

SM

BOROUGH OF RINGWOOD.

Town Hall,
RINGWOOD.
14th June, 1950.

MAROONDAH HIGHWAY AND DISTRICTS AMBULANCE SERVICE COMMITTEE.

The Mayor & Councillors,
BOROUGH OF RINGWOOD.

Gentlemen,

I attended a Meeting of the above mentioned Committee on Friday 9th June last. As these Meetings are only called when there is something to discuss and sometime is involved between Meetings, I will give a brief outline of what has happened up to date.

The Minister was approached with a view to having the Station at Canterbury staffed on a 24 hour service instead of 16 which it was then, as an immediate relief this has been done. It was decided to approach all Ministers with regards to increase in the Government Grant to the Victorian Civil Ambulance Service which last year was £1500 or approximately £4 a day which shows the financial obstacle which retards the growth of the present service.

From numerous Meetings that our Secretary Mr Turner has had with the Officials of the Civil Ambulance Service it has been decided to station a vehicle between the outskirts of Mitcham and Ringwood provided that suitable conveniences can be found.

This involves :-

1. Building to house ambulance and crew.
2. Telephone.
3. Hot Water facilities.
4. Conveniences.

Leaving out 2 and 3 the Committee has made exhaustive investigations but has not been able to make any headway, so it was decided to approach the Council's involved for a possible Site, and in the event of this being made available it was proposed to erect a suitable type of temporary building so as to have the Ambulance functioning at the earliest possible date. The Site must be in proximity to White Horse road.

A.D.PATTERSON,
COUNCILLOR.

In Committee I Recommended that the Council made available land in Pitt st engineer not happy about it he says it is necessary for a centre

In Committee I recommended that the Council made available land in Pitt St. he made a happy about it he says it is necessary for a centre for his office

Mr. Davis queried the charge of 6d. per mile at Chelsea. No ambulance, he said, could possibly pay at that rate.

Mr. Burke: The Chelsea ambulance is on a voluntary basis and possibly that is why the 6d. rate is revenue producing.

Mr. Duke: Has there been any liaison with the Nunawading Committee? I attended that meeting as a delegate and am interested to know if any approach has been made to that committee.

Mr. Burke: No approach has been made to date, but if an official committee is formed, contact could then officially be made.

Mrs. Jenkyn: There are also many interested organisations in Ringwood that should be contacted, such as the Red Cross, C.W.A. and others.

Chairman: That will be the first step and when a committee is formed an endeavour would be made to get every organisation in Ringwood interested. I personally am disappointed at the attendance. The secretary sent out 96 letters and distributed 400 leaflets.

Following further discussion a provisional committee was formed, comprising Messrs C. Roberts, D. Lindsay, C. Davis, J. Burns (East Ringwood), J. Spence. Mr. R. Guest was elected chairman and Mr. J. Burke secretary and treasurer.

It was decided to ask the council to refund the cost of the hall hire on the grounds that the meeting was called for the service of ratepayers.

Following further discussion the meeting closed and the provisional committee met and made arrangements to contact all organisations in Ringwood.

A further public meeting will be held at the first opportunity.

12.1.56.

AMBULANCE STATION OPENED



The Premier of Victoria, Mr. H. Bolte, opened the Ringwood and District Ambulance Station last week. Also in this picture are Mr. McLennan, one of the Hospital and Charities Commissioners, and the Mayor of Ringwood, Cr. B. Hubbard.

made 12/1/56

THE PREMIER AT RINGWOOD



Looking over one of the vehicles after the opening of Ringwood's Ambulance Station are L. to R.: Cr. F. Corr, Station Officer J. Byrne, The Premier of Victoria, Mr. H. Bolte, Mr. E. Baker, Pres. Victorian Ambulance Service

made 12/1/56

CTD FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

(SE0047B #1731 9/3/19)

4M

Borough of Ringwood

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED
TO TOWN CLERK

Town Hall,

Ringwood 25th Oct. 1937.

PHONE RINGWOOD 204 (copy)

City of Melbourne.

Town Hall,

22nd October, 1937.

Dear Sir,

In accordance with a request received from the Victorian Civil Ambulance Service, I hereby convene a meeting of representatives of the southern Municipalities for the purpose of electing a representative of such Municipalities on the Ambulance Service Council.

