experienced in Canberra, where new radio control procedures were introduced along with a new telephone queueing system for transport bookings. There was also a measure of economy taken when 20 car drivers returned to driving buses, though as before, with

stints driving cars when available and required. Those drivers, previously part of the Department of the Capital Territory, were considered to be senior to those from the former Department of Supply following union negotiations that accompanied the amalgamation. Consequently, Hank Jensen, who began driving Canberra buses in 1973 was considered to have a more senior position than Ivan Sako, who had become a truck driver in Canberra with the Department of Supply in 1967.

Later, in 1978, the Australian Capital Territory Branch received 512 passenger vehicles from the Department of the Capital Territory that had formed part of the ACT self-drive fleet. Soon afterwards, most functions of the Transport and Stores Division in Canberra were consolidated at a new depot established at Fyshwick. This included the passenger car fleet that transferred there from the long-time Kingston depot, along with administration, overseas packing, workshops and auction functions.² The new administrative arrangements had no immediate effect on transport operations in the states.

At this time(1978) the Central Transport Authority operated a fleet of 6400 powered vehicles nationally, 4400 of them being passenger vehicles; there were 519 passenger drivers throughout Australia.³



From top:

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Melbourne, 1977.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip at Morphettville Racecourse, Adelaide, 10.11.1981.



Princess Dianna and Prince Charles with drivers at Government House, Melbourne, 1983.



Visit of
Vice-President
George Bush to the
Australian
War Memorial,
Canberra, 30.4.1982.

Right of the Prime Minister

The allocation of a Commonwealth car-with-driver had long been accepted as one of the rights of office, though one also constrained by tradition and tempered by the idea that any party in government would be in opposition sooner or later. So, in 1976, cars-with-drivers were allocated to the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, to ministers, the President of the Senate, the Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the Opposition Leader in the Senate, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives, and the Leader of the Country Party. The Prime Minister also approved the allocation of cars-with-drivers to former Prime Ministers Sir Robert Menzies, Sir John McEwen, John C Gorton, and William McMahon, along with the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia. Each of these was entitled to the allocation of a dedicated car-with-driver for self and spouse in the state of residence and unrestricted temporary allocation of a car-with-driver when interstate.⁴

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, the Leader of the Country Party in the Senate and the Leader of the more recently formed Australian Democratic Party had use of an official car in capital cities when travelling in connection with official duties, but were not allocated dedicated drivers.

The Prime Minister and the Minister for Services and Property might approve entitlements to cars-with-drivers, but did not have the exclusive say on the appointment of drivers, at least within the Australian Capital Territory. These were to be drawn from a short-list of the most senior drivers available. Prime Minister Fraser chose N Hansen as his regular driver in Canberra with Max Blumenthal as his relief driver.

Gough Whitlam's staff caused something of an issue that highlighted entrenched attitudes concerning seniority when a member asked if the former Prime Minister's dedicated driver, Bob Miller, originally from Sydney, could remain in the same role in Canberra as dedicated driver for Whitlam, now Leader of the Opposition. This would have created a precedent – at two levels. The Leader of the Opposition had not been allocated a dedicated driver in the past, and former prime ministers had been allocated a car and dedicated driver only in their state of residence. Moreover, departmental officers doubted that Miller's position would be acceptable to the union. LI Crowe of the Special Transport Group indicated:

In view of this Department's written agreement with the TWU to the effect that such appointments will be made internally on a seniority basis from TWU (Canberra Branch) members I sought a reaction from the TWU Executive stressing that the representation was being made on behalf of Mr Whitlam. Mr Carpenter is adamant that the Union would not accept any departure from established custom and practice for Mr Whitlam or any other Parliamentarian.⁵

Carpenter's response had been unequivocal:

I am not at liberty to make an exemption for Mr. Miller to enter the work force other than by the long standing practice of application for a position when a position was vacant, and that is, to become a bus driver, then by application and seniority to any other vacant position.⁶

Assistant Director HJ Tankey was not surprised by the decision and advised his Director:

The Union have been consistently 'solid' on the seniority issue and have 'gone to court' on several occasions with a history of successful decisions. Within the Union ranks memories are 'long' and the issue, if it is permitted to emerge, would be 'taken on' with confidence.

