



OUTBACK *Ambulance*

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is the official journal of

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Front cover: The 4 preceding Deputy Priors and the current Deputy Prior, His Honour the Administrator of the NT, with the Lord Prior. From left: Neil Conn, Austin Asche, His Honour the Administrator of the NT Mr Tom Pauling, the Lord Prior Professor Anthony Mellows, Ted Egan & John Anictomatis.



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Chief Executive Officer's

REPORT

Another year has again rushed past with the demands on the range of services offered by St John NT continuing to increase. It is a credit to all involved that we meet the challenges that come our way in such a positive and "can do" manner.



Volunteer demand for public event coverage, plus training required for our Volunteers to attend those events, was again on the increase and the number of Volunteers attending multiple events on any given weekend is amazing. The work at major events is fantastic and this year I would like to make mention of the Volunteer presence at the Finke Desert Race event as the major function whereby Volunteer and paid staff stand side by side delivering first aid coverage that enables this event to occur.

Last year I mentioned a number of new appointments and Management structures that were implemented and I must say that this year these have settled quite well and are providing a good platform for the organisation to work from. The work completed by these groups to establish business plans, forward growth projections, risk assessments on our activities and a change in focus on the future of Paramedic training in the NT have all been most beneficial in assisting with the current Ambulance Service contract negotiations.

The ambulance service contract expired on 30 June 2010 and despite every one's best efforts a new contract was not able to be formulated by that date. Discussions continue and are focusing on appropriate resourcing, workload mix variations and funding levels and it is envisaged that discussions will be finalised by the end of the year.

It was again very pleasing to hear, and I believe a most appropriate recognition, that Ambulance Officers (Paramedics) were for the 7th year in a row voted the "most trusted profession".

The Board some time back discussed and made a decision that it was time to raise the profile of the St John Organisation within the NT community. This commenced with the ramping up of the Organisations Endowment Trust, a registered Gift Deductible Recipient entity established in 1987 to allow Territory individuals and Companies to donate money to that in turn, enabled resources and funding to be provided to the Volunteers so that they were well equipped to provide the services requested of them by the Community. Two appointments were made to the Trust, Mr Andy Bruyn as Chairman and Chief Justice Trevor Riley as Patron and then fundraising dinners were conducted at each of the Centres in Casuarina, Parap and Palmerston. Business leaders were invited to these dinners and during the course of the evening the profile of St John, the past activities and the future direction of the Organisation, were outlined and the support of these directions by those in attendance was promoted. The responses received was over

whelming and indicated to all at St John of the wonderful Community commitment these business houses have for the St John Volunteer Organisation.

It is now planned to extend the promotion into other Regions throughout the Territory and if any reader wishes to follow suit and provide support please do not hesitate to contact myself or Cheryl Martin at cheryl.martin@stjohnnt.asn.au.

We held our annual Volunteer Parade weekend again this year and I must thank our sponsors for the event, Nick & Annette at Darwin Carpet Choice and Jayne from JR Communications and the Telstra Shop Palmerston. Their support goes a long way to making this weekend the success it is. The members enjoy the opportunity to get together to discuss common issues and how we can better deliver on the requests placed upon us and also get the opportunity to network, parade and attend the annual church service.

During a year where it has been commercially difficult in the NT we have held our own with our public education training, sales of kits and components, contract paramedical services and have in fact grown the workshop vehicle build and general servicing activities. This is a credit to all the staff in these areas and places St John in a strong position going into 2011, a year predicted to be one of growth for the NT.

The challenges ahead still remain as in past years where we have to be very professional and progressive to ensure we recruit and retain adult Volunteers and the same applies within the Ambulance Service when we talk about retention and attraction of staff. During the course of the current negotiations for the Ambulance Service contract ways of decreasing staff turnover have been a major focus and with the proposed initiatives being included we believe we can assist in keeping staff in this great part of the Country.

We look forward to the challenges ahead and I personally would like to thank firstly, the Board for their confidence in not only myself but our team to design the future for the Services provided by St John NT, secondly our fantastic staff for the tremendous work they deliver day after day without fuss our due public recognition and thirdly to the Government and NT Community for the ongoing support of the various activities of St John NT.

Have a great Christmas and New Year everyone and I will see you in 2011.

Ross Coburn
CEO

Education & Training Report

First Aid and Paramedic Training continues to be delivered at the highest possible standard by our team of committed staff with valuable feedback received from participants about how we may be able to improve our services.

First Aid Trainers have undertaken a lot of travel during the year, they have also experienced a heavier than normal training workload which at times became quite challenging. This was due to a number of resignations received from full time staff throughout the year. While any resignation is unfortunate, all members of our training team were supportive and wish their colleagues well for the future. During the busy periods encountered, the Training Department were fortunate to have the wonderful support of a number of Part-Time (Casual) trainers to assist us and we specifically acknowledge the valuable assistance of Geoff Lohmeyer, Christine Turner, Kelly Raven, Daniel Macmillan and Barbara Klesser.

