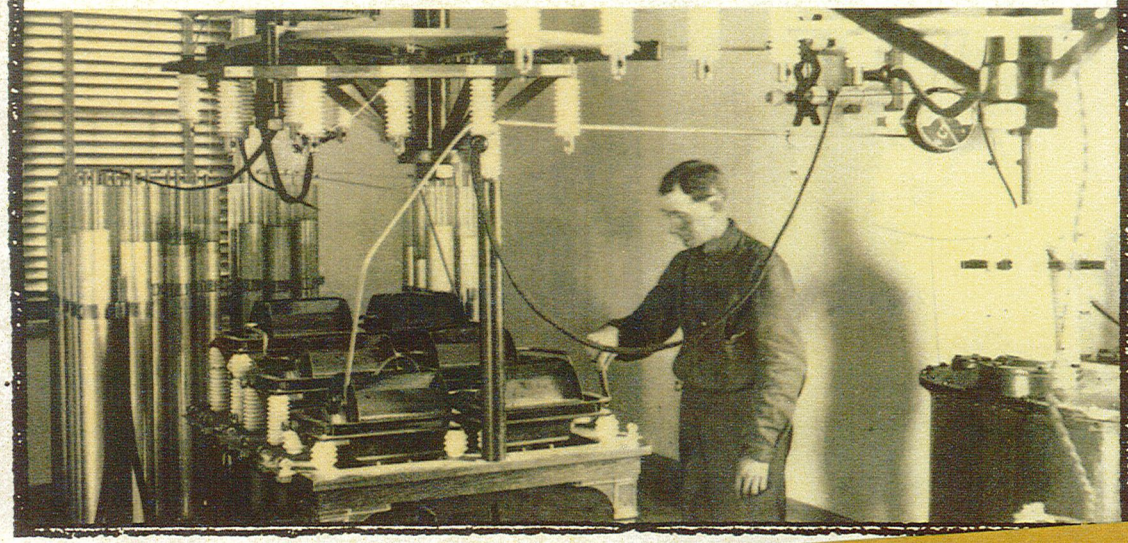
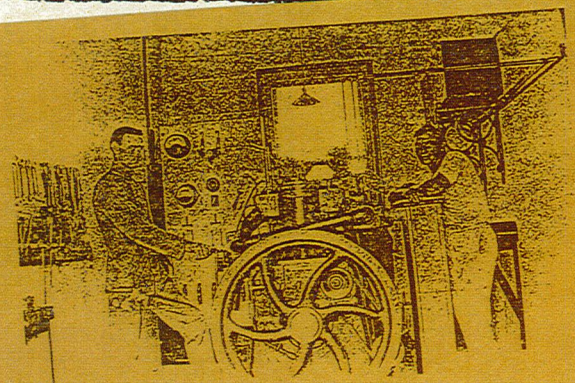


Coast Radio Calling

A pictorial history of the first thirty-five years of the Coastal Radio Service 1912 - 1947

PART 1: The Australian mainland







Early photograph of Guglielmo Marconi standing by his mother, with his elder brother Alfonso.

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Preface

THE HISTORY of Australia's Coastal Radio Service is not simply one of technological achievement, it's a testament to the experienced and dedicated people who frequently endured considerable hardships during the service's early years.

Since the early 1900s, Australia's maritime community has communicated ship-shore and shore-ship via 'Coast Radio'.

Some operators spent years in the lonely outposts of Papua New Guinea, others lived in isolated townships around Australia's vast coastline. Whatever their background, these men had a capacity for hard work and dedication to duty, usually combined with a strong pioneering spirit.

The photographs in this book are taken from OTC's extensive photographic archives. Some were donated by individual staff members or their families, some found their way to the archives from official files, and others were generously donated by the Overseas Telecommunications Veterans' Association (OTVA) — a body of long-serving men and women of the overseas telecommunications service.

Australia's worldwide communications company, AOTC, continues to operate the Coastal Radio Service around our shores — albeit renamed the Maritime Communications Service. Since 1947, some stations have closed, others have been relocated, and new stations have been built. But a vital function of the stations continues to be the safety of life at sea.

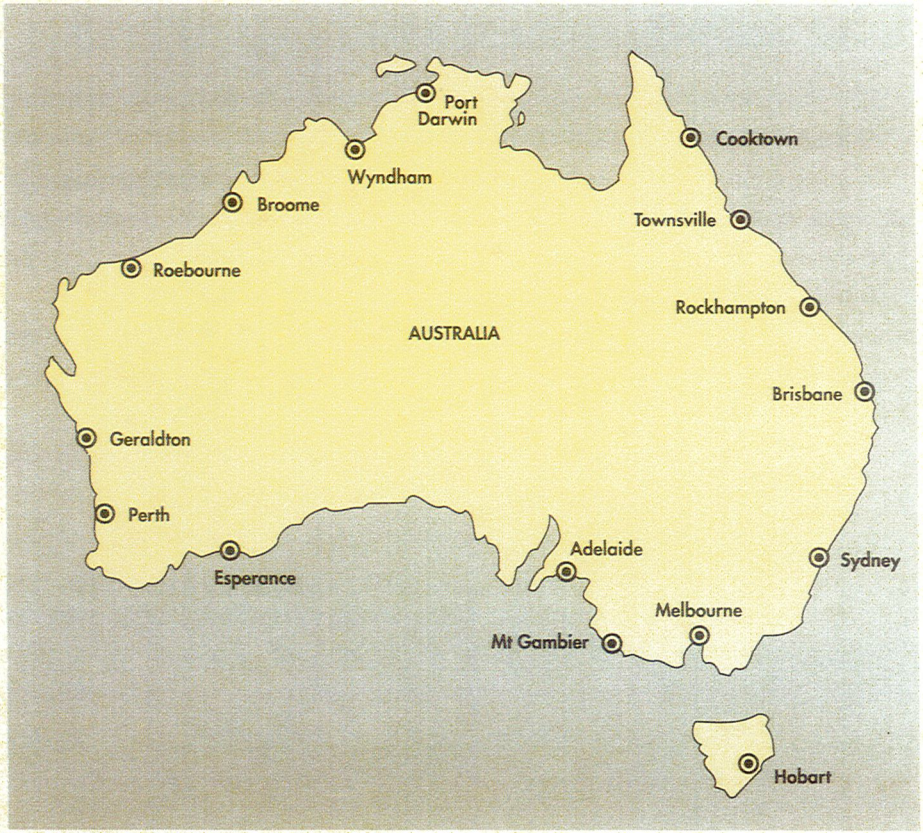
We've come a long way since those early days, but we should never forget the enormous legacy of those who worked to provide the vital links between Australia and the rest of the world.

This book, and others in the series, is dedicated to the memory of that pioneering spirit. The communicators' creed of 1870 remains unchanged today:

The message must get through!

Steve Burdon

S W R Burdon
Group Managing Director
Australian and Overseas Telecommunications Corporation



Mainland Stations of the Coastal Radio Service, 1914

Communication without wires

DEVELOPMENTS in radio technology in the late nineteenth century were rapid and diverse.

In 1865, a Cambridge University Professor, James Clerk Maxwell, proposed his theory on the existence of electromagnetic waves. More than two decades later, their existence was confirmed in a practical demonstration by German physicist, Heinrich Hertz.

In the following decade, significant advances were made in refining Hertz's experiments, including the work of Professor Eduard Branly in France and Sir Oliver Lodge in England.

But it was the work of a young Italian, Guglielmo Marconi, which took the new science out of the laboratory and into the 'real' world.

Marconi lived with his parents in Pontecchio, near Bologna. From boyhood, he had been fascinated with science and in 1894, after studying the work of Hertz, he began his first experiments using electromagnetic waves. Using refined equipment and incorporating a Morse key he found he could send signals from one part of the house to another.

Soon his experiments became more ambitious; his most significant advance being to attach aerials and earths to both transmitter and receiver. He then realised that the distance over which signals could be sent was relative to the size and elevation of the cylindrical aerials.

In 1895, Marconi offered to demonstrate his new signalling system to the Italian Government. His offer was declined. Undeterred, he sailed for England, hoping to interest the British Government in his inventions.

In June 1896 Marconi applied for, and was granted, the first patent for wireless telegraphy. The following year he formed the Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company and built the very first coastal radio station; an experimental station on the Isle of Wight.

Within a few years, a chain of radio stations had been completed around the English coast. Marconi continued to conduct some amazing demonstrations, the most spectacular of which was to pass radio signals across the Atlantic Ocean in 1901.

Australia's Coastal Radio Service

IN 1901, the Marconi Company approached the Australian Government with a proposal to connect Australia and New Zealand by wireless, but it was not until 1906 that the company was granted a temporary licence to conduct trials between Devonport in Tasmania and Queenscliff in Victoria.

The Postmaster General's Department was given full control of wireless communications in Australia under the Wireless Telegraphy Act, passed by the Australian Parliament in 1905.

By 1909, the threat of war was increasing, and the Government decided to establish wireless telegraphic stations around Australia's coast as a means of gathering naval intelligence, and for the safety of life at sea.

Tenders were called to erect two high-powered stations in Sydney and Perth. The successful bidder was the newly formed Australasian Wireless Company.

The company's activities were further broadened when, in 1910, it was granted a licence to operate an experimental radio station at the back of the *Bulletin* offices in Sydney.

This station later moved to the Australia Hotel, which became Australia's first coastal radio station after the Australasian Wireless Company was granted a licence to handle public traffic to and from ships at sea. It closed in 1912 when the Pennant Hills radio station opened.

Another licence was granted to Father Archibald Shaw, a priest and former telegraphist, to build an experimental wireless station in Randwick, Sydney. Later, Father Shaw began manufacturing wireless equipment from a site next to this station; he also gained a licence to operate a radio station on King Island in Bass Strait.

With a change in Government in 1910, the Prime Minister appointed a wireless expert — Graham Balsillie — to speed up the construction of the wireless stations. Melbourne Radio was the first station completed, opening on 8 February 1912.

A series of legal disputes between the Australasian Wireless Company, Telefunken and the Marconi Company led to the formation of Amalgamated Wireless Australasia Ltd (AWA Ltd) in 1913.

Meanwhile, the construction of coastal radio stations continued with 19 stations

being erected between 1912 and 1914.

In 1912 the Australian Government passed the Navigation Act which made it compulsory for all ships in Australian waters carrying more than 50 passengers to have wireless apparatus.