The meeting will be held at the Town Hall Melbourne at 12 o'clock noon on Friday next, 29th instant.

I shall be glad if you will arrange for the attendance of a representative of your Council accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

H.S. Wootton,

Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk.

*C. Wootton
attended*

6M



4/11/84

THE district officers for cadets, from left, Mrs Marian Chamberlain, Mrs Elizabeth Hollman and Mr Peter Chamberlain, demonstrate the technique of resuscitation at the St John Ambulance information booth at the Eastland shopping centre.

St John Ambulance seeks recruits

MEMBERS of the Eastern Metropolitan Corps of the St John Ambulance Association are holding an all-out recruiting drive.

The Ringwood-Nunawading and Croydon members contributed their efforts by conducting an information booth at Eastland shopping centre. The district officers for cadets, Mrs Marian Chamberlain, Mr Peter

Chamberlain, of Ringwood, and Mrs Elizabeth Hollman, of Croydon, manned the booth and explained the techniques of resuscitation and first aid to passers-by.

The ambulance regularly provides much-needed medical help at sports matches and other public events. Its officers help educate the community about first aid by giving talks in schools and to community groups.

Children as young as 11 can join the cadet

branch of the ambulance and at 18 become seniors. There are also activities for girls and boys from the ages of eight to 11.

Next year's challenge will be an attempt by the Ringwood group to break the world record for continuous cardio/pulmonary resuscitation of 52 hours set by a NSW group.

Anyone who is interested in joining the ambulance at a local level should contact Mic Sella on 726 0407.

MAROONDAH HIGHWAY AMBULANCE STATION



13.1.55

The Maroondah Ambulance Service will soon have a home. This is the building, in Pitt St., Ringwood, now nearing completion. When operating, the ambulances based here will serve Mitcham, Ringwood, Croydon and the surrounding districts.

AMBULANCE FOR RINGWOOD

Disappointing Attendance at Public Meeting

● The public meeting convened in the Ringwood Town Hall on Thursday evening for the purpose of discussing ways and means of establishing an ambulance to serve the Ringwood district met with a poor response from the citizens of Ringwood. Approximately 20 people were present.

This does not mean that the citizens of Ringwood will not give full support to a movement for an ambulance. It is recognised that it is desirable and essential, but there is some confusion regarding two movements with the same objective.

Recently a movement for the establishment of a district ambulance resulted in a representative meeting being held at Blackburn.

At that meeting the Shires of Lillydale, and Doncaster, the City of Nunawading and the Borough of Ringwood were represented. Representatives of the R.S.L. groups in the No 11 District Board were represented. It is believed that the outcome of that meeting will be the establish-

ment of an ambulance with headquarters at possibly Nunawading, which will be sponsored by the Victorian Civil Ambulance. A report of this meeting appears in another column.

The meeting on Thursday was the result of a local movement which to date has done splendid work and has had offers of free garaging and servicing of the ambulance and a qualified 1st Aid driver during the night

hours.

A district ambulance is not only desirable, it is essential, but we cannot have two appeals at the same time from different organisations in the same area. There must be some approach to this essential objective by a concerted effort.

At least the meeting was representative. Mrs. Parker represented the Red Cross Emergency Coy, Mrs. Jenkyns the C.W.A., Mr. Duke the R.S.L., Rev. C. McKittrick (Baptist Church), Mr. Burns (East Ringwood Progress Assoc.), Mr G. Benson (E. Ringwood Football Club), Mr. C. Davis (East Ringwood Reserve Management Committee), Mr. C. Roberts (Ringwood Traders), Mr. J. Spence (Bowling Club), a representative from South Ward Progress Assoc., Mr. D. Lindsay (A.L.P.), Mr. Martin and Mr. G. Toivenon (St. John's Ambulance).

Mr. C. Roberts was elected chairman for the meeting and he called on the acting secretary, Mr. J. Burke, to detail activities to date.

Mr. Burke said the meeting was called as a result of the activities of a few people in Ringwood who realised the necessity for an ambulance in the district.

When the proposal was first spoken of the response was so generous that it was decided to get the public interested.

An offer was made to garage and service an ambulance and a competent 1st Aid driver was offered for night duties.

Ringwood, continued Mr. Burke, has a population of nearly 7,000 and plus the accidents on the Maroondah Highway, makes an ambulance a necessity.