Currently there are 2 full time Trainer positions to fill which will allow us to be even more responsive in being able to meet customer needs and expectations for their training.

Following discussions between St John NT and the Human Resource Division of the Department of Education and Training which occurred in late 2009 and again in early 2010, the Training Department received a Purchase Order to the value of \$18,500. This amount has 'pre-purchased' first aid training under the 'Quality Teacher Program' being rolled out by the Department across the NT.

During the year, our Trainers have travelled to Minyerri, Katherine and currently tentative arrangements have been made to travel to Milikapiti with other remote schools yet to be discussed and programmed.

Since the commencement of the 2010 school year, we have been inundated by requests from schools to deliver the 1hour EpiPen training session. During the year this training was delivered to 495 participants. The EpiPen program is not considered to be a significant income generator but is promoting the first aid services offered by St John NT and it is hoped may prompt a number of teachers to complete a full first aid course.

Due to the recent introduction of a new Anaphylaxis product namely the 'Anapen', St John NT will now be delivering a session titled 'Adrenaline Auto Injectors' which covers both the EpiPen and Anapen devices.

For a number of years now, St John NT had been supplying CPR123 Manikins to all participants enrolled into accredited First Aid training. While these were a great gift and home learning resource, we have since steered away from that resource and have introduced our own 'St John NT stamped' pens and key ring resuscitation face

shields. This initiative has received very positive feedback from course participants as they feel these items are quite useful to their needs and it extensively promotes the name of St John within the community.

In early 2010 through some consistent 'lobbying' espousing the quality of St John First Aid training and the professionalism of our Trainers, the Training Department were successful in winning a 12 month first aid training arrangement with the Granites Gold Mine. This arrangement included the delivery of 10 x 2 day Apply First Aid courses, 8 – 10 Advanced Resuscitation courses and 1 or 2 Occupational First Aid courses. St John won the training from 3 other Alice Springs based training providers.

Throughout the year, it has been pleasing to see a substantial number of public and private customers returning to St John NT after previously completing their training with commercial competitors. A positive indication of the quality of our training programs is highlighted by the fact that some customer groups have been prepared to wait a period of time simply to ensure this training is delivered by our team.

Earlier in the year St John again met with representatives of Group Training NT to discuss further school based Work Ready first aid training for the second half of the year for delivery in 'remote' areas. Participant numbers for each remote location are identified in brackets. Groote Eylandt (8), Maningrida (14), Jabiru (23), Batchelor (15), Katherine (12), Borroloola (11), with Tennant Creek scheduled for delivery later in the year. Locally under this program we trained a total of 148 school students in the Darwin/Alice Springs regions and have further courses scheduled for delivery prior to the end of year.

In May 2010 a restructure of the Training Department occurred and I took on a more strategic, planning role in training as the Director, Education and Training. Lynda McMeekin accepted an appointment as the Paramedic Education Manager and Annetta Albanese as the First Aid Training Manager.

Earlier in the year, representatives from the Training Department attended an Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) information session. The information session gave an insight to Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) re: National Regulations. Based on information which was passed on at this session responsibilities for accreditation of courses, RTO

registrations and external auditing will be taken over in the near future by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Federal), rather than local Department of Education bodies.

During 2010, the Paramedic Training College (PTC) has successfully facilitated 2 recruit level courses commonly referred to as 'Clinical 1' for a combined total of 30 students; a Workplace Assessor course delivered by Dr Len Smith from Australian Based Learning Experiences; a Clinical 2 course for 8 students who are now preparing to qualify at Paramedic level and 3 driving courses.

The Paramedic Training College has recently been joined by Christine McLeod-Curran as the PTC Administration Support Officer. Christine has extensive experience in the training and assessment sphere. Paramedic Education Officer Brad Sanderson (ex St John NT and more recently Queensland Ambulance Service) has, since commencing his PTC role, settled in well.

Both Brad and Lynda McMeekin have received highly positive feedback from Student Paramedics. Brad's obvious commitment to his role has seen him contribute to the delivery of internal professional development workshops for Paramedic workplace assessors at all Ambulance Centers across the NT.

As part of a professional development exercise, Brad also attended an EMERTRAIN course, a multi casualty exercise conducted through National Critical Care Trauma Research Centre (NCCTRC). This was a national based exercise involving multiple agencies at Royal Darwin Hospital. The course was designed to test the resources and responses of national and local agencies.

