

## A Man of Principle by Ray Barden

Initially, this self-published autobiography will provide the reader with an insight of life from a now forgotten bygone era (the mid 1930's) as the author recounts his memories of growing up in a small country town without any of the current raft of modern conveniences that many people expect these days. The book documents the litany of the author's early school life experiences from primary through to secondary - Form 2. It was expected that everyone had to contribute to family life and from an early age Ray readily accepted those responsibilities. The author's description of family life from that era provides an accurate insight of life's challenges as well as a precise snapshot of the social history of that era.

After finishing school, Ray undertook several manual seasonal jobs before deciding that a more permanent job should be his goal. He started his railway working career (no doubt influenced by the number of local staff he knew at Nyora) as a Lad Porter (station assistant) at Essendon. He was indeed fortunate that his first supervising Station Master took a keen interest in all his staff and encouraged them to undertake study and qualify in all aspects of railway station operations. It is apparent that this conversation from a seasoned mentor struck a chord with a young man who was keen to progress his career.

Throughout Ray's career, his lust for learning enabled him to qualify for promotion and this included working at 125 different station locations prior to being selected to become a train controller. As Ray progressed to more senior management positions, he realised that rather than rely on the then current traditional method of rail experience for further promotions, the "new age" thinking for progressing to management roles required qualification in appropriate tertiary/transport studies. His perception of the future proved to be correct, and he eventually was promoted to the newly created position of Chief Operations Manager in 1980 after a period of considerable restructures in the Rail Industry.

Whilst one may consider that after attaining the "top of the tree" position in the new restructure his working life would or should then become a time to reflect and plan for more efficient operations based on his years of operating experience. Unfortunately, it proved not to be the case due to a combination of both internal and external political activities and he eventually was retired on "ill health grounds" after a railway career of more than 30 years

Whilst the above brief narrative provides an overview of Ray's rail working life there are other chapters to capture the reader's attention in his meticulous documentation of both his family and personal life.

The book has been written to give the reader an insight into the mechanics of the Victorian Railways from the perspective of a person in a decision-making position. The central theme of the 'Railway Era' describes how it was necessary to constantly juggle the competing needs of running the business, implementing changes that were often politically inspired as well as handling the militancy of the industrial organisations.

To validate the narrative, the author has included contemporary documents. The inclusion of these documents, whilst accepting that some could not be easily reproduced to a high quality, was seen as a necessity to validate the author's position at the time.

**Verdict:** In summary, a great read which details a person's willingness to uphold his principles despite the circumstances.

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Former work colleague of Ray Barden