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Fares Please! Retired Transport Workers' Oral History Project

Interview with Darryl Peckham Biographical Notes and Timed Summary

Background

Darryl was born at the Canberra Hospital 15 December 1950 when his parents were living in Campbell Street Queanbeyan. The family moved into a government house in O'Connor in Canberra in 1953. Darryl lived in this house on the corner of Miller Street and Boronia Drive until he married and went to live in Giralang in 1976. He went to school at Turner and Lyneham primaries and Lyneham High School where he completed his Higher School Certificate.

Darryl's career in Transport started with his acceptance as an apprentice mechanic at the Kingston depot in 1968. In 1971 he qualified as a motor mechanic and in 1976 became a leading hand mechanic. In 1980 he was promoted to senior motor mechanic at the Woden depot. During the 1980s he acted on higher duties in various positions including traffic officer, outside trade officer and workshop foreman. In 1990 he was appointed as workshop foreman at the Belconnen depot. Over these years, while Darryl's substantive positions were attached to one depot or another, he worked for blocks of time at all Transport's depots and workshops. He retired from his position at Belconnen in 1998 and since then has worked as a driving instructor.

Training has played a large part in Darryl's career from the time he was given an apprentice six months out from the completion of his own apprenticeship.

Darryl's work history at what is now ACTION coincides with the consolidation of the expansion of Canberra around the Woden and Belconnen Town Centres, the completion of the transfer of the federal public service to Canberra and changes in the management of Canberra including self-government in




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1989. When Darryl joined Transport in 1968, it was part of the Commonwealth Department of the Interior. During the 1970s under the Department of Territories (and its various forms), Transport became ACTION and a number of its earlier functions such as cars and trucks became separate entities. At the same time new depots were opened in response to Canberra's growth. Darryl's story reflects these developments. It also reflects the impact of changing technology and government management styles over the period.

The interview was conducted at the Retired ACT Transport Employees club rooms in Campbell.

Summary of positions

19/2/1968 Apprentice mechanic Kingston

14/10/1971 Motor Mechanic Kingston/Fyshwick

8/1976 Leading Hand Mechanic Kingston

8/1980 Senior Motor Mechanic Woden

1980s Acted on higher duties as Traffic Officer, Outside Trade Officer, Workshop Foreman

12/1990 Workshop Foreman Belconnen

Interview Summary

Track 1 (CD 1)	0:32:48
0:0:03	Introduction. Early years; Queanbeyan and move to O'Connor. Parents' background in Sydney and country New South Wales. Schooling. Decision to apply for apprenticeship with Department of Interior and selection as one of two mechanical apprentices for the year. Interest in mechanics.
0:05:08	Process of getting apprenticeship. Description of environment at Kingston depot at the time. Memories of interview and interviewers. Letter of acceptance.
0:10:05	Apprenticeship requirements and progress through these. First pay packet. Extra jobs to save money. First day at work. Memories of the work culture and strict regime, memories of particular individuals- Bert Robinson and Bill Burton.
0:15:05	Meeting first mechanic as apprentice – Mick Praznak. Difference between 'the floor' and 'the hierarchy'. Respect and discipline. Different sections of the mechanics workshop – moving through these as an apprentice.
0:20:05	Memories of apprenticeship in the machine shop with fitter Bob Hutchison. Jack



	Mitchell. Excellent tradesmen of the old school. Old skills including diagnostics – without the help of electronics. The learning environment of the workshop. Approximate number of tradesmen and apprentices at the time.
0:25:35	The culture of a big workforce. Growing confidence in the work environment. Own apprentice after qualified for six months.
0:28:38	Daily routine while apprentice. Delivery of the pays; pay envelopes, manual calculations, Leo Morrissey. Union membership; not allowed to join as apprentice, compulsory when qualified, first union Australian Society of Engineers.
0:32:48	END
Track 2 (CD 1)	0:31:49
0:00:00	Work culture and enjoyment of apprenticeship and early years as a qualified mechanic. Experience of Boys Brigade at school as good background for the work culture at Transport. Completion of apprenticeship October 1971.
0:04: 45	Range of mechanics' work when qualified included cars – and the police unit motorbikes. Depots at Woden and Belconnen and Kingston's satellite depot at Fyshwick. Loss of Commonwealth cars, the police unit and eventually trucks and fleet cars. Work at Fyshwick on trucks and on police motorbikes in Civic and Lonsdale Street. Return to Kingston as leading hand. Promotional steps for mechanic from industrial to public service stream.
0:10:21	Moves around depots on higher duties while appointed to Woden as senior motor mechanic. Preparation for Foreman position. Belconnen appointment. (For clarification of this discussion see summary of positions.)
0:15:04	System of permanent positions and higher duty vacancies providing experience. Work culture at each depot. Settling at Belconnen after moving around depots – a means of acquiring all-round trade skills.
0:20:08	Value of moving around workplaces. Opening of Tuggeranong depot. 1980s a settling period for ACTION
0:24:23	Management changes of 1990s; cutting people to cut costs. Impact of budget reductions on workforce. Impact of these changes on decision to leave
0:31:49	END
Track 3 (CD2)	0:31:19
0:00:00	(Discussion of time available for interview) Changing work practices; introduction of additional shift and issues for individual work. Changes in brand of bus. Technical changes.
0:04:50	Keeping up with changing technology – eg Anti-locking Braking Systems. Increased safety and issues of more sophisticated systems.
0:09:38	Resolution of disputes. Union issues. Workplace agreements replacing union negotiated wages. Union membership. Women in the workshop.
0:15:01	Male dominated nature of the Workshop. First female bus drivers. Issues for women in heavy mechanical work. Issues when women bus drivers started. Impact of women





	on work culture.
0:20:00	'league of nations' composition of the workforce. Management in this context. Management skills.
0:24:34	Reflection on working for Transport – 30 years of fun. Highlights for a sceptic – story of testing ABS brakes.
0:30:10	New career as driving instructor continues interest in training.
0:31:19	END



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