I suggest as a first step that a committee be formed to give the movement some official standing.

FINANCE

The cost of an ambulance said Mr. Burke, was approx £1076. The Charity Board would advance £400 and the local organisation would need to raise the balance of £776. This does not include equipment.

At Chelsea an ambulance association operated at a 5/- rate per year, entitling subscribers to free ambulance service in the City of Chelsea where there was a hospital.

Where a case had to be taken to a city hospital a charge of 6d. a mile was made.

With a long range vision and the new Box Hill Hospital as the nearest hospital a 10/- fee would probably meet local conditions for subscribers.

We are particularly fortunate in Ringwood, he said, in that we have quite a number of 1st aid men and women and we would have the support of the Red Cross Emergency Coy.

Referring to the Nunawading movement, he said a committee had been termed with the idea of establishing an ambulance in the area, but with our population of 7000 an ambulance is needed here and could be financed.

Mr. Burke instanced a case where injured persons had been lying on the roadway for some considerable time before an ambulance could be obtained. A local ambulance could be on the job in a few minutes.

MAROONDAH HIGHWAY AMBULANCE

As advised in last issue the Ambulance Station at Pitt St., Ringwood, is in operation. Station Officer Byrne is in residence at the Station with his wife and 3 children

There are two fully equipped ambulances at the Station and three men are on shift work. The other officers are H. Storrer and J. Vaux.

The Station was unofficially opened last Friday and 8 cases were handled that day. The Ambulance Station also has the assistance of the local St. John's personnel on Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

Until the Station is officially opened in the near future the phone number is FB 2222. Following the opening the number will be WU 8032.

"Mail" 26/5/55

1M

THE NEW AMBULANCE STATION



The Maroondah Highway new ambulance station is now open for service. So far there are these two fine vehicles and a staff of 3 to give 24 hours service a day. The building has been designed with a view to the day when these facilities will no longer be enough for the district, and plenty of room has been allowed for expansion.

J. Gallagher Photo

Mail - 2/6/55

12/11/56

mail

OPENING OF MAROONDAH HIGHWAY AMBULANCE STATION



Some of the spectators at the opening on Wednesday, December 14

(SE 41)

main p3 28-1-97 -

Row over ambulances

by JAMIE DUNCAN

POOR communications and a lack of planning during last week's Dandenong Ranges fires left Ringwood's ambulance station without transport, an ambulance officer has claimed.

Metropolitan Ambulance Service operations support manager Tony Pearce has hotly denied the officer's claims.

The officer, who did not wish to be named, said a lack of communication between Intergraph and field commanders put the lives of ambulance crews and the public at risk.

"There was no provision of disaster control at Intergraph and what that led to was that the ambulances in the field didn't understand or know what was going on," the officer said.

"But we were sitting there listening to the hand held scanners of the CFA and police and were actually hearing things that our service was saying weren't happening."

"Ringwood, Montrose and Lilydale - and nearly everybody in units around the area - were affected.

"Ringwood was left uncovered because they didn't bring any extra services in.

"At the height of the fires all 55 branches across Melbourne were occupied and there were seven calls waiting but there was nobody to respond to them.

And that includes Ringwood."

Units were tied up on other calls or at the fires, he said.

"They should have been calling more cars in earlier. They had too many resources called in too late," the officer said.

But Mr Pearce said the Ringwood ambulance was engaged with eight emergency calls for just over 12 hours from 11.41am on the day of the fires.

"Understandably the ambulance was not in attendance at its station when (the officer) passed through, most likely because it was deployed on an emergency case," he said.

The officer said there was no organisation when he arrived in Montrose. A cool change which threatened to flare up the fires was sweeping in.

"Throughout this whole period the information from the ambulance was playing down the situation when police and fire services were asking for extra units to assist evacuations," he said.

Officers were not told of road closures, evacuations, the location of other ambulances or the progress of fires, he said.

"I believe the service placed ambulance officer's lives at risk by the fact they didn't know where the danger spots were," he said.

Mr Pearce said ambulance managers at fire command posts, operations centres and the emergency co-ordination centre were briefed on those issues as soon as news was available.

"Ambulance officers were not ... deployed into any area of a major disaster unless their immediate manager is certain their safety can be assured," he said.

Ambulances appeared to be located inappropriately, the officer said.

