

Honouring the Past – Securing the Future

David Aprile has made a donation to The Mackay Foundation to build a secure future for the community, in honour of the contribution of

EMMANUELE ‘CASEY’ ZARB

Casey Zarb is a true pioneer of the Mackay district sugar industry. He was born Emmanuele Zarb on December 27, 1923 in Malta, the eighth of nine children of Vittorio Zarb and Paola Bartolo. He acquired the nickname Casey from a friend very early on and has been known by it his entire life.

Casey migrated to Australia with his family in 1935 at age 11 and settled at Finch Hatton where his father and brothers cut cane. His parents purchased a cane farm at Tannaloo where some of his fondest memories are of his family and their use of early farm machinery at a time when it was a scarce commodity due to war requisitions. So began a fascination and lifetime passion for all things mechanical and in particular, for transportation. His education in that austere time was limited, but his sheer determination and astuteness lead him to pursue and succeed in business opportunities in a field he loved. Seeking innovation, improving efficiency and pioneering improvement have been a mantra throughout Casey’s working life.



Casey and his brother Tony purchased a garage business in Finch Hatton in 1948 called Finch Hatton Motors. In 1951 the brothers expanded the business by acquiring the Mackay Bus Service, located on the corner of Bagley and Sneyd Streets. Casey operated the new business as well as drove and maintained the fleet, while Tony remained at Finch Hatton to run the garage until its sale in 1953. The brothers sold the bus service in 1964 but Casey continued the contracted sugar cane transportation operations he began in 1958 with the transport of raw sugar from Pleystowe Mill to Mackay Harbour.

Casey married Marjorie Wardrop in 1954 and in 1962 they moved to McLennan Street. They had six children including Christine (1955), David (1957), Stephen (1958), Maree (1960), Marguerite (1964) and Elizabeth (1966). It was at McLennan Street the sugarcane transport business consolidated and the depot is at this site to the present day. Zarb Road Transport was incorporated on July 1, 1966. Since this time all six districts sugar mills have employed the services of ZRT to haul sugar cane stick, raw sugar, molasses, dunder or refined sugar.

Although he retired in 2001, he still shows a keen interest in the continually growing company which retains Zarb family ownership and is controlled by eldest son David. In business circles Casey was considered to always be honest, fair and ethical and someone who preferred to buy and trade locally. Through hard work, persistence and determination Casey Zarb evolved Zarb Road Transport into one of the largest road transport operations in Queensland. Although possessing no formal mechanical or engineering qualifications, his initiatives helped revolutionise and forge advancement in the transportation of cane, raw sugar and refined sugar within the sugar industry. His contribution and loyalty to the Mackay community, the district sugar industry and its economy through employment, investment, trade and training is significant.