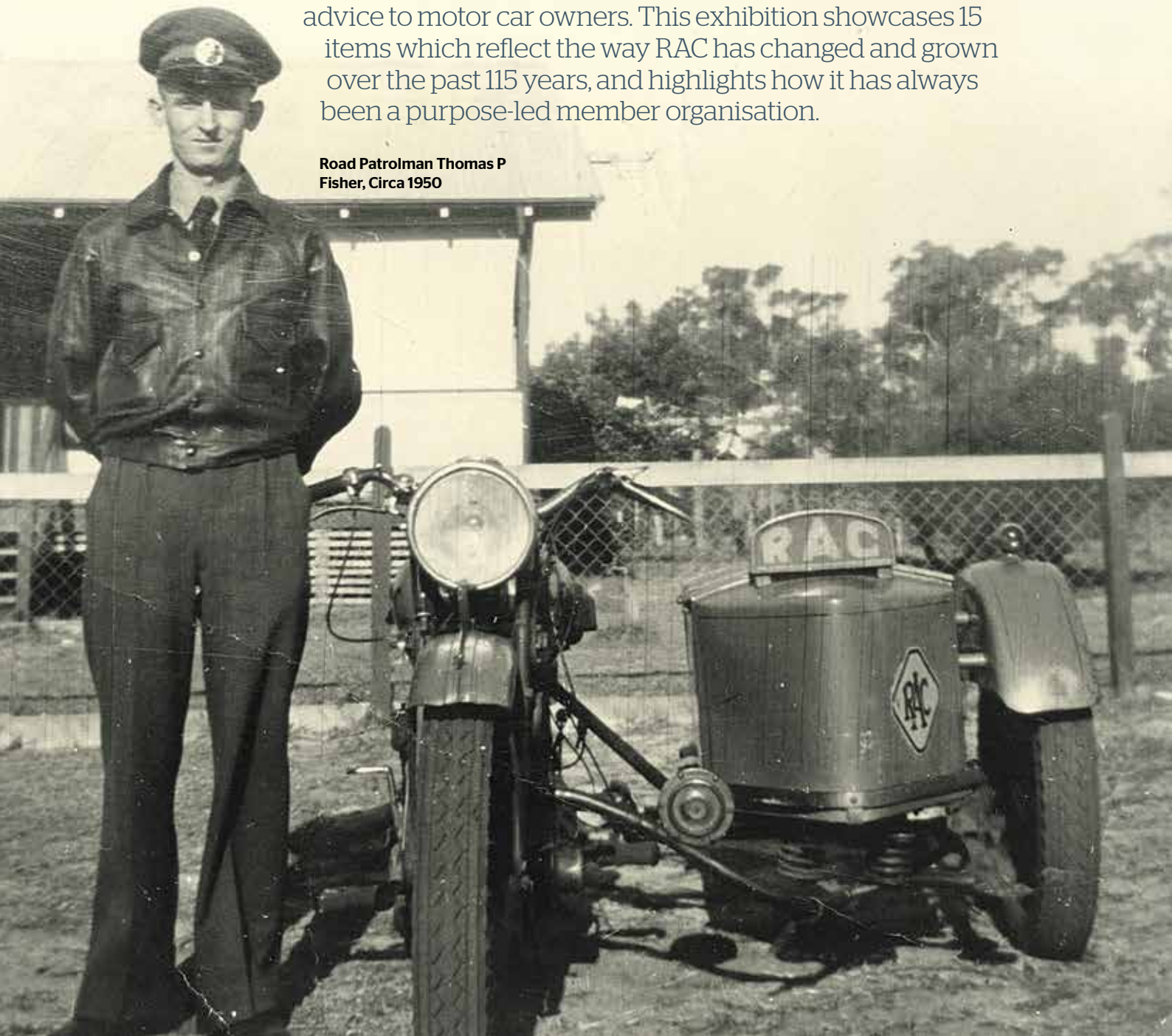


115 years

giving back to WA

One hundred and fifteen years ago, a small group of West Australians formed a club which they called the Automobile Club of WA. Back then, motor cars were considered a hobby, and many West Australians found the new transport method loud and obnoxious. The Club was formed to support its members by lobbying for their rights and providing advice to motor car owners. This exhibition showcases 15 items which reflect the way RAC has changed and grown over the past 115 years, and highlights how it has always been a purpose-led member organisation.