The benefits to St John NT of an exercise like goes along way to assisting our organisation with forward planning for service improvement purposes to ensure a greater response level in times of need. The skills and knowledge gained from this type of exercise also aims to be transferred across to Student Paramedics in training, particularly in relation to the PTC facilitated Rescue course

During 2010 PTC, the CEO and I held preliminary discussions with two Higher Education institutions in respect to our planned move toward Degree qualifications for Paramedic Officers. These discussions are ongoing as we strive to work through the intricacies of moving Paramedic Training from the Vocational Education and Training sector to the Higher Education sector – as is occurring throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Apply First Aid continues to be the training of choice in the Northern Territory as it nationally, both for individuals and for industry groups. Customers completing their first aid training all receive St John NT stamped' pens and key ring resuscitation face shields.

There were a total of 9965 Learners who completed

some form of first aid training delivered by St John NT. This equates to an increase of 1094 since 2008/2009 and represents an average of 830 learners per month. This is an encouraging sign as we map our way forward and represents an average increase of 90 participants per month-based on last financial years figures.



In closing I would like to acknowledge the wonderful work of our Training Department team (Trainers and Administration), and the support Training Branch receives from my St John Council colleagues, the Ambulance Service and, importantly, our support staff across the NT.

My particular thanks to our CEO, Ross Coburn and I would like also to recognise the invaluable contribution of our part-time Trainers for their work covering weekend (and in many cases, weekday), training commitments.

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Securing the future safety of our community through our Volunteers

St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc this year, is delighted to have partnered with a number of high profile and community focused businesses across the Territory in support of the St John Ambulance NT Endowment Trust and our dedicated St John Ambulance Volunteers.

The St John Ambulance (NT) Endowment Trust was formed in 1987 to support and assist the St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc. charitable and ambulance arms of the organisation. It is chaired by Mr Andrew Bruyn, General Manager of Channel Nine Darwin and its Patron Chief Justice Trevor Riley, QC, CSTJ.

As an initiative to reinvigorate the St John Ambulance NT Endowment Trust and invite future and ongoing contributions to the fund, three "Dine beneath the Stars" dinner functions were held this year at the Casuarina, Parap and Palmerston Centres.



Invited guests included respected members of the Territory business community who share our passion for the Territory community and the valuable contribution our



Volunteers make to the vibrant lifestyle and wonderful events we enjoy as Territorians every year. Guests were presented with information about the work of St John in the Territory and an invitation to share in the future vision for St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc.

Guests were treated to the warm and generous hospitality of St John Ambulance NT Endowment Trust Chairman, Mr Andrew Bruyn and Mr George Kapetas with delicious meals prepared on site at each of the centres. Our sincere thanks is also extended to Thomas Chin Wines, who donated wine for each of the dinner functions. Serving our guests with style were our dedicated team of Volunteers in Black and White who were responsible for making these evenings so successful.

The Endowment Trust plays a pivotal role in the provision of funds to allow St John Ambulance Volunteer members, to provide safe, skilled and professional First Aid assistance. There are currently over 500 members who provide thousands of hours annually for community events throughout the Territory.

This year's Endowment Trust "Dine beneath the Stars" dinners have focused specifically on raising much needed support for Volunteer divisional buildings and infrastructure which require redevelopment and refitting, to ensure our growing numbers of Volunteers and Ambulance Officers are provided with safe and secure premises to attend professional development training and store valuable First Aid equipment.



To enable this most valued volunteer resource to grow and meet the ever increasing demands of the community, our Endowment Trust partners have committed over \$180,000 this year to ensure the continued expansion of our funding in the Endowment Trust. The three dinner functions also helped in achieving an increased profile and knowledge about the operations of St John in the Territory (including Volunteer services, Contract Paramedic Services, Kits and Sales and Training).

On behalf of all St John Ambulance Volunteers across the Territory, we extend our gratitude to all businesses who have contributed to Securing the future safety of our community through our Volunteers.




Territory Business...securing the future safety of our community through our Volunteers

St John Volunteers are ordinary people with everyday lives who give up their spare time to provide first aid services to the Northern Territory community.

Over 500 St John NT Volunteers provide over 65,000 hours of service annually and treat more than 1,200 casualties every year. That's why, please community focused Territory businesses and organisations contribute to the future safety of our community by donating to St John Ambulance Volunteers.

On behalf of the Territory community, St John NT would like to say **thankyou** to the following supporters:

St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc. - 100 years in the Northern Territory for Ambulance and First Aid services

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Vale Bernard Kilgariff – OAM, AM, KStJ

Our thoughts are with Aileen, Fran, Kay & the Kilgariff family as we acknowledge the sad passing of a long term Territorian and Board Member of St John Ambulance NT, Mr. Bernard Kilgariff.

This year St John Ambulance NT farewelled a man of true community spirit after a life time of unwavering support for the work of St John Ambulance NT Volunteers across the Territory.

Adding to a lifetime of outstanding community contribution in the Northern Territory, Mr Kilgariff joined the Council of St John Ambulance as a Board Member in 1987 and was later promoted to Commander within the Order in 1999. His involvement has been central to building the profile and volunteer capability of the organisation in the Northern Territory over the last 20 years.