The sinking of the *Titanic* in April 1912 led to nations around the world adopting a uniform code of marine safety standards and procedures — the SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) Convention of 1914. Some years earlier, SOS had been adopted as the standard distress signal.

During World War I, the Department of the Navy took control of the stations; this responsibility reverted to the Postmaster General's Department in 1920.

Throughout this period, Ernest Fisk, managing director of AWA, had been expanding the company's commercial ventures.

In 1918, he conducted successful trials from his home in Wahroonga, Sydney, in which the Australian Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, sent a message direct from London to Australia.

The British Post Office then proposed building a chain of stations at regular intervals across the world, but the Australian Government strongly objected, fearing that Australia would be left isolated at the end of the chain.

In 1920, AWA submitted its own plan for a direct Australia-Britain wireless link; this proposal was accepted by the Australian Government in 1922.

The agreement gave AWA exclusive rights to build and operate any stations necessary to establish direct wireless contact between Australia and England. AWA also took control of the existing radio stations.

After it took over the Coastal Radio Service (CRS), AWA embarked on a program of modernisation and split the Coastal Radio Service into two administrative arms: The Coastal Radio Service, comprising the stations of mainland Australia, Thursday Island, and Port Moresby and its outstations in Papua; and the Island Radio Service, made up of the New Guinea stations and several remote island stations around Australia's shores.

In England, Marconi was experimenting with short-wave technology; the first short-wave message was received in Australia on 6 March 1924.

In 1925, AWA introduced a radio telephone service for ships at sea, but the main form of communication still remained wireless telegraphy. On 8 April 1927, the Australia-Britain beam wireless service opened, and AWA established a new receiving station at La Perouse.

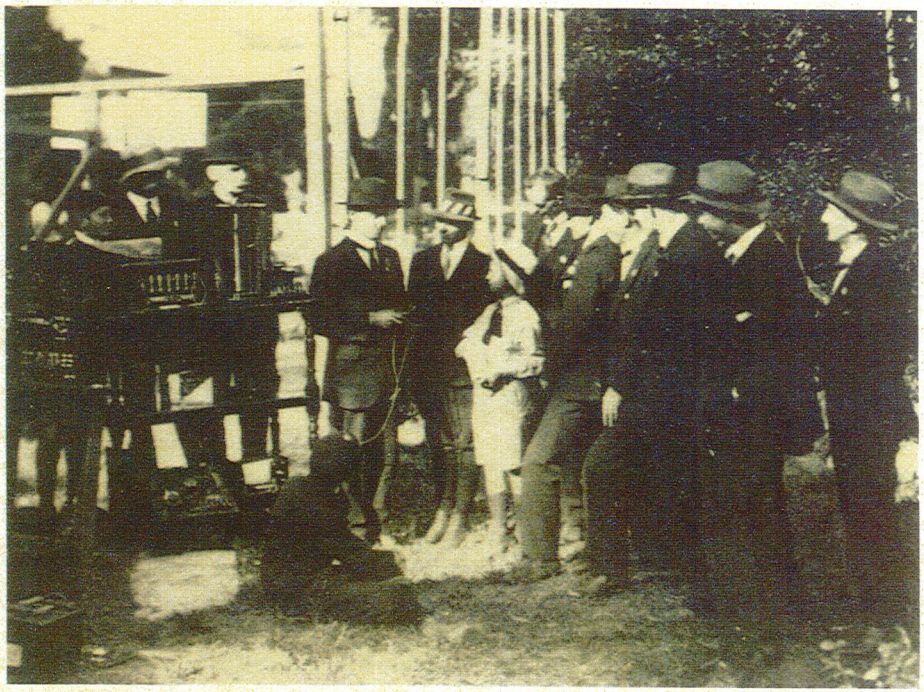
Most stations in the CRS were equipped with short-wave radio in the late 1920s and early 1930s. A direct service was opened between Fiji and Sydney Radio in 1928 and Sydney Radio became the radio hub of the Pacific.

By the mid-1930s several coastal radio stations were used as control centres for aeradio services.

The CRS played an important role in Australia's defence during World War II; its stations participated in the vital Coast Watching Scheme and provided links between naval ships and the Royal Australian Navy communication stations.

After the war ended, the CRS was purchased from AWA by the Australian Government, who administered the service until OTC took operational control on 1 February 1947.

At his home in the Sydney suburb of Wahroonga, Ernest Fisk (centre) demonstrates receiving equipment for the first radio message from England to Australia.



Keeping watch over ships at sea

WHEN the Coastal Radio Service was first established, many of its early operators were post office telegraphists working in relatively comfortable offices in the cities and towns of Australia. Others came from the ranks of the Royal Australian Navy or British merchant ships, and still more were telegraphists recruited from the various State railways.

These men were to enter a service which saw them at the forefront of new technological advances in wireless communications. The first operators, although trained in Morse Code, were unfamiliar with the new radio equipment. Little formal training was offered until the Marconi School of Wireless opened in 1913 to train marine operators.

Operators signed up for a period of at least three years and could be sent to some of the most remote parts of Australia, and the Territories of Papua and New Guinea.

Some of the Papua and New Guinea regions were barely civilised. Operators were posted to small Government outposts or to remote mining sites where the native population had rarely seen a white man. Others were stationed in locations which were physically, to some, like paradise on earth.

Whatever their posting, most of these men had to suffer some physical and emotional hardships. In tropical postings there was the risk of disease; food supplies were sent at only monthly or bi-monthly intervals; fresh food was sometimes scarce, and recreational facilities were limited.

For many, the greatest hardship was being away from family and friends for long periods of time. For some, the battle with loneliness became a mighty struggle.

There were, however, some material rewards for such privations. The cost of living in lonely outposts was negligible and could be a means of saving money; those posted to Papua and New Guinea escaped the rigours of the Depression and some grew to love the region, becoming part-time gold prospectors or plantation owners.

During World War II, operators in Papua and New Guinea played a vital role in the defence of Australia, but many barely escaped with their lives.

Despite these often difficult conditions, many operators remained with the CRS for the whole of their working lives.

Adelaide Radio (VIA)

THE COASTAL radio station in Adelaide opened on 1 October 1912 — the sixth coastal radio station to be built in Australia and the last of the capital city stations.



Staff at Adelaide Radio, 1916

The station was constructed on Grand Junction Road in Rosewater, about three kilometres from the centre of Adelaide. It operated from 8 am to midnight every day of the week, and was one of the first points of contact for ships sailing south from Hong Kong and Japan.

Apart from its major function of listening for ships' messages, Adelaide also handled traffic to and from the State telegraph system, and broadcast time signals to shipping.

When the Royal Australian Navy took control of the CRS in 1915, staff at VIA became naval personnel.

After World War I, the Postmaster General's Department regained control of the Service, and made plans to upgrade the stations. These plans were shelved when the Coastal Radio Service changed hands yet again and came under the control of AWA in 1922.

Further developments followed: the introduction of short-wave radio communication in 1923; the establishment of a radio telephone service between small ships of the Adelaide Steamship Company and the station in 1929; and the installation of a transmitter connected to Parafield airport for two-way radio communication between aircraft and airfield in 1934.

The Rosewater site for the Adelaide station was abandoned in 1963 when operations moved to a new station built by OTC at McLaren Vale.

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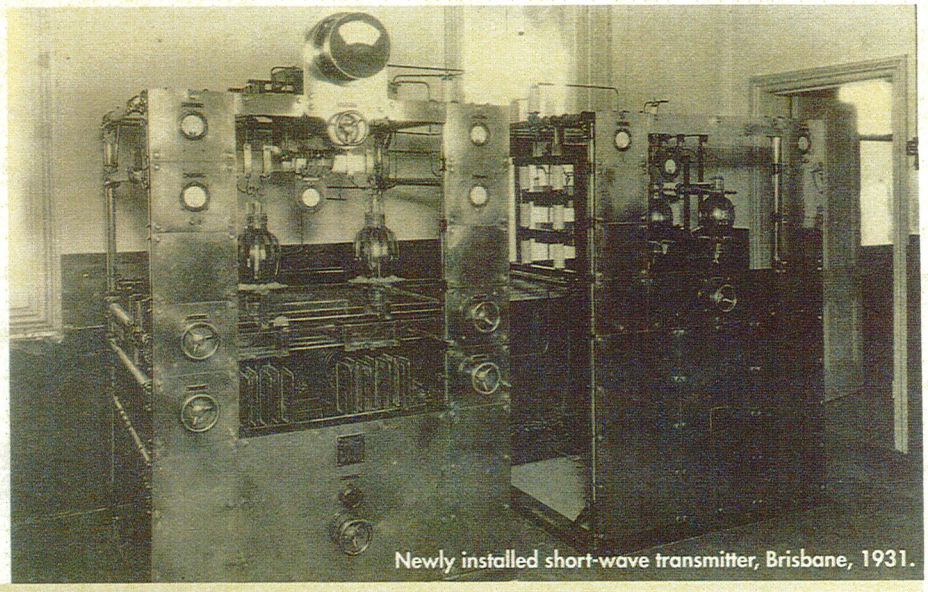
Brisbane Radio (VIB)

BRISBANE Radio was the fourth coastal radio station to be established by the Postmaster General's Office, opening on 2 September 1912.

The station was built at Pinkenba, a small rural village about 13 kilometres from Brisbane. This site was chosen because the air was cooler than in Brisbane itself — important to ensure the efficient operation of the early crystal receiver sets.