**Road Patrolman Thomas P
Fisher, Circa 1950**





Automobile Club of WA event, 1905



RAC organised tour to Melbourne, 1934

Formation of the Club

On 1 July 1905, the Automobile Club of WA celebrated its formation with an opening run. Approximately 40 vehicles, representing almost every automobile in the State gathered outside Government House for the event. At the time, Club membership was exclusive, and motoring was the new 'hobby'. The early car badges, designed with a black swan in the centre, became a recognisable symbol of the Club. As of June 2020, RAC represents more than 1.1 million members.

Mapping the State

The introduction of the motor car in WA gave people the opportunity to travel outside of Perth more easily than ever before. The Automobile Club of WA was keen to make life easy for its members, so it began speaking to local governments about the idea of erecting directional road signs in their districts. When they received little response, the Club decided to manufacture the signs themselves. RAC signposted the state from around 1909 until 1975.

RAC Headquarters, 1950





Touring map of the Perth City, Circa 1911



Road safety advertisement produced by RAC, 1936

The origins of the road trip

Prior to 1911, driving outside of the city of Perth required people to calculate everything themselves, from travel times to how much fuel was required for the journey. It was in 1911 when the Automobile Club of WA noted there were no road maps, so they decided to create one, mapping the entire State over the following decades. These maps were constantly updated, and the Club produced accompanying road reports, lobbying local and State governments to improve stretches of road that were often impassable.

Educating the next generation

When the Automobile Club of WA began manufacturing road signs for local governments, they also received correspondence from schools requesting they create something for them. Teachers were concerned that motorists were traveling at high speeds past schools and children were not yet used to the fast-moving vehicles. The Club agreed to create warning signs to be posted outside schools for motorists, while also distributing road safety information and illustrations for children. RAC continues to educate students today, providing free road safety workshops to tens of thousands of students every year.

RAC service fleet, 1964





Safety awareness campaign produced by RAC, 1933



Road Patrolman Ken Pratt, 1989

Legislating for safety

The introduction of motor cars into WA caused a rapid introduction of laws to deal with the new form of transport. These laws were created without consultation with drivers and were generally seen as restrictive and inconsistent. By 1918, a more unified set of laws was being developed and the Automobile Club of WA worked with the government on the new legislations. The Club also pushed for the introduction of drivers' licences, which required a test to obtain and could be revoked if a driver broke the law by speeding or drink driving.

Patrolling the State

In 1922, The Automobile Club of WA reached Royal status and from this point, was referred to as The Royal Automobile Club of WA (RAC). In May of 1926, RAC launched its patrol service, initially consisting of two men riding motorcycles with a side car housing equipment to get motorists back on the road after a breakdown. The patrol routes for the day would be advertised in the daily newspaper, or the patrolmen would simply drive around Perth looking for motorists in trouble. Patrols have only grown and improved since 1926 and RAC is WA's largest roadside network, helping hundreds of members every day.

Road Patrol vehicles, Circa 1975





RAC Horizons magazine, April/May edition 2019



Member tries a new child restraint, Circa 1975

Sharing news

In December 1930, RAC published its first newspaper. Up to this point, the Club had been producing yearbooks which included lists of members; Club activities; road condition reports; travelling routes and maps. RAC felt that it was no longer an efficient way to share information as it was going out of date too quickly so the Road Patrol newspaper was born. Except during a worldwide paper shortage in the 1950s, the Club has continually published a magazine, sharing important information and entertaining articles for members. The magazine is now known as Horizons and is the largest circulating publication in the State, reaching more than 630,000 households.

Keeping members informed

By the 1930s, cars were becoming more attainable to the average person. This meant more cars on the road and continual changes to road rules, ensuring the safety of all road users. RAC produced free road safety booklets which included The Road Traffic Act and other regulations. It also included an introduction written by the Club explaining road rules in laymen's terms and advice on safe driving techniques. The Club has continued to help the public navigate law changes, like the introduction of compulsory seatbelts in the 1970s; alcohol breathalysers in the 1980s; and mobile phone use in 2020.