Bernie Kilgariff's commitment to St John Ambulance in the Northern Territory and in particular to the Alice Springs Region, was recognised and he was formally invested as a Knight into the Order of St John in October 2008, in recognition of outstanding contributions to the work of the Order of St John. This was indeed a high honour for Mr Kilgariff, and one which was thoroughly deserved.

Bernie leaves behind a legacy to be proud of with his significant contribution to the Territory community, recognised in 1989 when he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours, as Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 1996 Queen's Birthday Honours; in 2001 he was awarded the Centenary Medal for service to Australian society through parliament and in 2004 he was awarded Senior Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory.

Primarily representing the Council of St John Ambulance in Alice Springs, Mr Kilgariff consistently provided



strong support to the cadet and adult volunteers of St John Ambulance. Even into his 80's, Mr Kilgariff regularly volunteered his valuable time to teaching St John Ambulance Cadets about the historical aspects of the Order of St John and the ANZAC tradition, whilst continuing his role on Council.

Bernie will continue to be honoured as the inspiration for the St John Ambulance NT Trainer Award, which aims to recognise the significant contribution of St John Ambulance First Aid Trainers to the development of individuals across the Northern Territory community every second year.

St John Ambulance NT has recognised the significant contribution of Bernie by naming an ambulance in his honour, which will be permanently based in Alice Springs.

The Chairman, Board Members, Management, Staff, Volunteers and Cadets of St John across the Territory will dearly miss Bernie Kilgariff and his passion for the work of our volunteers in the community. Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to all family members and his enormous network of close friends and colleagues.



Trevor Riley appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

In July 2010, Attorney-General Delia Lawrie officially appointed long term St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc board member and Patron of the St John Ambulance (NT) Endowment Trust, Trevor Riley as the Northern Territory's Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

His appointment marks the personal achievement of 36 years of legal service in the Territory. The Hon Chief Justice Trevor Riley, QC, CStJ has made a significant contribution to the development of the Territory's legal sector as a Member of the Law Faculty Board, lecturing at Charles Darwin University and as Chairman of the Indigenous Law Students Mentoring Program during his career.

St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc is immensely proud to be acknowledged among the many community service commitments of Chief Justice Riley. St John Ambulance NT is continually grateful for his dedication to the organisation in reaching its goals, as a vital member of the Board.

Trevor John Riley was appointed as a Justice of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory in 1999. At the time of his appointment he was a member of the Northern Territory Bar Association having signed the Roll of Counsel in 1985. Chief Justice Riley was a Northern Territory solicitor from 1974 to 1985.

Chief Justice Riley was appointed as a Queen's Counsel in 1989. He was President of the Northern Territory Bar Association from 1993 to 1997 having been Vice President from 1989 to 1993. From 1988 to 1991 he was counsel in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. He was Junior Vice-President of the Australian Bar Association in 1993 to 1994.



From left: Chairman Mike Mooney, Chief Justice Trevor Riley and CEO Ross Coburn

Chief Justice Riley is a former Vice-President of the Northern Territory Law Society and a former Councillor of that Society. He is a former member of the Legal Practitioners Complaints Committee, the Law Reform Committee, the Public Purposes Trust and the Legal Practitioners Admission Board.

Chief Justice Riley is also a convener with the National Judicial College of Australia and is well regarded for his considerable involvement in the Territory community supporting a range of organisations including St John Ambulance and arts and sporting bodies.

On behalf of all at St John Ambulance NT, we wish Chief Justice Trevor Riley every success as he embarks on this important and prestigious chapter of his professional career.



From left: Mr Austin & Dr Valerie Asche with CEO Ross Coburn

What A Catch

Dismissing my alarm at 5.50am, I found myself asking “why do shift workers work Sundays” My normal routine includes having a bowl of cereal, showering and then embarking on the 20 minute drive from Timi to Palmerston.

Being well rested from an easy Saturday night, I arrive at work prepare myself a signature instant coffee. My partner for the day ICP Officer Phil Blyth arriving moments after me, and I’ve already prepared his coffee anticipating his arrival. We go through our vehicle to ensure it’s ready to go, and after our checks are complete, its time to head inside. Luckily for us, we have the luxury of another crew on our station to socialise with.

After the small chat for the first hour into our shift or so, I settled into the lounge chair with my APLS (Advanced Pediatric Life Support) manual, which is required pre-reading for the course I’m enrolled in for December. I remember the ambience of the station being soft, with Phil assisting a student with log books, and another Paramedic also doing some textbook reading.

