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Australian Red Cross Blood Service

Summary

In 1929, Dr Lucy Bryce founded the first Australian blood service on the lines of the British Red Cross Society in London. By 1931 the Blood Transfusion Service, based in the Victorian Division of the Red Cross, was the recognized medium for metropolitan hospitals to obtain donors. The following year, it was operating around the clock. In 1938, the first Red Cross Blood Bank was established at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, with a number of its medical consultants, from the onset, being women.

Details

Shortly before World War II, the Australian Red Cross Blood Service was extended by the formation of an Emergency Transfusion Service, used by the Australian Imperial Forces and Royal Australian Air Force and the State Emergency Council. In 1941, the Australian Red Cross Society organised a National Transfusion Service for military and civil defence, based on the Victorian model. Since the mid-1950s, Australian governments have reimbursed the Australian Red Cross society for over 90% of its spending on blood transfusion with the remainder coming from Red Cross appeals and donations when possible. This infusion of government funds led to the establishment of a Suburban Mobile Unit, a Branch at the Royal Women’s Hospital and a chain of Regional Blood Banks throughout Victoria. By the mid-1960s, the National Blood Transfusion service extended to every part of the Australian Commonwealth. In 1996, its management structure changed, and it has been known as the Australian Red Cross Blood Service since. In 2004, it exists as a largely independent operating division of the Australian Red Cross with its own Board of Management and a Chief Executive Officer who reports to the Board. The Australian Red Cross Blood Service is the sole agency in Australia to collect blood from voluntary donors, provide quality blood products to hospitals and other health institutions for the benefit of the community. The work of the Australian Red Cross Blood Service is linked to the Australian Red Cross mission of protecting life and health.

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book
50 years service to humanity, Australian Red Cross Society, [1964]

The More things change…The Australian Red Cross 1914-1989, Minogue, Noreen, 1989

Report
Strategy 2005, Australian Red Cross, c2002

Archival resources

Australian Red Cross Research and Information Service
Records and publications of the Australian Red Cross Blood Service

The University of Melbourne Archives
Annual Reports of the Australian Red Cross

Minutes and Meeting Papers, National Council

Annual Reports of Red Cross Divisions and Blood Service

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