"The fire crews made the comment that it would have been more appropriate to have crews at evacuation centres rather than sitting at ambulance depots with no idea what was happening," the officer said.

Mr Pearce said Country Fire Authority management had made no adverse comments about the placement of ambulance resources during the fires.

He added it was "normal practice" to use St John's Ambulance volunteers to provide first aid treatment at evacuation centres.

Emergency ambulances were located strategically around disaster sites in readiness for rapid travel to life threatening emergencies and sick and severely injured patients.

"It saddens me to think these comments have been released to the media without (the officer) verifying the facts of the matter," Mr Pearce said.

mail 13 16-5-95

Ambulance antics a moving experience

by LEONORA ELLIOTT-BRUCE

RINGWOOD ambulance officers have been granted a last minute reprieve from moving to Mitcham, after intervention by local MPs and the City of Maroondah.

As reported in *The Mail* last week, officers were to have vacated the sold Pitt St ambulance depot by last Friday.

But as the removal vans moved, officers were told by the Metropolitan Ambulance Service to move back into the depot.

During the confusion local MPs, Maroondah city commissioners, MAS officials and Health ministry representatives met for urgent talks.

The Member for Warrandyte Mr Phil Honeywood said he was enraged and shocked by the MAS plan to relocate the Ringwood ambulance to Mitcham.

He said the first he knew of the plan was after reading *The Mail* article (May 9) and he and other local MPs had acted immediately to stop the move.

"I am appalled... I would have thought that MAS management would have been more sensitive to this issue. It didn't even bother to consult with local MPs," he said.

State Member for Bayswater Mr Gordon Ashley said he was also unaware of the planned move until last week. He said he was even unaware the Pitt St depot had been sold.

"I was stunned to hear of the possible position and it struck me as unlikely to have produced the best response times for the people of the City of Maroondah," Mr Ashley said.

MAS spokesman Mr Gary Bartram said negotiations with Maroondah City commissioners would occur this week to find an alternative ambulance station site for Ringwood officers.

He said originally settlement should have occurred last Friday, but that an extra 30 days had been negotiated with the new owner of the property.

Mr Bartram said negotiations to extend the

settlement date had not begun until late last week.

"Initially we were told there was to be a 60 day settlement and then it was reduced to 30 days and then we found we could extend it for another 30 days which gives us more time to look for a site," Mr Bartram said. The Mitcham move was planned as an interim measure, he said.

Ambulance officers had rejected the planned Mitcham move and according to union spokesman Mr Rod Morris, there was a plan to set up a makeshift depot in the streets, rather than move from the Ringwood area.

He said officers had also rejected a MAS offer to move to the MICA 8 location at the Maroondah Hospital. The Ringwood ambulance work was based further west, Mr Morris said.

It was appropriate local MPs had entered the debate, he said.

A spokesman for Health Minister Mrs Marie Tehan said it was a matter for Maroondah City commissioners and MAS to decide, but Health Ministry representatives had attended last week's crisis talks.

Stay put Ambo seeks help

Post
12/4/95
p.3

THE Ambulance Employees Australia (AEA) announced this week it intends to call on Maroondah Council to support its members' efforts to retain a "viable and reliable ambulance service in Ringwood".

AEA secretary David Land told the Post this week he intends writing to chief commissioner Bill Heath asking him to support the AEA's opposition to the proposed relocation of the Pitt Street ambulance station to Maroondah Hospital.

The AEA has been at logger heads with the Metropolitan Ambulance Service (MAS) for several months over the proposed move.

It has accused the MAS of "privatisation by stealth" and "reneging on their responsibilities on public safety".

AEA members have vowed to refuse to vacate the Pitt St site until a "more appropriate site has been guaranteed".

"It (the station) would be better placed and more suitable around Eastland rather than further away from the area they have to cover," Mr Land said this week.

He said the situation had reached crisis point following the recent

"move up" policy leaked to the Post.

The policy is designed to limit the number of occasions local ambulances are called out of their areas and how far out of their areas they travel.

Under the policy if an extra ambulance is needed in the city it will be provided by the Nunawading or Camberwell ambulance services.

Crews from Ringwood or Knox will then move to the Nunawading or Camberwell area and an ambulance from Lilydale or Montrose will move up to cover the Ringwood or Knox areas.