By 10am, three hours into our shift, neither Palmerston crews had yet to be dispatched, and I’m thinking to myself with some luck, the night shift had done most of the work for us. My train of thought had not yet completed when, the pager vibrated indicating a code 1 response to a property in Gray. It was my job, picking up from where we left off from the previous day. Our dispatcher informed us of an approximately 31 year old lady, in active labour with membrane rupture and contractions less then one minute apart. A short sub-5minute drive from memory landed us at the front door of this property, where we were met by a woman, who was leaning near the front door, in obvious distress. She had already done the hard yards to get out of her residence prior to our arrival, so while I established a history and rapport with the patient, Phil brought the stretcher to her. We initially had the patient lying in the left lateral position, but once she was loaded into the ambulance, she quickly indicated that she was much more comfortable on her back. Prior to departing the scene, I had conducted all necessary history taking and observations, and concluded to my partner that we were ready to depart to RDH on a non-emergency routine transport.

During our transport, her contractions became more pronounced, increasing in intensity. By the time we had reached the end of McMillians road (approaching PMC roundabout) it became evident that this woman would be having her baby very soon! I told my partner to ring ahead to inform RDH that transferring her to Maternity Ward was not going to be an option, and to have ED ready for an imminent birth. During Phil’s sit rep to the ED department, the mother had started crowning, at which point, I then indicated to Phil, “Pull over, she’s crowning” Phil calmly informed our communications that we were pulling over to “perform a procedure”. By this



time, the mother had placed her left foot on an upright IV pole, her right foot planted firmly on my chest, and while the vehicle was still in motion, before the vehicle even had time to pull over and park, I had the most amazing experience. Everything I had ever read about obstetrics, the delivery of newborn’s and the immediate after, rushed back to me like a dam that just burst its banks (pun intended). Everything I did from there on in felt natural. Thankfully earlier in the trip I had pre-empted such an event outcome, and had already prepared and unpacked the maternity kit. Clamps, receiving bowl, blankets and the likes were ready to go. This was happening, and it was happening now!

I can honestly say I don’t recall the first things Phil said to me. I don’t recall the car coming to a stop. I don’t remember the mother pushing, or screaming, (if there was even any). I was holding the most amazing gift anyone could ever bring into the world. I had this (admittedly slippery) baby boy in my arms, crying. There was a huge sense of relief, this huge rush of euphoria and from what Phil said to me after, a smile that reached from ear to ear, with eyes bigger then the plates that are served at Hogs Breath. Thankfully I was still with the game, dried and (re)wrapped this amazing gift, handing him to his very grateful mother, applying clamps and doing all other necessary checks and observations.

Wow. It all felt so surreal, the whole process felt like an eternity, but in reality, it was very quick and straight forward! The atmosphere in the back of the ambulance was one filled with happiness, high morale and a euphoria that I have never experienced before. We continued our journey to RDH, with Phil reporting to communications “procedure complete, now re-mobile to RDH with mother and a baby”.

People normally associate ambulances with death, dying and the injured, a place where tears flow for all the wrong reasons. Not on this day shift. This shift was something special. Weeks after this magical event, I still think of that Job, and the joy it’s brought to me as a Paramedic. Saving lives has become routine. The opportunity of bringing life into the world has just concreted why I chose this profession.

Ben Farkas

So you want to be a Paramedic?

So you want to be a Paramedic? That's the question that goes through my mind as I look at the new smiling faces looking back at me. It is a question often asked by Paramedic Educators of each new student intake that passes through Paramedic Training College.

The challenges of being a paramedic far out way the rewards, but in a way, the unique challenges are themselves the rewards.

When a person decides to become a paramedic it is not just a 9-5 job, it is a lifestyle, a life changing event not only for the students but also for their partners, children and families.

How do we prepare our fledgling paramedics for lost sleep, missed meals, violence, trauma, entrapments, sudden deaths, collapses, illnesses, remote areas and a lifetime of protocols, endless barrage of examinations and high pre hospital standards to be maintained on a daily basis?

Working in many environments and conditions to reverse the seemingly impossible, at times with death looking over their shoulder makes the paramedic a true champion of life.

I think back to some of the experiences seen and done throughout my own career, often kept quiet and untold. So I tell them about the late night call for an infant not breathing.

Dispatched as a single quick responder Intensive Care unit, my mind is instantly alert, thinking of how to arrive on scene quickly and safely – radio's are giving update instructions as I drive quickly, red and blue lights cutting through the darkness.

Radio communication informs me that the patient is only 3 months old and that there is a lot of confusion on scene, no CPR is in progress.

I arrive at a residence that has all lights on front door open, I hear shouting and crying – a small boy meets me



at the door and I enter the home, calling out to announce my presence, my portable radio on my shoulder crackles as a backup crew call their ETA 5 minutes, it's relaxing to hear other Para's coming to help me.

Entering a room I see the mother sitting on the floor distraught, she pleads for help and gestures towards a cot. In the cot is a small baby lying on its side, I find no pulse, no respiration, no heart sound, fixed dilated pupils, cold – I know what I am facing when I'm presented with these signs, suddenly I listen and all is quiet behind me, it was as if all noise in the room has gone.