Australian Automobile Association representatives meet in Perth for the 26th Annual Conference, 1953





RAC Elephant in the Wheatbelt campaign, 2018



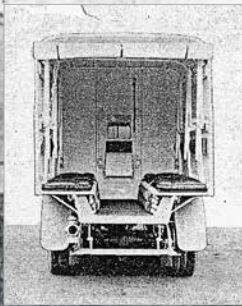
Advertisement for RAC Insurance in RAC Road Patrol magazine, 1969

Giving back to the community

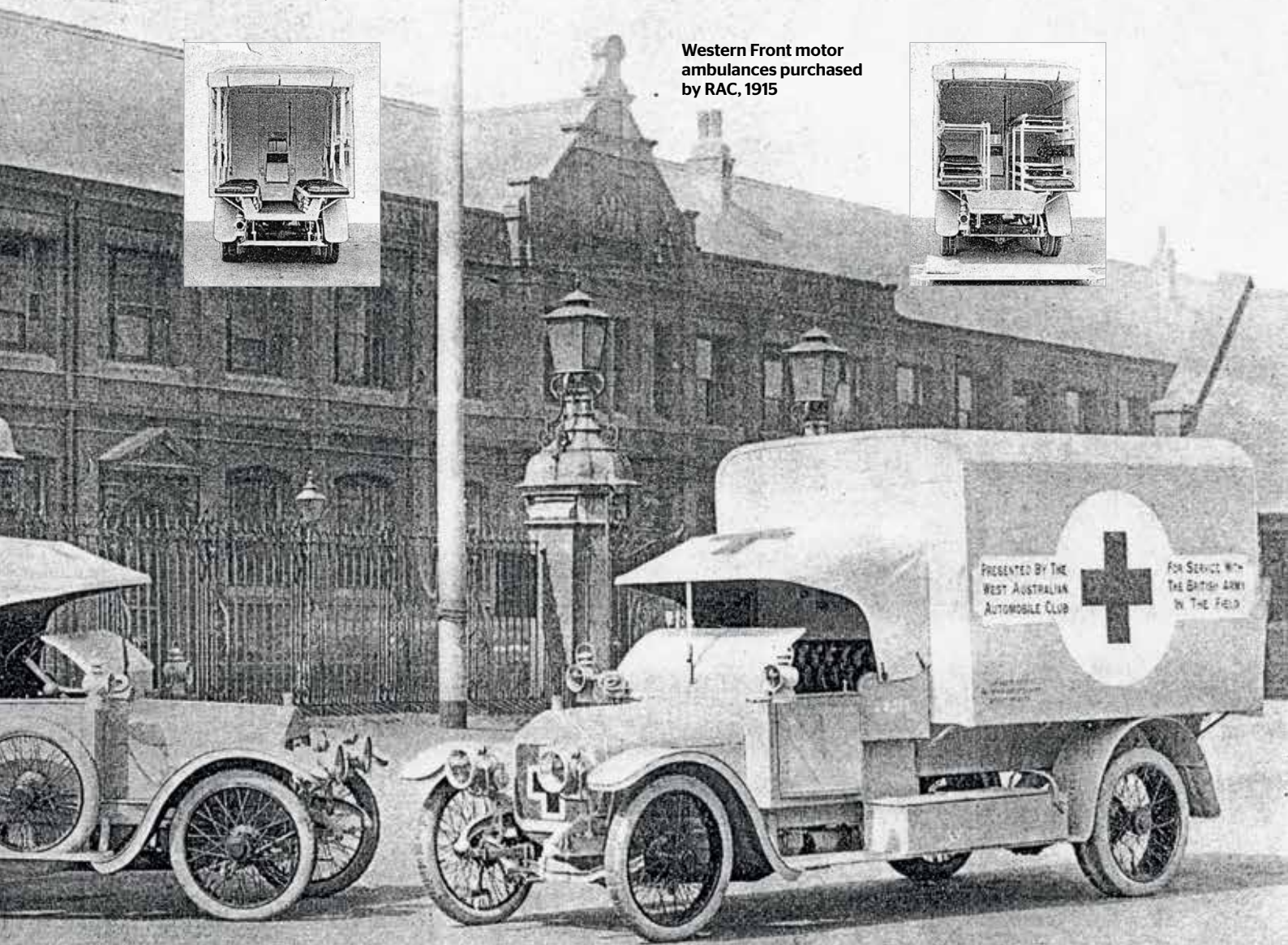
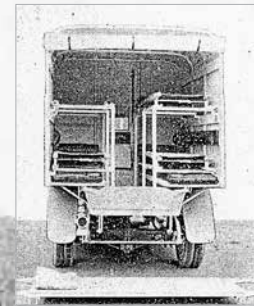
RAC has always supported the WA community. In 1915, the Club raised money to purchase two ambulances to use on the Western Front during World War I, while coordinating transport and picnics for returned soldiers and orphans on the home front. During World War II, the Club paid for the fit out of an operating theatre at Hollywood Military Hospital; was a depot for petrol rationing; and took down the road signs it had spent years erecting due to national security concerns.