Under the policy if the Montrose ambulance is moved up to either Knox or Ringwood, the Montrose, Mooroolbark and Kilsyth area should still be covered by the Lilydale ambulance.

Despite claims the "move up" policy will provide more effective ambulance cover, the Post learned last Thursday night that only two days after the policy was implemented, an area from Ringwood in the west to Warburton in the east, and from Yarra Glen in the north to The Basin in the south, was left with only one ambulance based at Yarra Junction.

NEWS WATCH

Moul
18-4-95

Station sale leaves service in transit

by LEONORA ELLIOTT-BRUCE

THE Ringwood ambulance station in Pitt St has been sold giving the 10 ambulance officers 60 days to vacate the premises but a permanent new depot site is yet to be selected.

The Ambulance Employees Association has described the sale and indecision on the future depot location as gross mismanagement.

The station was sold at auction on April 15 for \$112,100 to a private bidder.

MAS eastern business manager Gary Bartram said the Ringwood Ambulance service would move to the East Ringwood MICA 8 depot opposite Maroondah Hospital as a temporary measure.

He said the service wanted to locate the team in a central location in the district where they could respond to jobs within a 360 degree radius in 10 to 12 minutes.

"We need a team in the Ringwood area and we certainly do need to look at another site. The Maroondah Hospital location will not be chiselled in marble."

Management was having ongoing discussions with Ringwood ambulance officers on the best location.

Ambulance Employees Association spokesman Mr Rod Morris said the situation had been grossly mismanaged.

He said officers were yet to discuss a plan of action but it was possible they would pick their own location.

"The service has a responsibility to its officers to relocate them when an asset such as this office has been sold.

"It won't work putting the station at MICA 8 because that will only increase response times.

"It's total nonsense," Mr Morris said.

MAS should lease or purchase an alternative site with the money obtained from the sale of Pitt St, Mr Morris said.

"To sell off an asset such as an ambulance station and have no alternative site is like selling off your car when you need it desperately to get to work and you haven't worked out any alternative way of getting to work," Mr Morris said.

Ambulance officers would do what was best for the community, Mr Morris said.

"There is no way they will let the people of the area down."

The Pitt Street depot was opened in 1955 by Sir Henry Bolte with two cars and seven officers serving all the outer east including the Dandenongs. Previously the brick building was the Ringwood garbage truck depot.



RINGWOOD ambulance service is on the move after the Pitt St depot was sold last week.

New ambulance and fire station plan

A NEW million dollar combined Ringwood fire and ambulance station has been proposed to replace the fire station at 255 Maroondah Hwy and the ambulance station in Pitt St.

A 1987 Strategic Location Plan of Fire Suppression Resources argued for development of a fire station near the Maroondah Hwy and Mt Dandenong Rd intersection where the new joint fire and ambulance station is proposed.

The existing fire station is regarded as inadequate because it has no rear access and requires vehicles to reverse in off Maroondah Hwy which is regarded as unsafe.

it is also the only station in Melbourne unable to house the Metropolitan Fire Brigade's new equipment and does not have a drill yard for training.

The MFB's major construction

projects manager Warren Doubleday said although the co-location decision had not been finally taken, the proposal was put up because the new fire station was necessary.

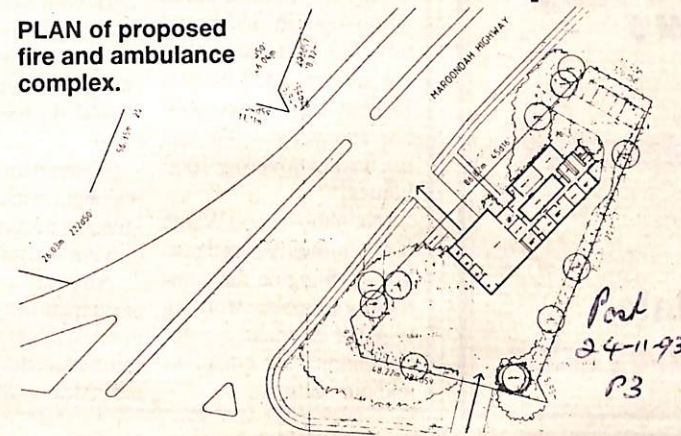
"The ambulance service is trying to increase response times and the current ambulance station is not well located ... but it is only a proposal," Mr Doubleday said.