I turn to speak to the mother, kneeling down beside her what do I say? No words are required – we both have a conversation of the highest importance without words, I wrap the baby and the mother takes her in arms quietly sobbing to her child, a hand grasps my shoulder I look up my back up paramedics have arrived, the noise comes back!

Again my radio crackles and I leave the crew responding for an elderly male patient with unrelieved chest pain.

Later that night, I arrive home all is quite. My own child is sleeping in her bed, the similarities stop me as I check in – I sit cuddling my own child now, silently, tears flow....

Now I look around the room, those smiling faces are now serious, concentrating!

So you want to be a Paramedic. Welcome to the course!

Brad Sanderson

Brad Sanderson is an Intensive Care Paramedic and Paramedic Education Officer with SJA NT.



Volunteer Awards Presentation Weekend

Held on Friday, November 5th 2010 at the Novotel Atrium.

Congratulations to our nominees and winners of the 2010 Commissioners Awards. A terrific night was held at the Novotel Atrium to recognise the contribution of our volunteers and thank them for their work over the past twelve months. Members from all centres in the Northern Territory joined in the celebrations.

Our Deputy Prior, His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC, Administrator of the Northern Territory attended the event and presented volunteers with their 12 year service medals and bars. Other dignitaries included Mr Peter Styles MLA Representing the Leader of the Opposition, Alderman John Bailey representing the Lord Mayor and Ms Plaxy Purich, representing the Litchfield Shire Council and Mr Greg Nettleton, NT Fire Chief.

Members of St John Council who joined in the celebrations were Chairman of St John, Mr Michael Mooney and Mrs Rosemary Mooney, Mr Roland Chin, Ms Fran Kilgariff, Mr Alan Bromwich, CEO Mr Ross Coburn and Mrs Leanne Coburn. We would like to give a special thank you to our National St John CEO, Peter LeCornu who travelled from Canberra to participate in the weekend's activities and also present leadership training at our officers meeting.

It is not possible to hold events without support and we would like to thank our sponsors Nick and Annette Frangoulis from Carpet Choice and Jayne Rothall from JR Communications and the Telstra Shop Palmerston. Thank you all for your ongoing support of our volunteers.

Congratulations to the recipients of Service Medals and Bars

12 yr Service Medal – Paul Berry and Sheryl Rossiter

17 year Service Bar – Patrick Murray, Adrian Rossiter, Paul Maybank

27 year Service Bar – Angie Butler

2010 Commissioner Awards Winners

Adult Member of the Year – Territory Officer Cadets, Kimberlee McKay

Cadet Member of the Year – Kristy Janssen from the Alice Springs Cadet Division

Operational Support Member of the Year – Frank Dunstan

Adult Division of the Year – Nhulunbuy Adult Division

Cadet Division of the Year – Tennant Creek Cadet Division

Congratulations to Leanne Eltagonde from the Palmerston Cadet Division and the Youth Division who was announced as the 2011 Peter Falkland Youth Leader.

It was also an opportunity to thank one of our staff members, Belinda Graham who has supported the

Kimberlee McKay receives her award from Commissioner Steve Peers.



Volunteer office staff with His Honour, The Administrator of the NT.



Angie Butler at the Member Dinner.



volunteers throughout the year. Sadly, Belinda is heading back to NSW at the end of the year. Thank you also to Debbie Garraway for all her work in helping with the planning of the weekends activities and agreeing to be our MC on the night along with Steve Balch.

MEMBER DINNER

It was party dresses and music at the annual members dinner held at Kantillas on Saturday 6th November. Sixty members, friends and partners attended the dinner and had the chance to relax and enjoy a rare night off from public duties. There were lots of lucky door prizes and Benny Butler and Dawn Bat did a great job arranging the Celebrity Heads games.

OFFICERS MEETING

Thirty Superintendents, Officers and other interested members attended the Annual Officers Meeting held on Saturday 6th November. There were many topics covered including: training, marketing & promotion, recognition and reward programs, Richard Morris Community Spirit Award and the Ochre Card. CEO, Ross Coburn spoke about St John and the future of our organisation in the Northern



**Benny Butler
& Dawn Bat.**



**The Colour
Party at
the Church
Service.**

Territory. National CEO, Peter LeCornu conducted two leadership sessions – Giving Feedback and Delegation. Fairlie Crozier from our national office gave a brief description about her role as the National Volunteer Development Manager.

Minutes from the meeting will be sent to all Superintendents and Territory Officers.

