

# The CRB Family

I Matriculated in 1966 with honours and was certain to win a Commonwealth University Scholarship, but the income from this scholarship would not have sufficed to support me through university. So, I applied for a job with the Commonwealth Bank and started training to become a Teller.

I also applied for a few Cadetships with State Government Departments and when I was offered a Cadetship with the CRB, I was able to go to university.



Tom Russell was on my interview panel for the Cadetship and I remember the main question he asked: "do you play sport". I was very nervous and mumbled "a bit of footy". He nicely filled in a bit more by saying "you'd be a nippy rover".



The 1972 Board Members: Chairman Mr R E V Donaldson, Mr J D (Jack) Thorpe and Mr T H (Tom) Russell.



Jim Morse

The CRB provided me with some wonderful vacation work experience. The first was in Ballarat Division. Jim Morse picked me up at the train station on my arrival (I had never previously been to Ballarat) and later the Divisional Engineer, Ted Oppy, invited me to lunch with his family. I was so nervous and unable to make conversation, but the Oppy family was so friendly and supportive I have never forgotten them. This was my first hint that I was about to become part of the greater CRB Family.



Ted Oppy

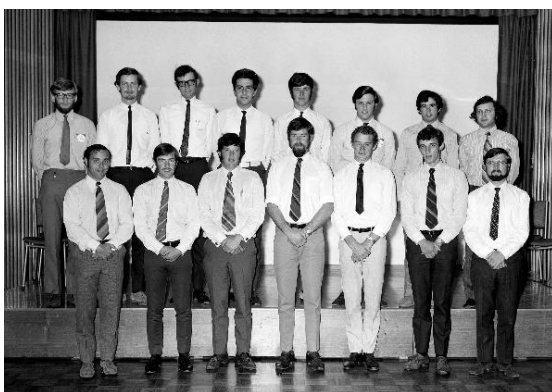
The second vacation experience was with a team surveying a new route over the Baw Baw plateau. It was exhilarating to work on top of the mountains after months of study for exams. Pushing through the mountain scrub wore out the knees of my trousers within a couple of weeks.

The third vacation experience was on the Separation St Project in Geelong. David Berry was the Project Engineer and I assisted the mud doctor George Zirka (think that's the spelling) and others. I really enjoyed my vacation experience working at various locations with many different people.



David Berry in the 1990s

I was inducted into the CRB in 1970. The following photo shows the other graduates I was inducted with. The second photo shows some of the senior engineers of the time.



CRB Inductees 1970

L-R, Rear: Brian Weinberg, ?, Rodney Troutbeck, Peter Dobos, ?, Anthony Aiello, ?, I Leszczynski.  
Front: Neil Aplin, David Jones, David Chipperfield, ?, Max Ervin, Trevor Miller, Nick Szwed.



L-R: Bob Morrison, Les Kovacs, Andrew Noble, Dick Coulter, Harry Townley, Neil Guerin, Mac Wilkinson, Robin Underwood, Max McPherson

Two people I remember well during these early years were the head of Training, Bob Billinge (on left), a very encouraging and kind person and one of his assistants, George Wittingslow (on right). George stands out in my memory because one day he had to take a few of us trainees from Kew to Ringwood in a hurry and I had never experienced driving like his before.



On completion of my studies in 1972 I started full time work in the Traffic Engineering Division (TED) of the CRB in Wellington St Kew. I was posted there because I had done postgraduate studies in traffic engineering. In TED, I carried out a statistical analysis of the usage of grade separated pedestrian crossings, designed road signs and managed the Annual Traffic Census.



CRB HQ Denmark St Kew 1970s

I worked for Ian Mackintosh, Roland Stuart and David Freeman. Max McPherson was the Traffic Engineer and Ted Barton the Assistant TE. Tony Fry was there too.