I can see no ground on which an officer of the Department could be expected to argue a case against the seniority concept. There was an area of discontent in the ranks when the former PM's driver was 'brought in' from Sydney and the representations now being considered would stir embers anew particularly as the new PM has been 'Trialling' a number of drivers from this Section. This has been an acceptance of Union standards and, although it may not have been deliberately intended to do so, has been a good exercise in Industrial relations.⁷

Doug Anthony, Deputy Prime Minister following the change of government, sought Max Blumenthal as his dedicated driver in Canberra. The department was happy to acquiesce, but only in accordance with established procedures. JH Marshall, First Assistant Secretary of the Transport and Traffic Special Group indicated:

The conditions of employment for car drivers provide for the advertising of such vacancies as open to Interstate (Ministerial) drivers and the recognition of the individual seniority of applicants ...

Mr Anthony has been provided with the car service since 27.1.76 but the driver has been changed each week because, until the selection is finalised, this type of prestige work is distributed as equally as possible between all Ministerial drivers ...

I feel sure the Deputy Prime Minister understands the basis of the selection process and is satisfied that all ministerial drivers have the capacity and application to meet the demands of the position.⁸

In the event, there were 11 applicants for the position with A Staples, whose seniority dated from 26 February 1948, being appointed to the position. Blumenthal was next most senior with his seniority dating from 30 October 1949. Blumenthal was selected as the Prime Minister's reserve driver.

Later that year, in October 1976, the Prime Minister approved a special rate of pay to be applied in all states and the Australian Capital Territory to be paid on any day that drivers worked for the Prime Minister or members of his family; any driver qualifying for part of the day was to be paid for the full day.⁹

As Miller's predicament indicated, the issue of seniority loomed large, but was essentially a local issue. Kevin Mahoney in Brisbane had joined the Stores and Transport Division of the Department of Supply and worked for a time in an Army depot before transferring to Sydney as a motor mechanic in 1962. While working at the Army depot he had met many drivers and had been persuaded to apply for a driving position. He was successful in 1975 and began his career with the car-with-driver service in Sydney. He transferred back to Brisbane in 1979, but was put on the bottom of the seniority list; his time in the public service and his driving in Sydney counted for nought.

Outside influences

Outside influences still impacted on Commonwealth agencies, with government policy urging spending restraint and a reduction in employee numbers. In accordance with this policy, the government initiated a Review of Commonwealth Functions by a committee chaired by Sir Phillip Lynch and appointed in November 1980. The committee was charged with identifying those functions that are:

- (a) not necessary functions of Government and/or might more appropriately be performed by the private sector
- (b) duplicate functions of state authorities and/or might more appropriately be performed by state authorities
- (c) duplicate or in other ways duplicate or overlap with functions of other Commonwealth authorities, or
- (d) do not provide sufficient benefits to justify the expense.

The Review of Commonwealth Functions' recommendations, handed down in April 1981, encompassed all of the Australian Public Service and urged a total reduction in its strength of 17,000 and a significant reduction in the size of the wages employee workforce, which encompassed drivers.

The policies of successive Fraser governments raised the spectre of significant change within the Commonwealth car service. Government directives and enquiries certainly promised – or threatened – change, but delivered little in the short term, largely because of the relative strength of the TWU, which resisted change.

Transport & Storage

Throughout this period, the car-with-driver service remained a large part of the Transport Section of the Transport and Storage Division of the department. In 1980-81 it operated a fleet of 5020 vehicles, though this included self-drive passenger vehicles as well as chauffeur-driven vehicles, with passenger vehicles being available for weekly hire by departments. In addition, the group was also responsible for acquiring and maintaining vehicles used by the Australian Federal Police, which included 520 police cars in 1980-81.¹⁰

Demands on the car-with-driver service remained high. Indeed, they were so great that only 39 per cent of the 980,000 car-with-driver jobs were performed by Commonwealth drivers, with the remainder having to be performed by commercially-operated vehicles under contract. The group's transport section was also a complex one that had its own workshops which employed 199 tradesmen and 56 apprentices.

Widows of returned servicemen also received services from the Repatriation Department.



The Commonwealth light transport service also provided coach transport for clients of the Repatriation Department.



Drivers provided every assistance to clients of the Repatriation Department.



End of innocence

The car-with-driver service remained associated with milestones and key trends in Australia's history. Australian society had long been an open one, with political divisions and issues largely being resolved at the ballot-box. Many believed this changed in the late 1970s when dissidents detonated a bomb at a Sydney hotel hosting a Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting. The incident highlighted the need for greater security for dignitaries and led to changes in the car-with-driver service.

Eleven foreign heads of government attended this meeting under tight security at Sydney's Hilton Hotel on 13 and 14 February 1978. The Commonwealth car service was closely involved in providing ground transport and baggage services for delegates. An office was established in the hotel and staffed 24 hours per day to handle requests for transport and provide a radio base for transport control.

