

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF AIRAH

SUMMER 2020 · VOLUME 19.8

RRP \$14.95

PRINT POST APPROVAL

NUMBER PP352532/00001

Ecolibrium

ANNUAL
**AIRAH
AWARDS**
SPECIAL



Show off

How PICAC put its kit on display,
and won the day.



THE LISTENER

The ability to absorb information from various sources before making a decision has served Phillip Carruthers, F.AIRAH, in good stead throughout his 50-year HVAC&R career.

After 30 years at Norman Disney & Young and a short-lived retirement, he now serves as the Engineering Services Manager of CBRE Building Consultancy Group.

Carruthers' experience with AIRAH is almost as long as his time in the HVAC&R industry. After joining the Institute in 1972, he served as National President from 2002–2003.

Carruthers earned AIRAH's highest honour, the James Harrison Award, as part of the 2020 AIRAH Awards.

Ecolibrium: What brought you to the HVAC&R industry?

Phillip Carruthers: I always wanted to be an engineer! My first idea was to go for automotive stuff, designing cars, but I started with earthmoving equipment such as rippers. We actually developed a ripper for a Caterpillar D9 to cut a swath six feet deep, six inches wide to simultaneously lay a telephone cable for Telecom. It was magnificent to see working.

I moved on from there to air conditioning in July 1969 in Newcastle. I knew nothing, of course, but learnt from some very knowledgeable people. The biggest thing I learnt was to listen to everyone, then make up my own mind.

Eco: What's your favourite HVAC&R-related memory?

PC: There are lots of them, but the most gratifying was many years ago when my contracting firm had just finished the air conditioning of a new movie theatre in Newcastle, with all of the usual rush up to opening night.

About 6pm that night the electrical contractor dropped a neutral across three phases in the main switchboard, which took out everything, and the kick-off



was 7.30pm. I was home getting ready to attend the opening when I got the call.

To his credit the electrical contractor got power back to the building, but the air conditioning would not run. I climbed to the roof in my suit and tools in hand and methodically checked every circuit. I replaced every fuse in the board, got it running, then settled into my seat while the MC was apologising for the conditions by saying the gremlins are on the roof fixing it just as the temperature began to fall. This gremlin had a grin on his face.



My role has been predominantly making things go, or go better

Eco: What's something everyone should know about you, your work, or the HVAC&R industry?

PC: What a question! I've enjoyed my work and feel I've made a difference in some way. My role has been predominantly making things go, or go better, and when it comes together it's very satisfying. I still do that today, but my key role is helping people buy and sell buildings, which is always satisfying when I find an issue that will affect the sale but can work out a way to deal with it.

As to the industry today, I think we're taking the easy way out too often. Training is the key. I'm astounded that people in the industry don't necessarily understand the fundamentals of the science we deal with.

Eco: How do you see the HVAC&R industry developing over the next 100 years?

PC: This one is mind-boggling! We have seen the focus of energy go away from the chillers to fans and pumps, and that was unheard of years ago. Tomorrow's challenge will be more environmental than anything. What we do consumes energy, can't get away from that, so the future is going to be driven by events and people outside the industry. A bit like getting rid of HCFC22 because of a small ozone number and replacing it with a substance with high global warming potential.

AIRAH has a voice with government these days, but we should increase our influence there, so we don't have impossible legislation imposed upon us.

The industry has a good corporate citizen profile, we just need to make sure we maintain that profile while keeping the industry viable. ■

The 100 faces of AIRAH

Phillip Carruthers, F.AIRAH, is one of the 100 faces of AIRAH.

To read more, go to www.airah100.org.au