Ian Mackintosh



Roland Stuart



Tony Fry

Some other people who worked in TED and of whom I have found photos:



Louise Langford  
(later Kloot,  
traffic analyst)



Ian Thomas



Ian Thomas



David Brewer



Ted Vincent

I must mention Denis Moore who arrived at the CRB from Burnie in 1973. His cousin Owen Bugg advised him to seek employment at the CRB. Denis was a professional runner and coach and immediately influenced many of us who had contemplated running for fun or fitness. My father had recently died of heart disease and I had tried to start running for fitness but was making little progress until Denis turned up. Under his guidance, I got very fit and joined the Professional Cross Country Club of Victoria (PCCCV). I ran in the first four Frankston to Melbourne Marathons in 1978-1981.



Noel Anderson, Denis Moore, Brian Weston & John Harper, 1970s.



2021 Ken Barnhill, Nick, Denis Moore, David Williamson, Graham Hanson – all former members of PCCCV while working in TED.



Alan Bowman also ran with Denis's CRB runners.



2014 Kerras Burke



2021 Sean Cribbin



1989 Brian Negus



2004 Bill Hooker



1979 John Williams

In 1974 when the MMBW's road responsibilities were passed to the CRB, the above group and some others joined us in TED and brought a more adventurous attitude. For instance, one day John & Bill and others dreamt up this proposal that if we all put in several dollars that would be enough for one person to take a taxi to the airport, fly to Hobart, invest some money at the Casino and return. (At that time there were no casinos in Melbourne.) Jenny Risol's name was drawn and that afternoon she flew to Hobart, invested the money but unfortunately, returned without any profit.

This photo shows TED staff in 1979. The occasion was the farewell to Emmerson Richardson. Emmerson had joined the CRB in 1975 after he met Keith Moody who was on a study tour in England. He simply asked Keith if there was a job for him in Australia. Keith said yes, so Emmerson brought his knowledge of English traffic management methods to the CRB. In 1979 he departed for the City of Stirling, WA.



Front: Ted Barton, Brian Negus, Emmerson Richardson, Nick Szweid, Chris Fox  
2<sup>nd</sup> row: Simeone Christoff, Ken Hall, John Smelt, David O'Sullivan, David Williamson, John Warren, Geoff East, Alan Bowman  
Backrow: Graeme Hodge, Vic Sedunary, Ray Beavis, Kerras Burke, Bill Lewis, Andrew Yeo, Mark Knudsen, Graham Foley?, John Williams

The two photos below are from the late 1970s.



TED end-of-year picnic

L-R: Graeme Hodge, Kerras Burke, ?, Robyn Martin, ?, Mary Spilar, Jenny Risol, ?, John Ford



Photo on right, Top row: Brian Negus, ?, Trevor McCullough, ?, John Thorpe, ?, Kerras Burke, ?, ?  
Second row: Varis Abele, Simeon Christoff, ? Third row: ?, ?, Robyn Martin, Jenny Risol. Front: Mary Spilar, Tom Byrne

Some other people not mentioned above who I remember worked in the TED in the early 1970s: Tony Avent, Les Bull, Fred Conway, Dave Freeman (his office was full of pipe smoke), Bob Holland, Louise Langford (later Kloot, traffic analyst), Peter Mitchell (introduced me to his brother Gary the flying priest), Bill Smith (who did not like the way his team collected traffic data), Barry Schmidt, Bob Simmonds, Bill Smith, Bob Taylor, Mike Taylor (went on to academia), Ian Thomas, John Thurlow (I think of him as a British cowboy), Rod Troutbeck (went on to academia), Sii Ah Wong (data analyst).

In 1977 I moved onto the Seymour-Euroa Hume Freeway Project to broaden my experience. It was there that I saw someone levitate. I was working in the site office when the surveyors brought in a large, decapitated snake. Vince DeMaria was out of the room, so they curled the dead snake up and put it on his seat. A short while later, I watched Vince swagger in, freeze for a split second and then instantly move backwards through the air about 2m, seemingly without moving a muscle.