ANNUAL CHURCH SERVICE

Bishop Greg Thompson gave the sermon at the annual church service which was held at the Christ Church Cathedral on Sunday 7th November. It was terrific to see the large number of members in uniform in addition to the robed members in the Capitular Procession. Thank you to Pat Murray for once again co-ordinating the Colour Party and to the members Adrian Rossiter, Simon Spillett and Ashlee Elton for a terrific job. Everyone gathered in the Harbour Room for morning tea after the service. Thank you to Debbie Garraway for buying all the goodies for morning tea.

There is a lot of work that goes into preparing for the Volunteer Weekend and I would like to recognise some special people for all their help – Dawn Bat, Debbie Garraway and Cheryl Martin for all their work.

I would also like to thank members who travelled to Darwin to join in the activities – Peter LeCornu and Fairlie Crozier for joining us from Canberra, Phil, Amy, Lenaire, Sam, Darrin, Kate and Ron for travelling from other centres to attend the weekend.

CADET ACTIVITY

It is also important to recognise the contribution by our cadets and juniors so decided to arrange a different type of activity for them. We contacted the Corrugated Iron Youth Arts to see what type of workshops they provided for young people and they offered a circus workshop and a drama workshop. The circus was the popular choice and sixteen cadets enjoyed two hours of juggling, balancing, somersaulting and general clowning around. We hope that this will be an annual event for the cadets.

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The Lord Prior visits Darwin

The Lord Prior Professor Anthony Mellows OBE TD KStJ flew into Darwin on Tuesday 2nd June just in time for our Investiture and Graduation ceremony for 2010.

The Lord Prior of the Order of St John is the most senior non-Royal member of the organisation, representing Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Sovereign Head of the Order.

The Lord Prior and his wife Elizabeth Mellows, did not have much time to check into their hotel before they were whisked away to Government House where they met with the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Mr. Tom Pauling AO QC KStJ and Patron of the Northern Territory, Mrs. Tessa Pauling DSTJ to get well acquainted before the ceremony.

The 2010 Investiture and Graduation made history not only as we had the honour of hosting the Lord Prior but the four preceding and current Administrators of the Northern Territory also attended. This was definitely a "Kodak Moment"

Lesley King, who was unable to attend the ceremony last year, received her promotion to Dame of the Order of St John. Lesley is the first lady, who was not a Patron, to ever be promoted to Dame in the Northern Territory. Peter Poole was also honoured to be the first person of the Northern Territory to ever be Knighted by the Lord Prior.

As you can see, this years Investiture ceremony made many memories for many members of the organisation.

The 2010 Investiture also saw the following Promotions and Admissions within the Order of St John;

Priory Vote of Thanks:

Bruce Garnett, Geoff Lohmeyer, Daphne Marsh, Marion McLauchlan, Lynda McMeekin, Matthew Pearce, Tour de Arnhem.

Admission as Member of the Order:

Rosemary Ballinger, Mark Cullenane, Kimberlee McKay, Arun Mahajani, Paul Maybank, Sue-ellen Skinner, Sheryl Rossiter, Kelly Raven, Lee Payne, Geoff Kain.

Promotion to Officer within the Order:

Kevin Blake

Promotion to Commander within the Order:

David Baker

Promotion to Knight within the Order:

Peter Poole

In addition there were 18 members who were recognised for their long service within the organisation:

5 Years

Sally Abbott, Natalie Clarke, Peter Jones, Royce Langston, Daniel Macmillan, Ron Owen, Paul Pankhurst, Kelly Raven, Matthew Schepisi, Fiona Sylva.



The Lord Prior and Mrs Mellows at the 2010 Investiture and Graduation ceremony.



2010 Graduating Students.

10 Years

Stuart Anderson, Barbara Brown, Antoni Kwiatkowski, Donna Peters, Ray Roles, Katharine Taylor.

15 Years

Andrew Naden

20 Years

Jim Leigh

In conjunction with the Investiture ceremony there were 17 paramedics who graduated with either a Diploma or Advanced Diploma of Paramedical Science (Ambulance).

Diploma of Paramedical Science

Nicole Bouma, Kate Brewer, Ben Farkas, Karl Godden, Josh Gunders, Samantha King, Adam Kouzounian, Debbie McLeod, Quentin Norton, Julie Wickham, Adam Wylie.



Neil Conn, Austin Asche, His Honour the Administrator of the NT, the Lord Prior, Ted Egan & John Anictomatis.



Kimberlee & Amy McKay presenting the Lord Prior and Mrs Mellows with gifts.

Advanced Diploma of Paramedical Science

Nick Bigwood, Marcel Clark, Simon Cooper, Ben Falzon, Mark Ferguson and Katharine Taylor.

After the ceremony the Chairman, Mr Michael Mooney hosted a dinner for the Lord Prior and Mrs Mellows and the Administrator and Mrs Pauling at Pee Wees at the Point restaurant. Board members, CEO, Executive Management Team Members and special guests also attended the dinner where they had a chance to meet the Lord Prior and Mrs Mellows enjoying their company overlooking the wonderful view of Darwin harbour.