Insuring the State

In 1947, RAC developed a service which they had been considering since 1908. RAC launched its own motor insurance product on 1 June 1947. Six days later, the first claim was made. The member had been driving along Stirling Highway on a rainy night and had clipped a parked car. In the 1970s, RAC added home and contents to its offerings and since then it has broadened to include everything from boats to pets to travel.



Western Front motor ambulances purchased by RAC, 1915





Shipping
Patrolman
Dennis Cahill,
1956



Eyre Highway
Patrolman
accreditation,
1962

Benefits of membership

Being an RAC member has always meant more than the traditional services. Amongst many other benefits over the years, RAC has had a shipping department which organised for members cars to be transported interstate or overseas for a holiday; legal advice and defence for members involved in a crash; vehicle licencing for streamlined licence renewal; and touring advice for members planning a driving holiday. RAC now offers a range of benefits and discounts, with members saving \$64 million in direct member benefits in the 2020 financial year.

Staying safe for the Commonwealth Games

In 1962, Perth became the host city for the Commonwealth Games. This was an exciting opportunity for WA, who anticipated thousands of overseas and interstate visitors. State motoring organisations including RAC noted that most visitors from the eastern states would choose to drive to Perth. As the Eyre highway was remote and only partially sealed, the clubs felt there was a high risk of breakdowns. To help alleviate the risk, RAC and the other clubs each sent a patrol van to monitor the highway.

RAC team departing for Eyre Highway patrol, 1962





**RAC Monkey
Mia Dolphin
Resort, 2018**

Holidaying in WA

Beginning in the 1950s, there was an increase in families looking to holiday within WA. Caravans and camping became popular options, so RAC began publishing directories which were free for members. These guides provided tips on how to tow a caravan and prepare for a camping trip; regulations around national parks; and accommodation guides. These were comprehensive guides and were complemented by RAC's touring department, which could book accommodation and provide detailed route maps to members looking to holiday in WA. RAC now operates nine Parks and Resorts across WA, encouraging members to holiday in WA easily and safely.



**RAC Rescue
helicopter**

RAC Rescue helicopters

In 2003, RAC became the naming rights sponsor of WA's only 24/7 emergency rescue helicopter. For the past 17 years, the helicopters have provided vital search and rescue and critical care medical services to the WA community with 72% of missions flown to regional WA and nearly 70% in response to road trauma. In April 2020 the RAC Rescue helicopters flew their 7,500th mission. The RAC Rescue helicopters are sponsored by RAC, funded by the State Government and managed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES).

Roadside Patrolman, Circa 1980



Australia's first electric highway

RAC has been instrumental in opening up the State to new transport options. In the early 1900s it encouraged and assisted motorists in making some of the first regional car journeys in Western Australia, and in 2015, RAC made it possible for electric vehicles to travel outside of the city. The RAC Electric Highway® was Australia's first network of publicly available electric charging stations. Eleven fast charging stations installed around the south west of Western Australia enables electric vehicle drivers to make long journeys while eliminating issues such as "range anxiety". The RAC Electric Highway® helps support RAC's commitment to sustainable transport options.

RAC Intellibus®

Since 2015, RAC has been working to help prepare a roadmap for how Western Australia can prepare for and transition to driverless vehicles. On 31 August 2016, with support from the WA Government and the City of South Perth, Australia's first public trial of a driverless vehicle was launched. As of September 2020, more than 16,600 passengers have experienced the RAC Intellibus®, which has travelled more than 25,550 kms in autonomous mode. The RAC Intellibus® has made the WA community some of the first people in the world to experience a driverless vehicle in action and demonstrates the changing nature of transport, mobility and road safety in WA.

RAC Intellibus® trial at South Perth foreshore