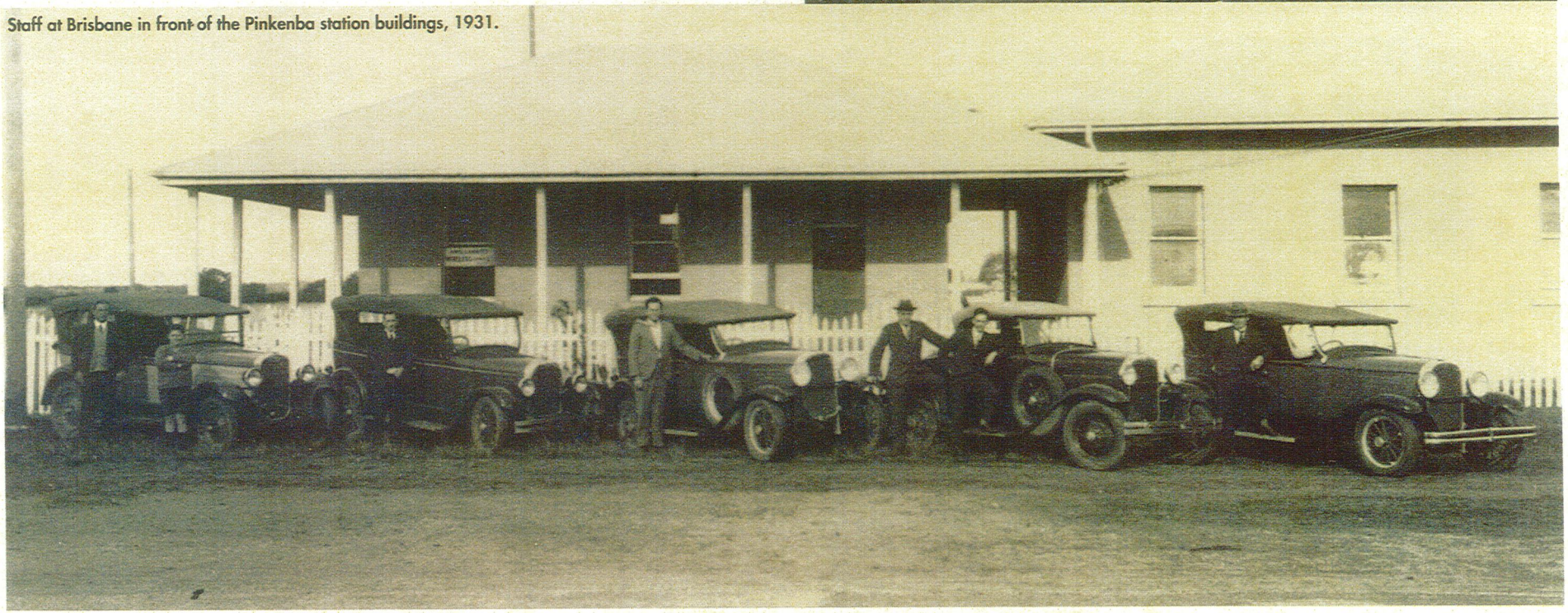
Brisbane was a continuous watch station and acted as a central communications office for several lighthouses in the region. Its facilities were upgraded to include short-wave transmitters in 1931.

In 1943, a high-powered transmitter was installed so Brisbane Radio could transmit on a high frequency as part of the British and Allied Merchant Shipping Service. From 1943, the station also transmitted the ABC time signals at 0900 and 2200 hours.



Newly installed short-wave transmitter, Brisbane, 1931.

Staff at Brisbane in front of the Pinkenba station buildings, 1931.



Broome Radio (VIO)

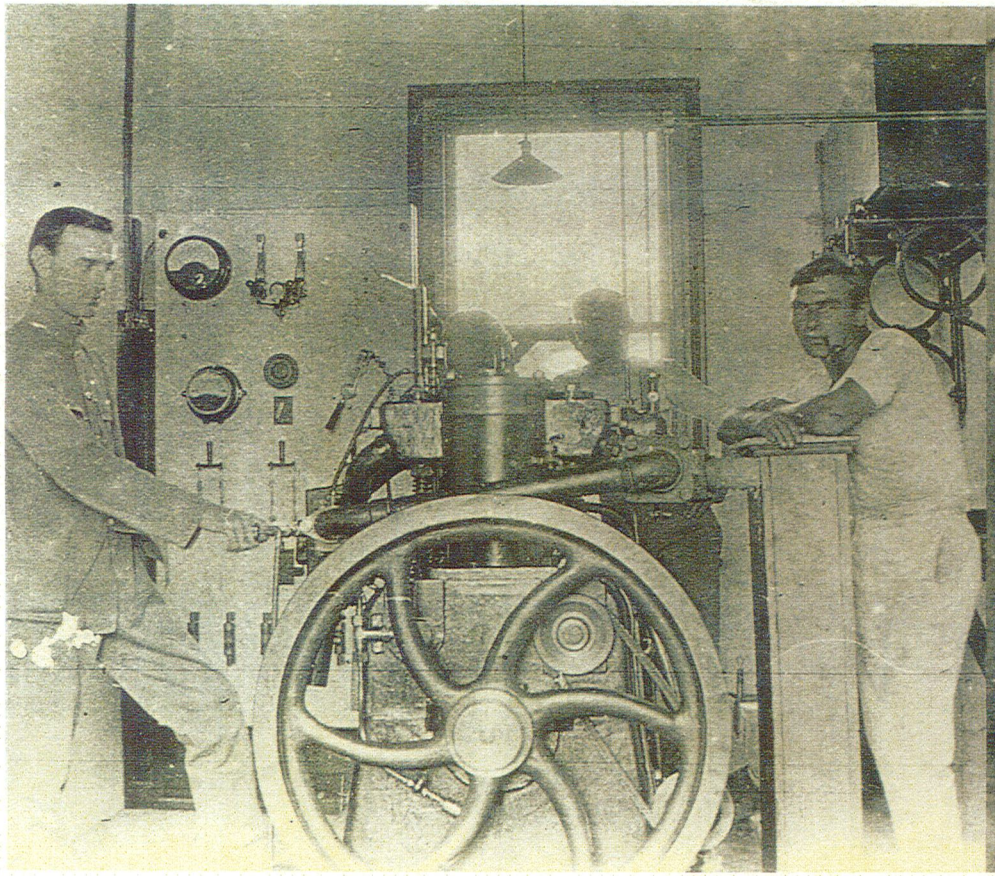
BROOME Radio opened on 18 August 1913 and was one of the last stations to be built by the Postmaster General's Department. Broome is located approximately 2,000 kilometres north-west of Perth, in an area which, from December to March, experiences the wet season.

In 1913, Broome was the centre of the pearl fishing industry in Western Australia. During the wet season, fishing boats and pearling luggers were laid up and it was quite common for the town to be partially wrecked by the short, sharp storms or 'cockeye Bobs'.

Station staff were an integral part of the small community and took part in its social and sporting activities. Accommodation was scarce, and for many operators and their wives, postings to places such as Broome meant painful separation from their children, who often had to be sent to city boarding schools.

The 1970s were to see increased demand from shipping serving the iron-ore ports of Australia's north-west; this resulted in an expansion of activities for Broome Radio, and construction of an additional station — Carnarvon Radio (VIC).

Inside the engine room of Broome radio station, 1913.



Staff of Broome radio station after a hard day's work repairing the Shaw engine, 1914.



Cooktown Radio (VIC)

COOKTOWN RADIO opened on 12 June 1913. Cooktown is situated at the mouth of Endeavour River, approximately 160 kilometres north of Cairns; in its early days it was the terminal for large interstate passenger vessels travelling to North Queensland ports.

During the Palmer goldfields rush, the population swelled to almost 20,000, but after the gold boom the population rapidly declined. By 1931, there were only about 300 residents in Cooktown and much of the town was in disrepair.

Cooktown Radio served as the main station for traffic from New Guinea but after the stations were upgraded, Townsville took over this function (in 1930) and Cooktown reverted to handling ships' traffic. Messages to and from Thursday Island were sometimes routed through Cooktown if the land-line was out of action.

By 1930, a declining population meant that Cooktown was only serviced by a weekly launch bringing mail and supplies from Cairns. Two small cargo vessels delivered stores once a month from Brisbane and Sydney.

Conditions improved when, in 1936, an air service was established between Cooktown and Cairns which operated two or three times a day.

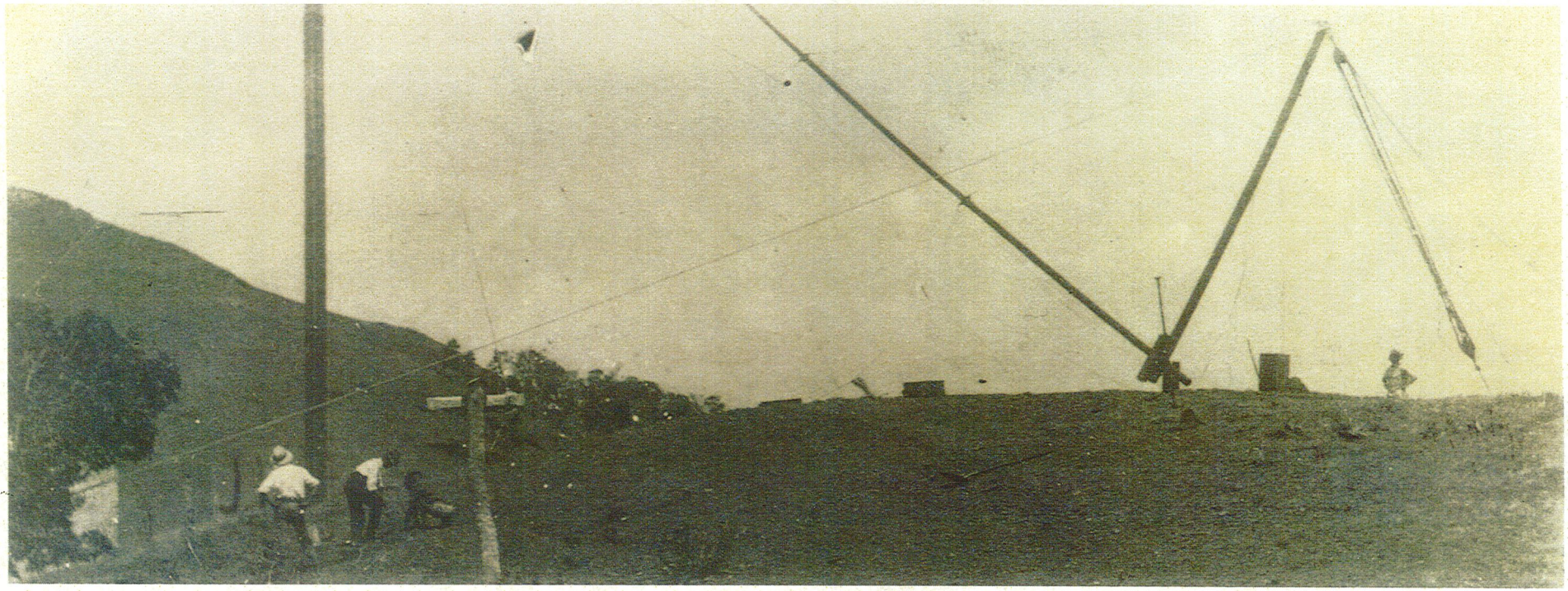
Although temperatures often reached into the high 30s, the weather at Cooktown was tempered by south-east trade winds, which made life tolerable for the radio station employees. Staff were able to enjoy outdoor pursuits such as swimming at nearby Finch Bay, fossicking in old tin mines, fishing and wild pig hunting.