Other people who I worked with on this project: Brian Chandler Project Engineer, Bruce Cochrane Asst PE, Lester Watt, Alan Mackinlay, Keith Kempton, Dot Foley, John Diamante, Neil Tull, Adrian Bond, Lance Midgely, Simon Eggleston, David Rolland Roy Symons.



Dot Foley 1982

There was a good team spirit on this project and we enjoyed some good social activities. When I left the project Dot Foley and some others wrote me a reference which I value greatly and have attached herewith.



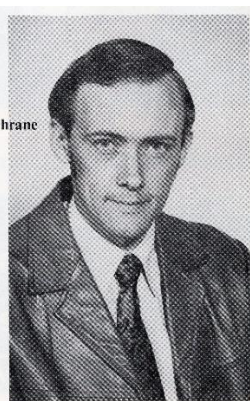
Socialising after a fun run: L-R: Bruce Every, Noel Osborne, Vince DeMaria, Roger Thorp, Nick Szwed, Ian Lister?, Mark Rennick, Stuart Jolly. Inside fence: Pam Ross in green and David Haine in red cardigan.



Music & song after dinner: Pam Ross with hat, Dot Foley hand in pocket, bearded Adrian Bond with guitar.



Brian Chandler  
Project Manager



Bruce Cochrane  
Asst Proj Man



John Diamante  
Gave me a regular  
lift to Seymour



2016 Reunion

At the 2016 end-of-year VicRoads Association luncheon we had a mini-reunion.  
Seated L to R Simon E, Neil T, Alan M. Standing Nick S, Noel O and David R.

Nearly a year in, I was really enjoying the work, meeting some great people, enjoying the social activities and even starting to plan a serious stint in construction when I got a call from Keith Hastings from TED. The CRB wanted me to set up Victoria's first Blackspot Program. It was a hard decision for me whether to continue in construction or return to HO. When I sought advice from Bruce Cochrane, he suggested to me that promotions were not easy to come by, so I made the decision to return to HO in 1978. There I assembled a great team which included Sii Ah Wong and Tim Strickland and we built Victoria's first Blackspot Program.



1985 Colin Horman, Nick, Bill Collins, Keith Hastings



Rahmi Akcelik

It was during this time that Rahmi Akcelik, who was developing a computer program to analyse intersection capacity at the Australian Road Research Board came to VicRoads to get some practical feedback. I was one of the people who took a serious interest in his work and provided him with some ideas for improvement.

Rahmi never forgot the support I gave his project and 40 years later, after he had established the internationally renowned SIDRA SOLUTIONS business, he came to me while I was President of Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), with a lucrative sponsorship deal for the ITE. A significant part of this was an annual award to the most outstanding postgraduate student in traffic and transport from a tertiary institution in Australia or New Zealand.



Another person I met around this time at the CRB public seminars that were held in the HO Theatre, was John Reid who went on to establish the Austraffic business around Australia. He also came to me 40 years later with a lucrative sponsorship offer for ITE to support young professionals, which is another story I am proud of.

Nick with John Reid in 2021

Some other people from other parts of the CRB who I had dealings with and got to know at this time:



Lance Midgley



George Giummarra



Andrew Noble



John Coles



Ross Gordon



Peter McCullough



Ian Cossens



Alan Woolard

An interesting thing happened to me in 1980 after our first child was born. My wife's maternity leave was coming to an end and we had to decide whether she would continue her career as a teacher or stay at home for a while longer. I believed I had no right to expect her to compromise her career any further and decided to share the parenting duties. I applied for 9 months leave, a mixture of annual, long service and half pay leave.

A couple of days after I submitted my application, my boss, Brian Negus told me Mr Hobbs, Chief Road Design Engineer, wanted to see me. I still remember vividly, the walk in anticipation from 89 High St to 60 Denmark St. Mr Hobbs was quite relaxed and friendly. He had heard that I had visited China the year before, being amongst the first westerners to do so after Gough Whitlam had opened the door to China. He was interested in my experience there and so I relaxed a little (only a little).