Despite the heavy security, a bomb concealed in a garbage can exploded in the early morning of 13 February as the can was being emptied into a garbage truck. The blast killed a garbage collector and a policeman on duty guarding the hotel entrance; several drivers were in the underground car park and heard the blast.

Delegates were due to go to the Berida Manor guest house at Bowral in the New South Wales Southern Highlands on 14 February, returning to Sydney for the final formal meeting on the afternoon of 16 February 1978. Prime Minister Fraser called for Army protection of delegates as the meeting transferred to Bowral. The delegates were taken to Victoria Barracks in Sydney, from where they were flown by helicopter to the Bowral golf course and then taken to their new venue. The heads of government travelled south by special train, with the Commonwealth cars travelling in convoy with a police escort and air protection from Iroquois helicopters.

Increased security became an issue. Consequently, the government acquired two 1978 Mercedes 450 SEL saloons – ZSS 358 and C* 527 – that were protected using conventional steel protection for solid armour and laminated glass as transparent armour. Later, two partially armoured 1985 LTD Sedans – C*526 and C*199 – were acquired that were capable of repelling multi-hit medium-power small arms fire at 10 metres.

The protected vehicles were for use of overseas guests of the government when there was a threat assessment advised by the Protective Services Co-ordination Centre of the Department of the Special Minister of State, and endorsed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, or when specifically requested by the overseas guest. The cars were driven by Commonwealth drivers specifically trained in their use.¹¹ All drivers in the Australian Capital Territory had undergone training on basic VIP Driving, which included defensive driving, skid control, motorcade skills and techniques, but senior drivers had also been trained in anti-terrorist driving techniques. This included advanced vehicle control, barrier evasion and simple bomb search detection.¹² The additional training was necessary because the weight of the protected vehicles, up to 2.6 tonnes in the case of the Mercedes, meant they handled poorly, especially around corners.¹³



CHOGM 1981

The provision of vehicles and services for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne in October 1981 provided another major challenge. The need to provide services for leaders representing 41 Commonwealth countries and as many as 2000 other delegates required a fleet of 443 vehicles and relocation and accommodation of drivers from other states.

The meeting was a significant one that obviously brought kudos to the government. Moreover, it was to be held amidst the tightest security measures ever taken in Melbourne, with as many as 4000 police and security guards to maintain order within the city centre.

The significance of the occasion provided the opportunity for the TWU to flex its muscle and press its case for air-conditioning in all cars. Only ministerial and parliamentary vehicles had air-conditioning at this time. This meant that drivers and clients such as those of the Department of Veterans' Affairs – established on 5 October 1976 after abolition of the Repatriation Department – suffered from uncomfortable conditions during summer. The drivers threatened strike action only weeks before the meeting unless air-conditioning was installed in all cars. Their request was granted.¹⁴

In other respects the meeting went as planned. It opened on 30 September 1981 at the Melbourne Town Hall and continued until 7 October, with the business sessions being held in the Royal Exhibition Building. Queen Elizabeth, Head of the Commonwealth, had arrived in Melbourne on 26 September and lived aboard the Royal yacht *Brittania*, which had arrived in port on 23 September.

The exercise was complicated by the need to relocate leaders to the weekend retreat in Canberra from 2 to 4 October where they stayed at the Lakeside Hotel. However, it passed without incident. Excursions were organised for delegates and their spouses during the weekend. Delegates visited Government House on Saturday morning, with the spouses being taken for a bus tour of Canberra, with all attending an informal dinner given at The Lodge on Saturday night. There was a visit to John Gale's pastoral property, 'Huntly' on the Uriarra Road, on Sunday to witness the mustering of a flock of sheep.¹⁵

Prince Charles being received at the Sydney Town Hall, April 1981.

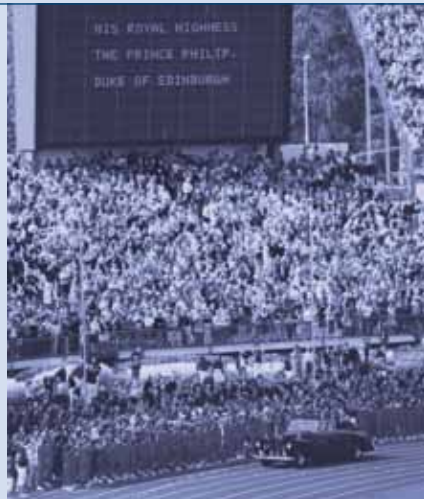
Part of the motorcade at QE II Stadium, Brisbane, at the time of the Commonwealth Games, 30.9.1982.