"This is the first one (new building for co-location) to get to planning stage although I believe some (ambulances) are moving (into fire stations) next month," Mr Doubleday said.

Mr Doubleday said the site was particularly good in terms of road access.

The eastern end of the Ringwood bypass will be opposite the proposed joint station location on the north east corner of the Maroondah Hwy and Mt

PLAN of proposed fire and ambulance complex.



Dandenong Rd intersection.

"Anywhere within kicking distance of the current site would have been good but we wanted to be on the eastern side of Ringwood - it is a good, fast, central location," Mr Doubleday said.

Metropolitan Ambulance Service (MAS) eastern business

manager Ian Goldsmith said the current ambulance station in Pitt St was a "fairly old station" and any move would be an improvement of facilities.

"We would be interested in co-locating at the site because it would be an upgrading of our facility," Mr Goldsmith said.

Ambulance move to slash services

by LEONORA ELLIOTT-BRUCE

RELOCATING ambulances at fire stations was "nothing more than a smoke screen" created to disguise ambulance service cuts, a union official has warned.

Ambulance Employees Association spokesman, John Taplin, criticised the plans announced by the Metropolitan Ambulance Service (MAS) which could see an ambulance located at the Croydon fire station.

Mr Taplin said about 30 less ambulances a day would be covering the metropolitan region once the relocations were completed.

Good sense

"It is nothing more than a smoke screen to disguise the fact they're taking 30 ambulances off the roads," he said.

However the relocations made good sense.

"It really is a mixed blessing, because for some-time now we have been arguing for better more accessible locations for ambulances, and the fire stations make good economic sense but at what expense are the relocations occurring?" Mr Taplin asked.

At the Ringwood ambulance base, Mr Taplin said officer numbers would be cut from 11 to eight and at Nunawading numbers would reduce to eight from 17.

Shake-up

MAS chief executive officer, Jack Firman, said relocations would occur as part of a massive shake-up aimed at improving response times for emergency ambulance services throughout Melbourne's East.

"One of the keys to reduced response times is to strategically place ambulances in certain areas where they have not been stationed before," he said.

Ambulances would be stationed at Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Country Fire Authority fire stations, he said.

"Our ambulances are largely self-contained and the communication needs will still be met by normal procedures. "Command and control of the ambulance fleet will remain with MAS," he said.

Some ambulances would be redeployed from larger stations but Mr Firman said there would be an increase in the number of emergency ambulances.

MAS eastern business manager, Ian Goldsmith, said discussion to station ambulances at the Croydon/Kilsyth/Montrose, Malvern/Prahran, and Glen Waverley/Wheelers Hill were occurring with the MFB and the CFA.

NEWS watch



Call for an ambulance exit to avoid delays

By JANINE JONES

THE absence of an emergency ambulance exit outside Maroondah Hospital could cause delays of up to a minute for emergency calls east of the hospital.

The Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance (MICA) service's officer-in-charge, Mr David Sell, said last week that provision of an emergency exit on the Mount Dandenong Rd median strip opposite Grey St would reduce attendance times to calls east of the hospital by up to a minute.

It would also reduce the ambulance's chances of being involved in an accident and the disturbance to traffic at the Eastfield Rd intersection, he said.

Mr Sell said that to

attend calls in areas east of the hospital, such as Croydon, ambulance staff had to turn left on Mount Dandenong Rd and then make a U-turn at the busy Eastfield Rd intersection.

This caused a great deal of interference as cars were forced to move out of the normal flow of traffic and greatly increased the risk of an accident.

Emergency

The need for an emergency exit outside the hospital was raised at Ringwood Council by Cr Chris McRae last week.

Cr McRae, who lives opposite the hospital, said he had noticed delays experienced by ambulance drivers as they tried to make U-turns at the Eastfield Rd intersection.

"In peak hour traffic, the ambulance is hindered because of a build-up of traffic," he said. "It could almost be argued that this could be a life-threatening situation."

The council agreed to negotiate with ambulance and hospital management to develop plans for emergency exits.

Hospital chief executive officer, John Lightfoot, welcomed the move. "It is an excellent initiative when you consider the time it will save," he said. "It will cut out travel down 150 metres of road in the event of a call to Croydon."

The MICA 8 Ambulance Service was established at the hospital just over a year ago. It is staffed by officers specially trained to deal with cardiac emergencies.