The main complaint by Cooktown staff was negotiating the 200 metre high hill, affectionately known as 'Old Grassy', on which the radio station was built.

Generally, staff mingled with local residents and, over the years, many became assimilated into the local community.

Cooktown Radio was closed a few years after OTC took over the Coastal Radio Service in 1947.

Jury rig being used to hoist a new radio mast at Cooktown Radio, 1927.



Darwin Radio (VID)

DARWIN RADIO began operating on 25 September 1913. The station was situated near the junction of Wireless Hill Road, McMinn Street and Daly Street in an area known as 'Frog Hollow', which faced the entrance to the Botanical Gardens.

Then Darwin was little more than a shanty town, and suitable housing was hard to find, so the Department of the Navy commissioned six houses on a site near the radio station, overlooking the Botanical Gardens.

Life in Darwin's tropical conditions was difficult, with no fresh cow's milk, limited supplies of fresh meat and no refrigeration. Lamb could be bought only every six weeks from a steamer service sailing to Australia from Singapore.

Medical services were also scarce; there was only one qualified medical practitioner for the entire Northern Territory.

The conditions for reception of radio signals were particularly bad immediately before and during the wet season, and at times the atmospherics were so severe that it was impossible to read messages from a ship anchored in the harbour.

Ships' messages routed through Darwin were few, but within several years of AWA's control of the CRS, Darwin became the contact point for many outstations in the Territory. These radio outposts, operated by cattle station owners, missionaries and hunters, communicated with Darwin using pedal-powered radio sets, later replaced by teleradios.

Darwin also became an integral part of the Northern Territory Medical Service, and when the air-ambulance service was established, Darwin was used as a radio base.

With the advent of a regular commercial aviation service, aeradio became the next step in the radio revolution. In 1934, AWA equipped Darwin Radio with special equipment so it could communicate with aircraft on the London-Australia airmail/passenger service operated jointly by Qantas and Imperial Airways. Darwin Radio monitored the Darwin-Timor leg of the flight.

From 1938, the Commonwealth Government took responsibility for aeradio services, and AWA supplied and installed transmitters all over Australia. AWA operated these stations until 1939, when the Department of Civil Aviation began to take control. Many radio operators opted to work in the new service.

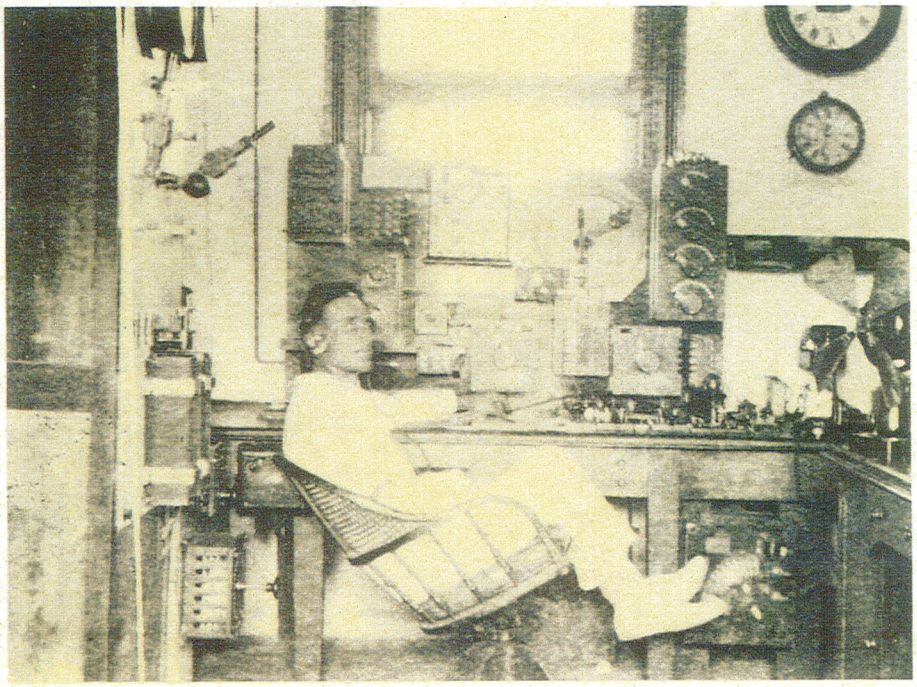
During World War II, Darwin was one of the stations intimately involved in the Royal Australian Navy's Coast Watching Scheme. All outstations around the northern and north-western coast were on the alert for enemy activity, and Darwin was used as a link between these coast watching stations and Naval Intelligence.

In 1941, a new RAN radio station was built in Darwin and took over the naval maritime functions from Darwin Radio. Darwin reverted to communications with merchant shipping.

Perhaps the most eventful period in the history of Darwin Radio was its partial destruction by Japanese bombing in 1942. The station was damaged in two raids, one in June and the most severe in August.

Until 1950, when a new station opened at Parap near Darwin, VID managed to keep operating under makeshift conditions in the old radio station buildings. Housing was sub-standard, but the staff battled under these post-war conditions, despite many frustrations and set-backs.

Radio operator seated at an operating desk at Darwin, 1919.



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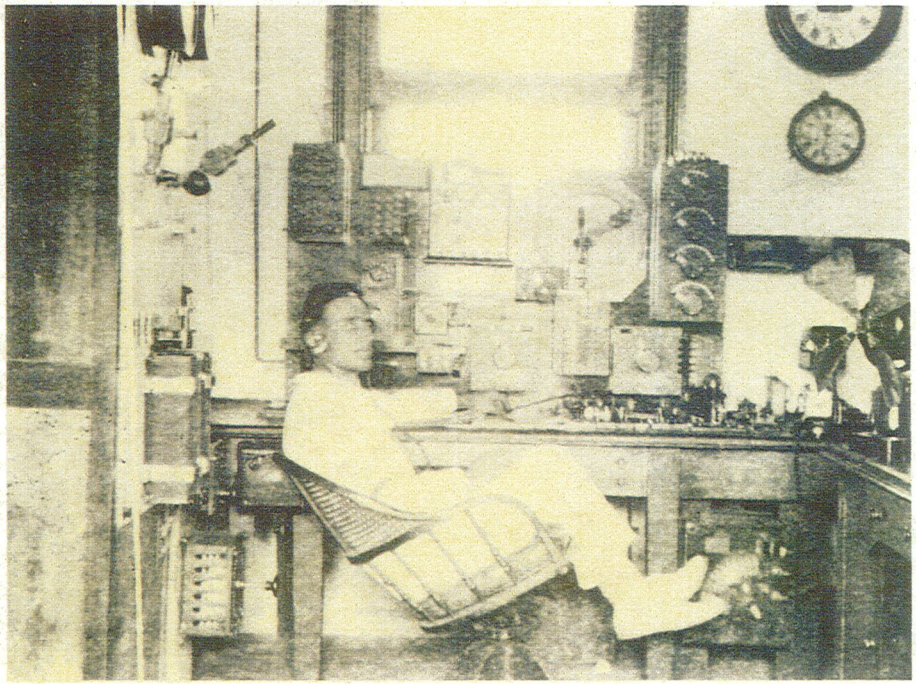
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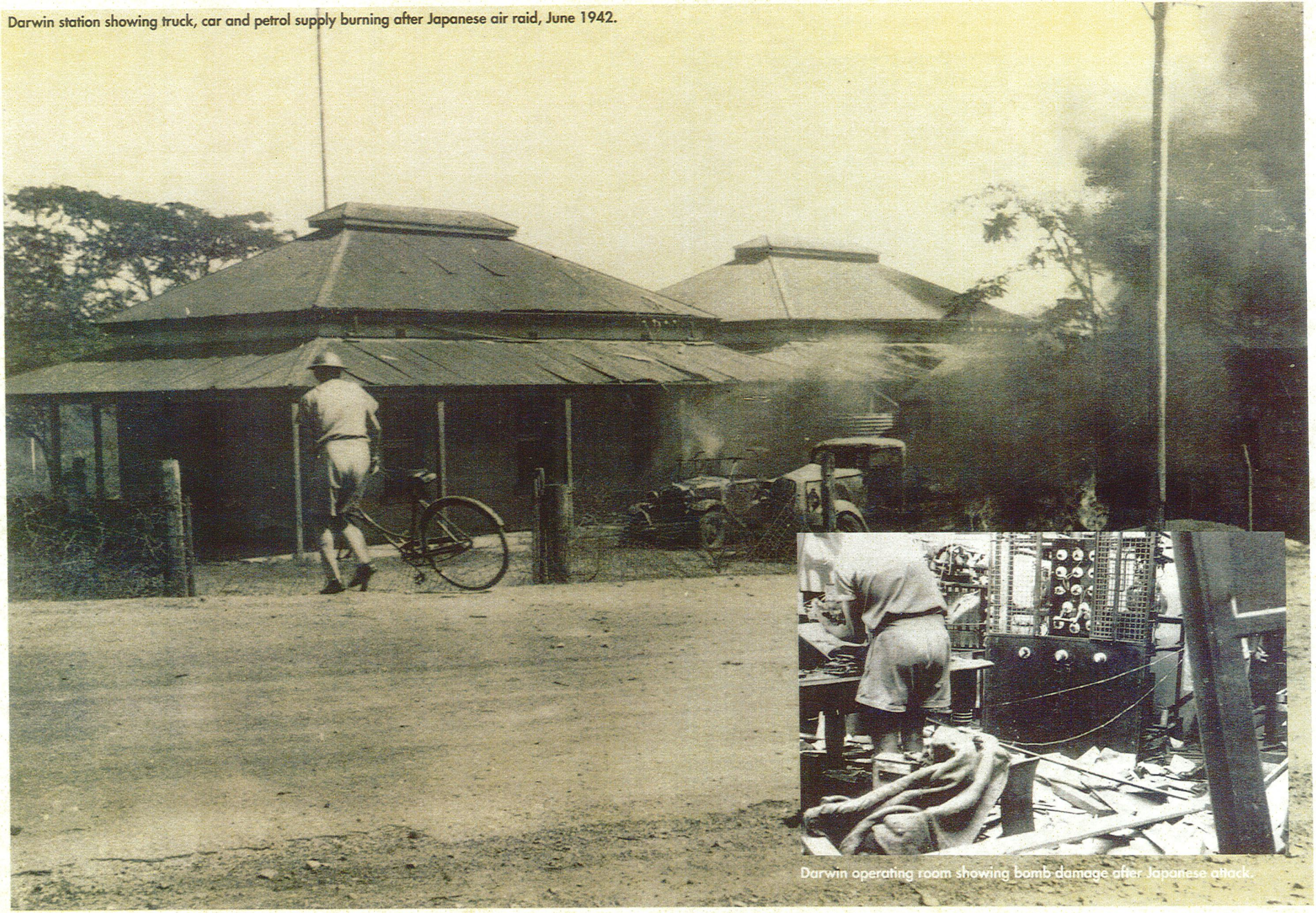
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Radio operator seated at an operating desk at Darwin, 1919.

