

WWII

The band reached a peak just before World War Two when it won the B grade championship in Newcastle, resulting in promotion to A grade. The adjudicator on that occasion was the legendary A.H. (Bert) Baille of Newcastle Steelworks Band fame. Waratah won all sections except the Street March which saw them pipped by a point.



World War Two brought its share of sadness and losses to the band as members left due to military service with some, inevitably, never to return. One Waratah historian singled out Jim Craig as having given “his life for the cause of Waratah Band”.

Past Musical Directors

In the band's more than 125 years there has been many a conductor. Success in the 1920s was enjoyed under the late **P. Hopwood**, and later with **W.J. Traise**, who was also known to double as drum major. The band continued through the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s under the baton of **Joe Goodshaw**. By the early 1970's **David McCaffrey** led a young, energetic band.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the band improved rapidly under the leadership of local brass musician, **Ron Grice**. Since entering A Grade, once again, in 1992, the band was consistently placed highly in contests at all levels; Regional, State and National.

Sydney Symphony Principal Trombonist, **Ronald Prussing** took over the musical reins of the band in 2001, continuing the band's domination of banding in NSW and Australia. During this time the band launched into a series of concerts, featuring artists such as James Morrison, The Tap Dogs and visiting overseas brass band identities.

In April 2010, Waratah Brass appointed **Steven English** as musical director. A renowned musician in both community banding and Salvation Army circles, Steven is a NSW State Soprano Cornet Championships and National Soprano Cornet Champion and is a nominated Yamaha Artist in Australia. He enjoyed early success with the band by leading it to victory in the East Coast of Australia Championships in June 2010. Steven enthusiastically embraced the Waratah Brass philosophy of serving the people of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley with high quality brass band performances.

In early 2013, **Rowan Taylor**, a young well-established musician in the Hunter and Central Coast region, took over the reins of Waratah Brass. Rowan had been a member of the band for several years and had been acting Musical Director since 2012. He stayed with the band as Musical Director until 2014.

In 2014, **Stephen Grice** was appointed Musical Director. Stephen has been a player in the band since 1984. He is an excellent musician and has a wealth of knowledge about brass bands. His talent as a musician as well as his dedication, enthusiasm, humility, and trademark good cheer have ensured both his popularity and success with the band. He has led the band to several East Coast Championship wins, a NSW State Championship win and in 2019 a National B Grade Championship title.

Following the band's success at the 2019 National Championships, the band was promoted to A Grade in 2020.