1982 Commonwealth Games

Provision of services for royalty and other dignitaries attending the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane from 30 September 1982 provided another challenge for those responsible for Special Services. This was the most significant event after the occasional Royal tours and provided a great boost to the service in Brisbane. Kevin Mahoney had noticed that cars in Brisbane were generally older than those in Sydney and were driven for longer periods; this changed with a fleet of new cars being acquired for the occasion. Moreover, in contrast to what had happened in earlier Royal tours, local drivers rather than those from interstate filled the choice driver positions.

Arrival of the Duke of Edinburgh at the QEII Stadium, Brisbane, during the Commonwealth Games, 30.9.1982.



Queen Elizabeth arriving at the Commonwealth Games, Brisbane, 30.9.1982.

Jack Gray, Manager of the Queensland Branch of the Transport and Stores Division, had management responsibility with assistance from Reg Pawle – Commonwealth Transport Officer from Canberra. The total team included 33 supervisors, with 17 from Queensland, five from Canberra, three from South Australia, three from Victoria, two from New South Wales and one from Western Australia. There were 33 Queensland drivers and 74 from interstate. The latter included 16 from Victoria, 35 from New South Wales, 10 from South Australia, three from Tasmania and 10 from the Australian Capital Territory. Jack Gray outlined the challenge to drivers appointed to take part:

The demand for transport between 29/9/82 and 10/10/82 is expected to be very heavy and it will be far beyond what the Queensland branch could meet with its own fleet. In this period, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, will travel extensively in Brisbane and in country areas and Her Majesty The Queen will be present for over three days and culminate her visit by closing the Commonwealth Games. The Games themselves will be staged from 30/9 – 9/10 and while indications are that few overseas Heads of State will attend, it has been confirmed that the many dignitaries entitled to use Commonwealth transport will include our Governor-General and Prime Minister and their wives, most of the Federal Ministry, a Cabinet Meeting on 5/10, and a growing number of overseas Ministers who are associated with their countries' athletic endeavours. In addition, the full range of our normal transport services will need to be provided ...



He went on to elaborate on provisions made for visiting drivers:

You are being accommodated at the Hacienda Motel, Hamilton Riverview Motel, or Raceways Motel in the Hamilton area close to our Operating Depot at Eagle Farm, or at the Gum Trees Motel at Aspley which is about 20 minutes from that depot ... the facilities allocated to us are reasonable. Accommodation will be on an 'all found' basis with payment of an Incidental Allowance.

Unfortunately, our normal Operating Depot at McLachlan Street would not accommodate the increased number of drivers and Supervisors. We have therefore set up for the period a second Depot at Eagle Farm and the Royal Visit and Commonwealth Games operations will be based there. While this second Depot will have all the necessary facilities for Supervisors and drivers, vehicle refuelling and major cleaning will be done at McLachlan Street. Both Depots will operate 24 hours each day, 7 days per week for the period.

State Branches providing cars for use during this operation will charge Queensland Branch on a Hire 6 basis for the period they are used. Any costs associated with transporting the vehicles to or from Queensland are recoverable direct for the Special Services Unit.¹⁶

The time in Brisbane was certainly a change for those Canberra drivers who were asked to undertake the 'Hire 5' work for the Department of Veterans' Affairs. They were unused to this type of work and the long distances that it often required but generally appreciated the change.

Driving royalty remained the highlight for many, if not most drivers, with only the most senior drivers being appointed to drive the Queen. Mick Broadbridge, however, had the distinction of being driven by Royalty during the occasion of the visit of Prince Charles to Australia in 1981. Mick recounted the story:

He (Prince Charles) had just flown in at Richmond RAAF Base and was on his way to a polo game at Warwick Farm ... He met a lot of the RAAF officers and their wives and then came over to the car.

He said hello to me and then said he would like to drive and asked if there would be any problem.

He said he didn't want to cause me any industrial trouble.

I said I didn't mind and that I'd never ridden in the back of an LTD, let alone being driven by royalty.

Prince Charles said "Let's do it."

There was a photo taken and there's Charlie in the front and Mick in the back.¹⁷

Who was Mick to argue with Royalty?

Just as importantly, drivers were in no position to argue with a government when it decided that changes must be made to the passenger car service. The decisions of the new Labor Government, which came to power in early 1983, proved to be more far-reaching than those of its predecessor.



Prince Charles at the wheel of a Commonwealth car at the RAAF air base, Richmond, 26.4.1981. Driver Mick Broadbridge is in the rear seat.