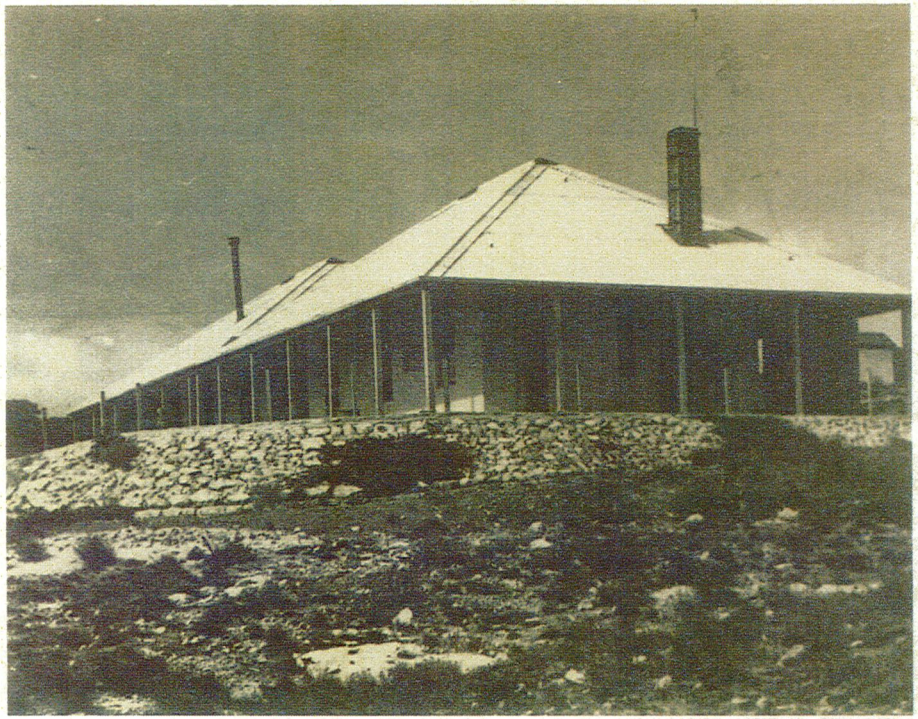




Darwin station showing truck, car and petrol supply burning after Japanese air raid, June 1942.

Darwin operating room showing bomb damage after Japanese attack.

Esperance Radio (VIE)



Esperance radio station buildings c. 1940.

ESPERANCE is situated on the south coast of Australia, about 724 kilometres east of Perth. The town is built on the edge of a heart-shaped bay, bounded by the sea on one side and on the other by brackish and fresh water lakes. The climate is good all year round and tempered by sea breezes.

Esperance Radio, which commenced operation on 21 July 1913, was located on a hill known as 'Wireless Hill' which gave a good view of the bay and Recherche Archipelago.

The radio station was often the first contact for ships coming to Australia via the Cape of Good Hope.

The town gained note with the opening of nearby goldfields and the population swelled but, as the lure of gold waned, the bulk of the population migrated to other goldfields.

Little was done to the area until, with the advent of the Esperance railway around 1930, moves were made to develop an agricultural industry — particularly the growing of wheat.

By 1931, Esperance had three staff, whose leisure was of a sporting nature — shooting, fishing, tennis and so on. According to one operator, 'There are worse places from a sporting man's standpoint, but socially and from the average woman's point of view, there are many better'.

Geraldton Radio (VIN)

GERALDTON RADIO opened on 12 May 1913. The town is situated about 300 kilometres north of Perth and, at the time the station was opened, was one of the largest wheat ports in Australia; it boasted a population of 2,000 - 3,000. It was also a booming fishing port.

Geraldton Radio maintained a 24-hour watch on coastal waters to the west and north-west, and assisted Perth Radio by handling traffic overloads when that station was busy.

After AWA took control of the CRS, some modifications and renovations were carried out to Geraldton in 1930. A new mast was erected and a new 2 kw transmitter was installed for coastal radio work.

Hobart Radio (VIH)

HOBART RADIO opened on 30 April 1912. The station was built at the base of Mount Wellington in the Queens Domain, high above the Derwent River; its original function was to keep in touch with steamers travelling on coastal runs.

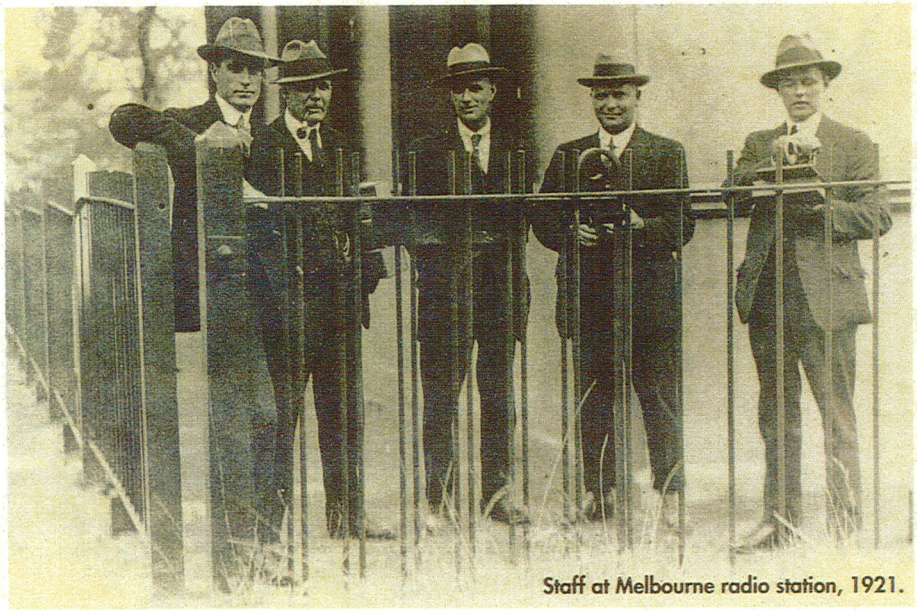
After AWA took over the Coastal Radio Service in 1922, Hobart was partially modernised and its equipment updated, although the station buildings remained the same, apart from some modifications to their internal structure.

During World War II, Hobart Radio was on continuous watch and a further two staff were assigned to the station which also continued to serve as a central communications 'hub' for several outstations.



Hobart radio station staff (standing), with operators' wives, 1943.

Melbourne Radio (VIM)



Staff at Melbourne radio station, 1921.

MELBOURNE RADIO was the first of the Government-owned stations in operation, opening on 8 February 1912. The main function of the station, located in Melbourne's Domain, was to communicate with ships travelling down the east coast of Australia. It was a continuous watch station and also issued twice daily time signals.

During World War I, Melbourne was a training post for many operators.

In May 1923, radios were installed into police cars in Melbourne and staff from the station trained police in the operation of these new wireless sets. VIM became the control centre of the infant police radio network.

When AWA began its modernisation program of coastal radio stations in the late 1920s, it decided there was no need for the old station in the Domain.

In 1931, the transmitter was transferred to the AWA transmitting centre at Braybrook and the receiver was relocated to Rockbank. Both transmitter and receiver were controlled from AWA's premises in Queen Street, Melbourne.

The old buildings of the radio station in the Domain were demolished in May 1932.

Mt Gambier Radio (VIY)

IN 1912, the Commonwealth Government bought land two kilometres north of the town of Mt Gambier in South Australia on which to build a coastal radio station.

Its original function was to act as a relay station between Melbourne and Adelaide, operating when daylight conditions could cause problems for long-distance transmission.

The buildings were double stone structures, each comprising two main rooms: one for radio equipment and an office, the other for power plant.

During World War I, Mt Gambier operated as a continuous watch station, the number of staff was increased, and the station put under guard by the local militia.

When the war ended, staff numbers declined. The station soon became a one-man operation, working seven hours a day and four hours on Saturday mornings.

With the installation of more sophisticated equipment at Adelaide and Melbourne, the Mt Gambier station closed in 1920.

Perth Radio - Applecross (VIP)

PERTH RADIO was established at Applecross, a site midway between Perth and Fremantle on the south side of the Swan River. This high-powered station opened on 30 September 1912.

An extremely busy station, Perth issued time signals, weather reports, handled traffic with Sydney and worked ships from long distances.

In the station's early days, the only transport to Perth was by means of a ferry across the Swan River, a three kilometre walk from the station. Flies and sand fleas were of almost plague proportions.

By 1931, Applecross was less isolated. Bitumen roads had been built to Perth and Fremantle and the ferry service ceased operating. The bushland along the roadsides had been cleared, houses built and the beginnings of a shopping centre could even be seen. Staff housing had been updated to include electric power, water heaters, septic tanks and all 'mod cons'.