A woman who owes her life to the MICA unit has spoken out against proposed changes to the service, believing they would risk lives. LEONORA ELLIOTT-BRUCE reports.

'They saved my life'

IN THE early hours of Thursday, January 14 this year, Merle Mahoney woke feeling sick.

She didn't take much notice at first, thinking she had a stomach ache.

But as the hours wore on the North Bayswater resident began to worry.

"I woke up Les (her husband) but even then we didn't think it was very serious," she said.

Merle was about to have a heart attack.

Within minutes of waking Les, her condition worsened.

"I rang for an ambulance and before I had hung up the telephone, they were virtually here," Mr Mahoney said.

Two MICA paramedics arrived at the scene and diagnosed Merle's condition as serious.

Mr Mahoney watched in horror as his wife's condition deteriorated and paramedics worked frantically

"I've never seen so much action in this house.

"They lost her a couple of times and then brought her back.

"They said we're losing her, we're losing her," Mr Mahoney remembered.

The two paramedics were forced to call for back-up from a general ambulance team, due to Merle's bad condition.

It took more than 15 minutes before the paramedics were satisfied Merle had stabilised.

"If just an ordinary ambulance team had arrived, or if just one paramedic had been with the team, as proposed, Merle would not be here today," Mr Mahoney said.

"All I know is they (the paramedics) saved Merle's life."

And Merle agreed the paramedic's speed and efficiency saved her.

"The five minutes which could have lapsed between when one MICA paramedic arrived at our home and when another one did could have cost me my life," Mrs Mahoney said.

Introducing a new paramedic response scheme could mean lost lives, she said.

"It would be absolutely horrific to learn that a life was lost just to save costs."

The Metropolitan Ambulance Service (MAS) has proposed MICA paramedic two-man teams be split up and joined with ordinary ambulance officers to increase quality of care to the community.

MAS spokesman David Col-



MICA paramedics saved Merle Mahoney's life. She and her husband Les are protesting at possible changes to the emergency ambulance service. Picture: CHRIS ROSTRON.

402cr303

lyer said the community had nothing to fear and that the changes were not cost-cutting measures.

But the Mahoneys did not agree and said the service should remain as it is.

"There is no way one paramedic could have done the work of the two men who saved my life," Mrs Mahoney said.

Calling for community opposition to the changes, Mrs Mahoney said an emergency situation should not be the time to discover there was no service.

"Don't wait until there is an emergency to discover there is

no appropriate service to help you," she said.

"When it happens to you, you do something about it. I must stress that we should act now before the service is changed.

"It's no good implementing a system if it means lives are going to be lost and that is what I am afraid of under the proposal."

There are eight MICA ambulance teams stationed at Maroondah, Box Hill, The Alfred, Frankston, Dandenong, Western General, Melbourne and Heidelberg Repatriation hospitals.

The Ringwood MICA 8 team was established 14 months ago after continued community support for an emergency service vehicle in the outer east.

The MICA paramedics undergo an intensive training course, teaching them to deal with emergency situations, including heart and asthma attacks.

Paramedics are permitted to administer specialised drugs and the MICA ambulance is fitted to ensure emergency patients can be monitored by a paramedic while being transported to hospital.

Feed 17/2/98 Page 7



Paramedics net extra training

THE rapidly expanding computer Internet system is now being used to train paramedics for the ambulance service and save more lives.

Maroondah Hospital's Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance (MICA) unit recently took possession of new computer hardware and software to be used in the service's training programs.

The computer system, purchased with a \$2500 donation from the Tattersall's group, is

being used to access the latest medical research and other relevant information.

Unit team manager Nigel Longman said the new system will help train an extra six paramedics this year.

The Metropolitan Ambulance Service is keen to increase the number of skilled paramedics in ambulances. Paramedics are trained to deal with specific crisis situations.

"The ambulance officers who pass the rigorous paramedic

selection process spend 20 weeks with a MICA unit as part of their 12-month training period.

"On completing their training, these new paramedics will be able to carry out a range of medical procedures as well as use drugs to treat a range of medical and surgical complaints on the spot," Mr Longman said.

■ Above: Ringwood-based ambulance paramedics Nigel Longman and Cathy Cooke with new equipment donated by Tattersall's representative Lance Behan.