He then proceeded to ask me about my leave application: what was I going to be doing for such an extended time? I said I was going to look after the baby while my wife went back to work. He said that was fine but what would I be doing with all that time on my hands? Was I going to build a home extension or travel, for instance? Nope just looking after baby. At that stage, I had no idea what that entailed and could offer no further explanation.

My leave was approved but I got the message that going through with it might compromise my career. That did not deter me, I decided on a more balanced life. This break from work brought me closer to my local community and educated me about broader societal issues. On return, I joined the committee of the Association of Professional Engineers Australia (APEA) and later I joined school councils and several other local community groups. I believe this break made me a more rounded engineer and human being.

A few random memories from those days:

- Ted Barton starting a conversation with "when I was in Canada...".
- Ian Mackintosh catching us secretly playing chess out of a desk draw.
- Gentleman Bob Billinge at a public speaking course, telling me I had a nice timbre in my voice because he could not think of anything else positive to say about my speech.
- The Tea ladies bringing morning tea around. Teatime was an important time to network and discuss work. We were on the second floor next to the Personnel Section. One day Peter J McCullough came over and told us to stop making so much noise and to drink our tea at our desks.
- On a lunchtime run one day we ran past Tom Russell and the other Board members and overheard one of them say that it was hoped that we would have sufficient energy left to continue working that afternoon.
- Competing with RoSTA to start the first Blackspot Program whilst working for Keith Hastings. We had more resources and won.
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In 1981 Reg Paterson offered me an acting role in Metropolitan Division for a few months. I got on well with Reg at the time but later when I moved to the Ministry of Transport, he labelled me a traitor. This meant I had a rather awkward time when I had to come back to interview him about some metropolitan projects that the Minister was interested in.

Later, when the RTA and RCA were created, he thought I was an even bigger traitor because I moved to the RTA. But in the end when RTA and RCA merged all was forgiven and Reg and I were on friendly terms again.

## Reference for Nick Szwed

We hereby introduce Mr Nick Szwed. A gentleman who has given us the pleasure of his company on the CRB Seymour-Euroa Project since 14/2/77, to date.

As his future employers/workmates you will no doubt appreciate the following list of his abilities and accomplishments.

ABILITIES: Engineering - he can engineer anything from fog watching to a foot race. NOTE: As he's normally in a fog anyway, we can highly recommend him for the former employment, however, we did have trouble convincing him that a foot race is not a community of 12" people.

FLYING: Not overly confident in this field. On a recent air trip to N.T. he took along 3 priests. He had heard someone refer to the clergy as "sky-pilots".

NAVIGATING: (Road) We have it on good authority that this is not his best field. On a recent inspection tour of our radio transmitted in the Brown Ranges he insisted on navigating from outside the vehicle, some 100m behind in fact.

COMPOUND & SITE OFFICE ESTABLISHMENT: No comment!

VOLLEY BALL: Here he shines. His non-stop on-court comments, commentary, advice and coaching of his team is inspiring. Remarkable too when one realises that he rarely in fact touches the ball.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 1. ENGINEERING  
2. FLYING  
3. NAVIGATING  
4. COMPOUND & SITE OFFICE ESTABLISHMENT  
5. VOLLEY BALL  
6. EATING  
7. DRINKING  
8. STRINE  
9. LAUGHING  
10. IRISH JOKES,  
etc, etc.

These are but a few of Mr Szwed's many abilities, the most important of which we have left until last.

His unique sense of humour. Nick never laughs at anyone, always with. His jokes are always on himself and never hurt anyone else.

His kindness & generosity. Nick would give his armpits away and sweat thru his teeth.

His greatest achievement. His ability to create, with laughter, a team.

This team will miss him very much. We give him up reluctantly but we most sincerely wish him well, wish him happiness, wish him love and for leaving us - wish him to buggery.