Over the years the equipment was updated both by the Navy and AWA, and

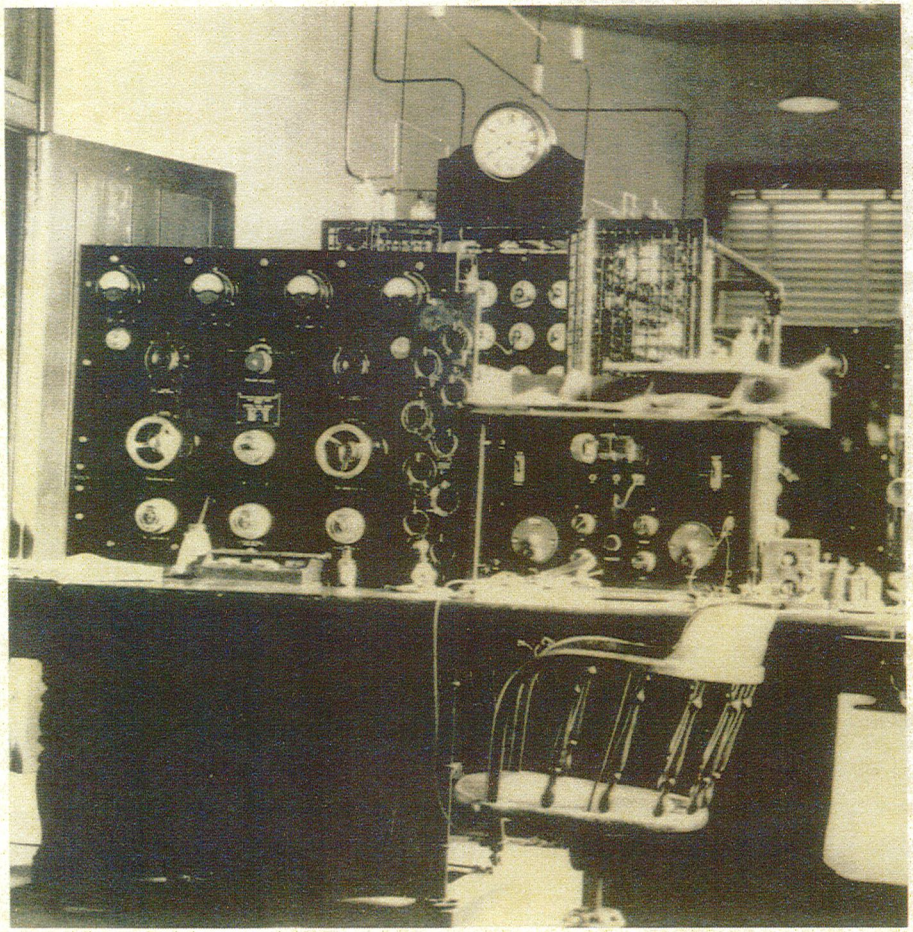
eventually operated using mains power. In 1932, a 500 watt transmitter was installed for use by the 6PR radio broadcasting station.

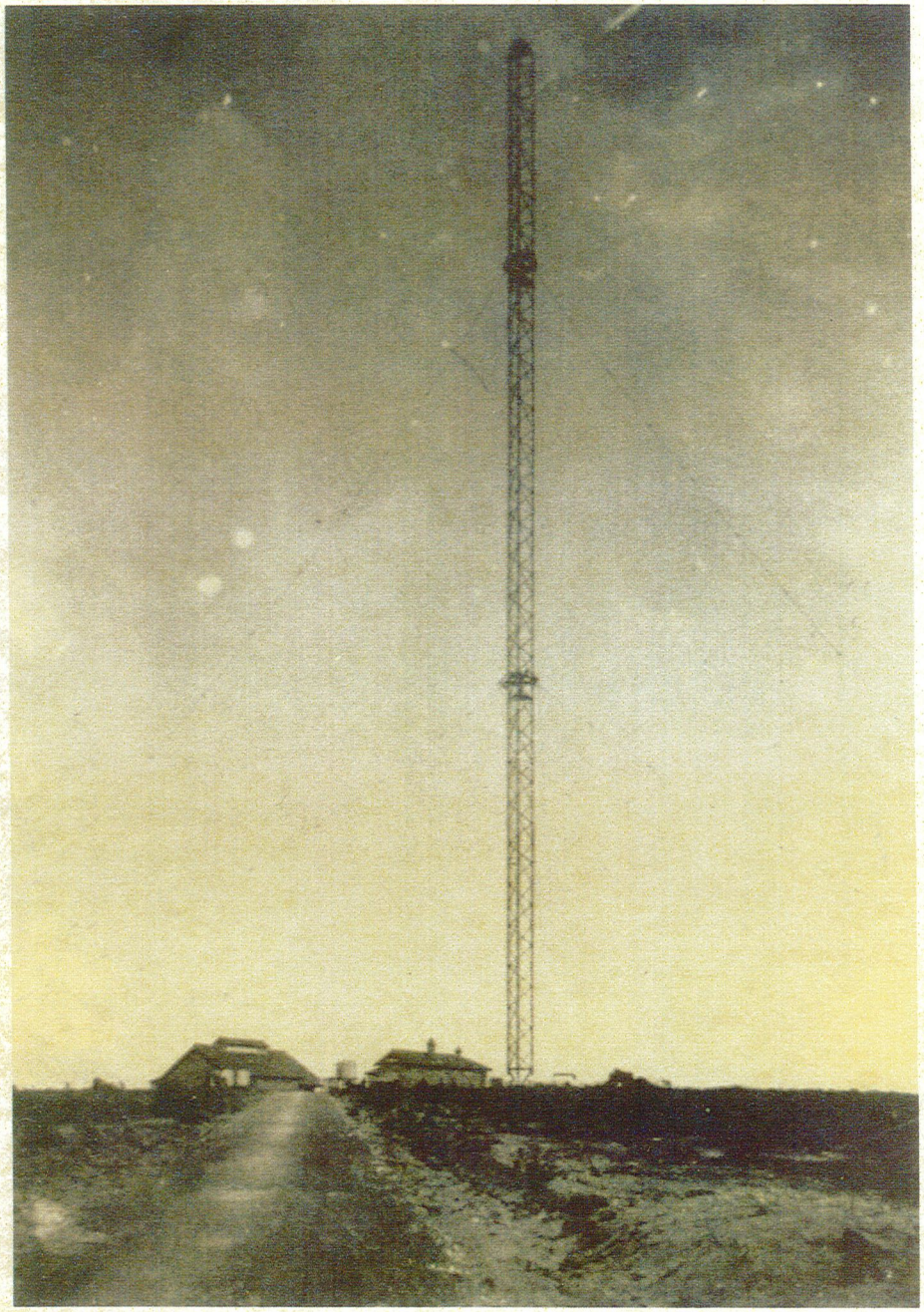
From 1939, the station operated as a communications point for naval shipping. During World War II, it served as a relay station on the international radiotelegraph circuit, issuing fleet weather forecasts four times a day, ABC time signals (after 1943) and, after 1944, had a triple watch on high frequency work with ships at sea.

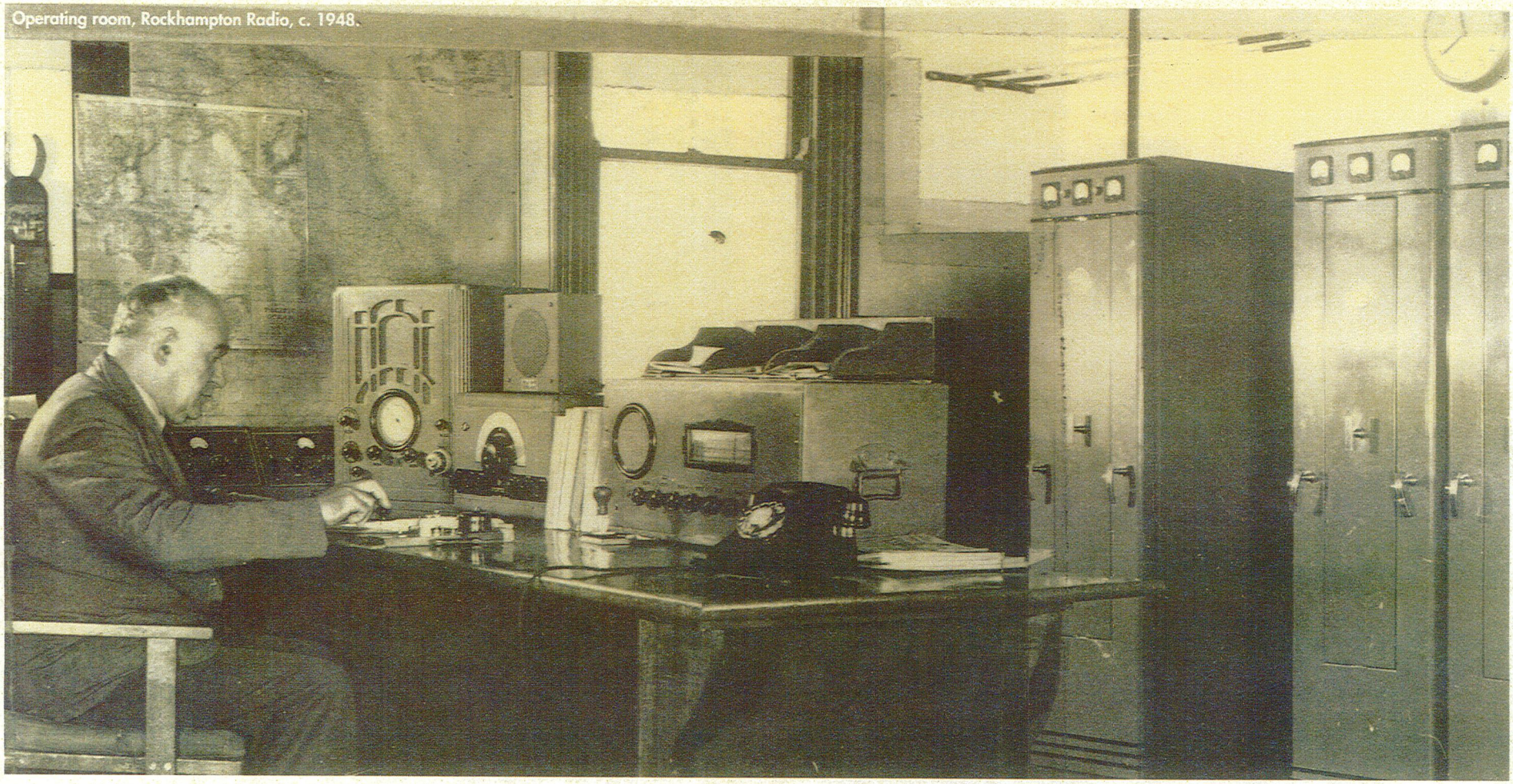
Perth Radio was still operating from the same site when OTC took over the CRS in 1947. The station at Applecross closed in 1968 and became a telecommunications museum.

▶ **Distant view of the radio station at Applecross, c. 1912.**

▼ **Perth Radio operators' desk, early years.**







Operating room, Rockhampton Radio, c. 1948.

Rockhampton Radio (VIR)

ROCKHAMPTON RADIO STATION began operating on 24 May 1913. The station was situated 45 kilometres up-river, in the old part of town, and was used mainly to keep in radio contact with larger vessels sailing up the east coast.

In its early days the station was well-known for its involvement in Outpost Radio, keeping outlying communities and cattle stations in touch with civilisation.

Roeburne Radio (VIZ)

ROEBURNE is situated on the west coast of Australia between Broome and Geraldton. The radio station at Roeburne opened on 26 January 1914, as one of the original chain of coastal radio stations. It was established to ensure continuous communications for ships travelling along the west coast.

The traffic handled by the station was minimal and it closed down about 1920, before AWA took control of the CRS.

Sydney Radio - Pennant Hills and La Perouse (VIS)

SYDNEY RADIO station was built by the Australasian Wireless Company after it won the contract to build high-powered radio stations in Sydney and Perth.

Situated 20 kilometres to the north-west of the city centre at Pennant Hills, the station opened on 19 August 1912 with the brief to watch over Pacific shipping and to communicate with the Perth station. It issued time signals twice daily and weather forecasts to shipping.

Sydney Radio was destined to become the centre of communications in the Pacific as well as being the major coastal radio station in Australia. In 1925, the station was chosen to conduct the first short-wave long distance ship-to-shore radio telegraphy experiments in Australia.

The station kept in constant contact with the *SS Niagara*, which had been fitted with short-wave radio equipment, as it voyaged from Australia to Vancouver. Soon after, Pennant Hills was equipped with a radio telephone transmitter, and established communications with Sydney-based fishing trawlers. Later, several NSW fishing fleets equipped their vessels with radio telephones.

The Pennant Hills station served as both a transmitting and receiving centre for the CRS until 1926. With the increased growth and development of short-wave services to ships, the receiving facilities were moved to a site at Willoughby on Sydney's North Shore.

Meanwhile, a new receiving facility was under construction at La Perouse, overlooking Botany Bay. On 28 February 1927, this new site became the permanent CRS receiving station.

The station at Pennant Hills remained as a transmitting site, but its activities were not just confined to coastal radio services. By 1928, high frequency equipment had been installed, giving Pennant Hills direct communications with Suva and Rabaul.

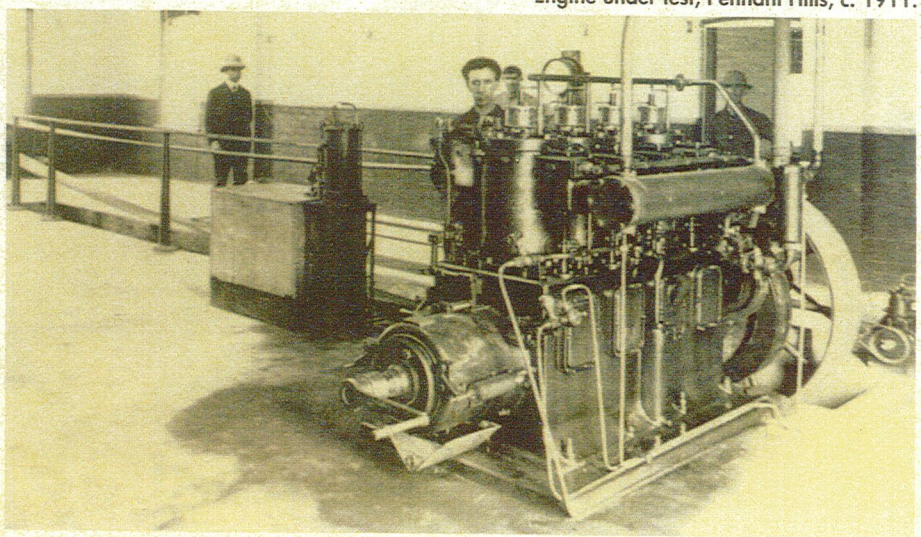
As AWA continued to upgrade and modernise its facilities, Sydney could maintain direct contact with the remaining stations in the CRS network and, by 1931, was in direct contact with Port Moresby. The radio broadcasting station 2FC also transmitted from the Pennant Hills site.

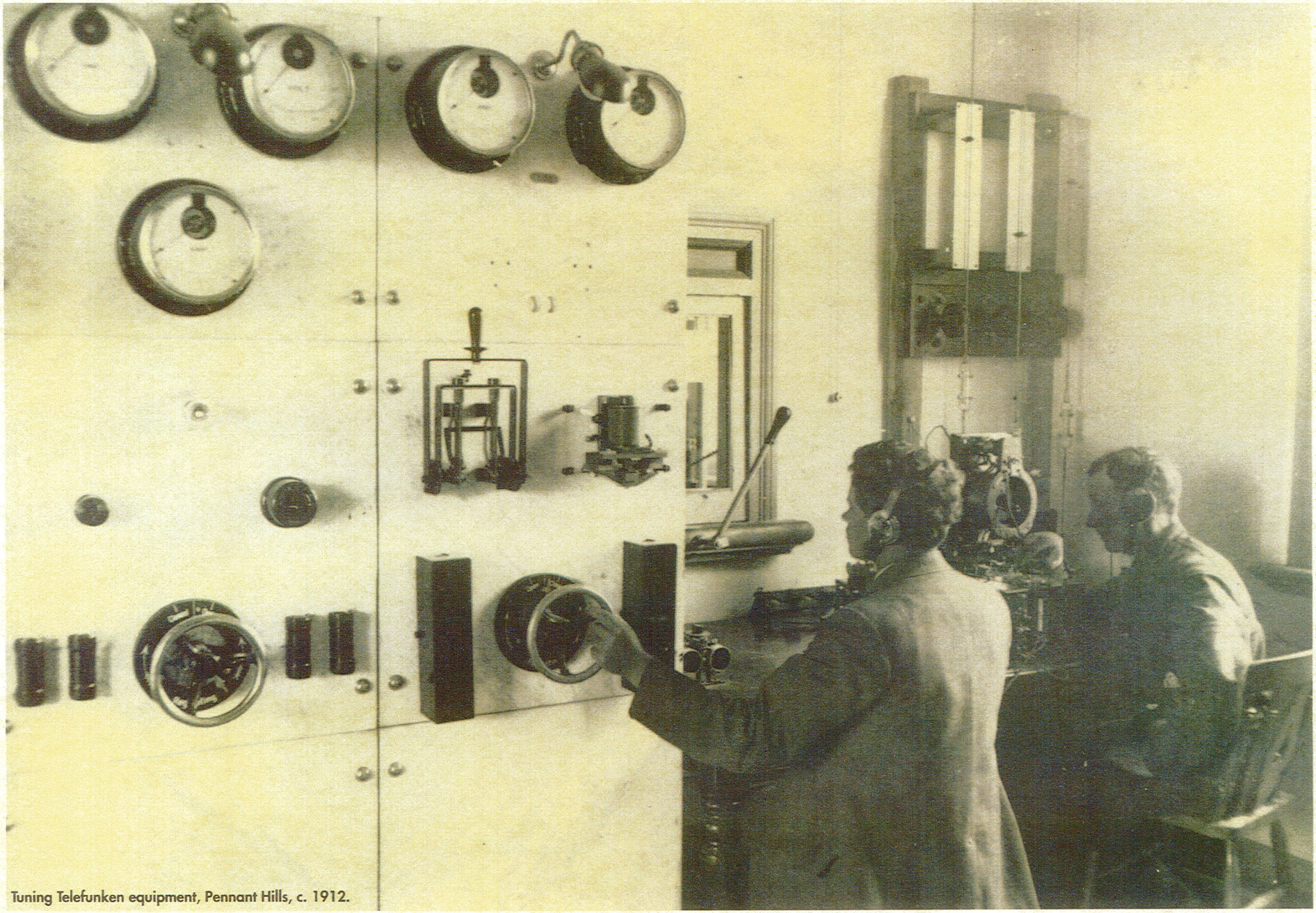
After OTC took control, it bought two new sites in 1950; one at Doonside and the other at Bringelly, west of Parramatta. The transmitting functions of Sydney Radio were moved to Doonside, and the receiving functions to Bringelly in 1955/56. La Perouse remained in operation using the callsign VIS. It continues to be the most important station in Australia's Coastal Radio Service.

Operator at La Perouse receiving station in the 1920s.



Engine under test, Pennant Hills, c. 1911.





Tuning Telefunken equipment, Pennant Hills, c. 1912.

Townsville Radio (VIT)

TOWNSVILLE RADIO began operating on 7 August 1913, its primary function was to provide a coast watch service for the treacherous waters off Townsville and the Great Barrier Reef.

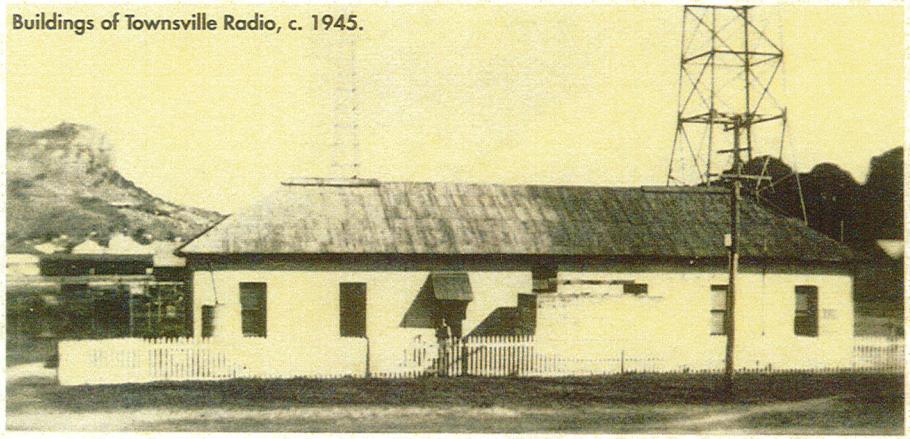
Other functions were added, including receiving weather reports from the Willis Island meteorological station, receiving mail messages transmitted by AWA staff on Willis Island, and acting as a relay station for Thursday Island and Cooktown radio stations.

After 1931, Townsville Radio replaced Cooktown Radio as the main relay station for messages from New Guinea to Sydney. Aeradio services were also established, and continued to be based at the station until 1942.

During World War II, Townsville took part in the Coast Watchers Scheme. The headquarters for the Coast Watching organisation for the south-west Pacific area moved to Townsville from Port Moresby; they remained there until November 1942.

Messages were received from outlying posts in the northern islands which were relayed to Port Moresby and on to Townsville. A Naval Intelligence Officer was also stationed at Townsville early in the war, and Area Combined Headquarters was established by mid-1941 as an intelligence gathering centre.

A posting to Townsville was welcomed by many of the men in the CRS. The station was situated in a pleasant town with a warm climate and they could take advantage of Townsville's social life and sporting facilities.



Buildings of Townsville Radio, c. 1945.

Wyndham Radio (VIW)

WYNDHAM was the last of the initial chain of coastal radio stations to be established; it began operating on 18 May 1914. Wyndham is situated in one of the most remote parts of Australia, on the northern coast a few hundred kilometres south-west of Darwin.

The radio station was built just outside the town, which is located at the base of a 300-metre high mountain on Cambridge Gulf. The waters are infested with crocodiles and, during the wet season, mosquitos hit plague proportions.

Staff stationed in Wyndham during those early years spoke of tolerable weather from May to August during the dry season, but complained of the almost unbearable heat — the mean temperature being more than 35 degrees Celsius.

The population of Wyndham underwent seasonal fluctuations. The main industry of the town was the meatworks, which only operated for 20 weeks of the year; during that period, the population could swell from 50 to 300. Even by 1931, the town was still small and comprised a hotel, three Chinese shops, a post office, police station, hospital, a European store and a smattering of private houses.

For the staff at the station, social life was extremely limited, especially during the periods when the meatworks was closed. The main event of the week was the arrival of the mail plane, which operated for eight months of the year. At other times, contact with the outside world was restricted to the bi-monthly steamer.

The one hotel was the source of most social life. Swimming was impossible in the waters around the area, but some of the staff took to duck shooting for recreation. Once the meatworks began operating, the social life improved with tennis tournaments, twice-weekly movies, and social gatherings.

By the mid 1930s, several of the outlying cattle stations had installed teleradios and had contact with the outside world via Wyndham Radio. The local mission was also equipped with a radio telephone by the mid-1930s.

When OTC took over administration of the Coastal Radio Service in 1947, Wyndham was one of the first stations to close — its operations being transferred to other stations in the network.

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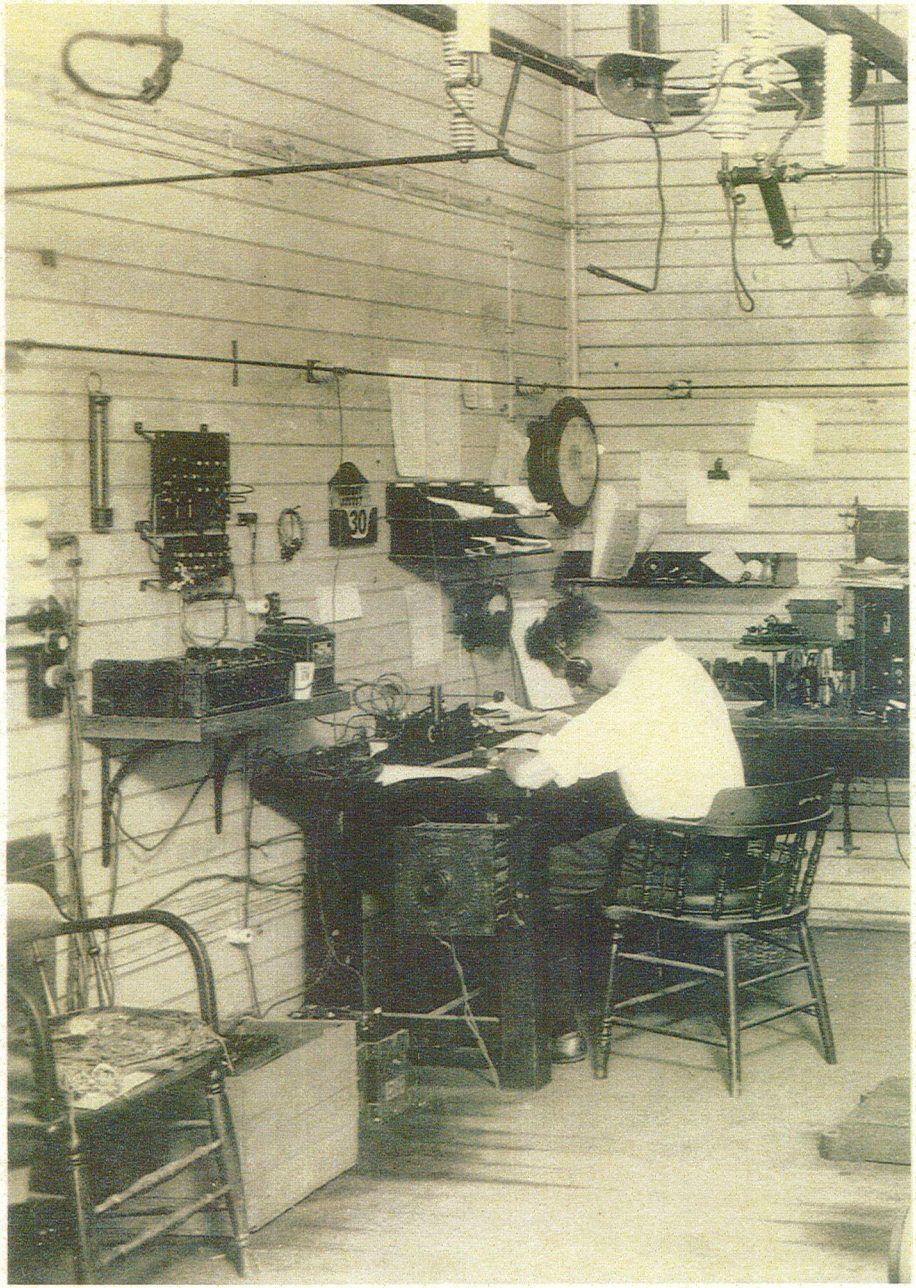
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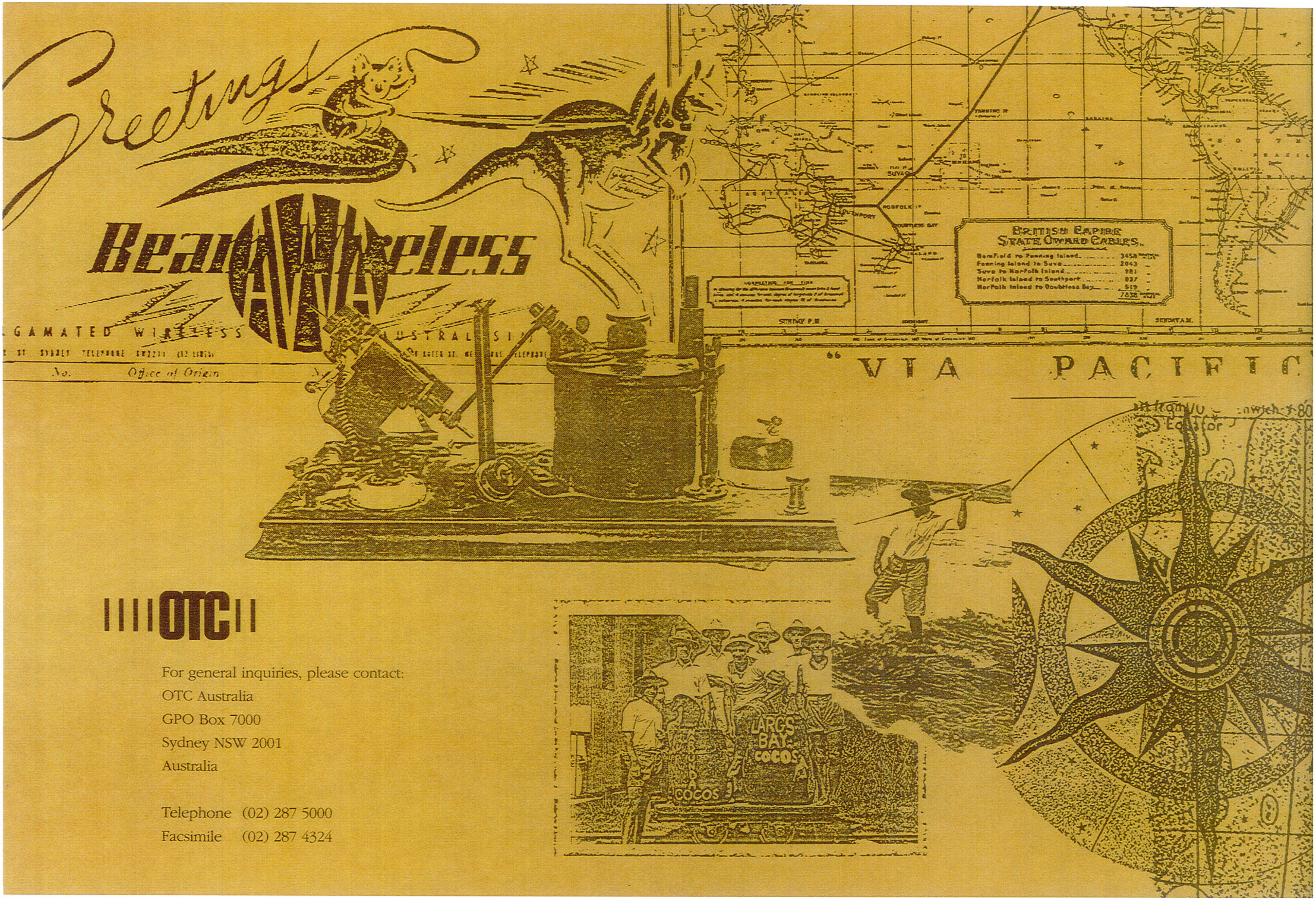
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**All due care has been taken to acknowledge the original source and/or ownership of photographs. Our sincere apologies to anyone inadvertently omitted from the above list or not credited in the photo captions.*



Inside view of the operating room at Townsville Radio, c. 1928.



OTC

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