The remaining time was spent conducting centre tours and having a traditional Aussie BBQ at the Palmerston Volunteer Centre. One hundred Volunteers, families and friends attended the function on Friday 4th June to meet

the Lord Prior and Mrs Mellows. The Lord Prior was very impressed with the way Territorians celebrated an outdoor BBQ, in fact he admitted to this being his first BBQ while visiting Australia.

After meeting with the members, their families and friends, the Lord Prior and Mrs Mellows were presented with a number of gifts one including a framed photo of the procession taken at the Investiture and Graduation on the Wednesday night.

The members in the Northern Territory were honoured and felt privileged to have had the opportunity to meet with the Lord Prior and Mrs Mellows and we're sure they have fond memories of their visit to the Top End.

Below is a letter received from The Lord Prior Professor Anthony Mellows OBE TD KStJ and his wife Elizabeth.

Dear St. John Darwin,

We cannot write to everyone whom we met in and around Darwin so we asked if we could put this letter in Vellie News. We both want to thank St. John NT for everything which you did to make our visit so memorable and enjoyable.

We will remember for a very long time the outstanding Investiture in the marvellous setting of Government House. We will also remember for a long time the conducted tours which Ross Coburn, Steve Peers and Mick McKay gave us of the various Centres as well as Casuarina – we probably left them exhausted from answering our numerous questions throughout our visit.

From the Sailing Club we saw over Fannie Bay the most beautiful sunset which we have ever seen; and there could have been no better way of ending our visit than the splendid Combined Social Night and BBQ at Palmerston.

Thank you all for your lovely presents, your touchingly warm welcome, and your great hospitality. We came away with the happiest memories.

St. John in the Northern Territory is vibrant and innovative. We have already been talking about it in other parts of the St. John world – and we will continue to do so.

Thank you again for the marvellous time which we had with you.

With all best wishes

Tony and Elizabeth Mellows

Peter Poole KStJ

There are not too many people in St John Ambulance who haven't had some contact with Peter Poole. In recognition of his dedication to St John as a volunteer Peter was promoted to a Knight of the Order of St John at a ceremony at Government House in June 2010.

There are so many things that could be said about Peter Poole's life within the St John Ambulance Volunteers, unfortunately we could not cover it all, so here are some events that Peter has recalled.

In 1979 Peter finished rebuilding his home in Wanguri after it was destroyed in Cyclone Tracy in 1974. He had some spare time so he decided to do some community work. Peter was previously involved with Citizens Military Forces in Victoria in the sixties, but thought Darwin's climate was not conducive to this type of work.

His mate Gordon Bowman (with whom he had cut cabbages at Ron Hersey's Katherine vegetable farm in the late 60's) was involved in St John at the time and introduced him to the Volunteers. Peter completed a First Aid course and joined the Darwin Division in February 1979; he then commenced the Casualty Care and Transport ambulance-training course in the same year. In those days there were Darwin and Casuarina Divisions and although he lived closer to Casuarina Centre Darwin Division was chosen as the rosters had more openings.

In May 1979 Peter was transferred to Tennant Creek with work, so he transferred to the Tennant Creek Division. St John Ambulance was due to take over the ambulance service in Tennant Creek in June 1979 from the Department of Health. The Service had appointed two Darwin officers, John Hill as OIC and Steve Peers as 2IC. During weekdays John and Steve were the on road crew and after hours and weekends the crew consisted of one paid Ambulance Officer and one volunteer Ambulance Officer and numerous trainees. (The first job St John attended in Tennant had Driver, Attendant and the balance of the Division as Trainees)

Peter recalled some of the interesting work he encountered in Tennant Creek

- Women from Warrabri giving birth on the way into Tennant Creek
- Long trips to Barry Caves and Newcastle Waters allowing Peter to conduct road condition surveys for Transport and Works at the same time as attending patients.
- Long nights leaving Tennant Creek at 6.30pm and travelling to Elliott and Newcastle Waters for a vehicle accident and returning by 7.30am in time to go to work.
- Refuelling on the run – The vehicles in use in Tennant Creek did not hold much fuel, approx 80 litres, and they only got about 2.5km/litre hence each case up or down the track resulted in much time spent refuelling at Road Houses on the way. When on a "Red" the siren was activated a kilometre or two before the next wayside inn; then night or day by the time you arrived someone would be at the bowser ready to refuel.
- Radio Communication – The HF radios in the vehicles didn't work satisfactorily so when on Code Red (now

Code 1) Tennant crews had to stop at each wayside telephone box and contact the OIC and confirm that the job was still on. On return to Tennant Creek John Hill would advise how long it took to go from for example Banka Banka to Renner Springs and inquire as to whether they were aware that this indicated their average speed was some incredible rate of knots? To which we replied no!

After 18 months in Tennant Creek, Peter returned to Darwin and rejoined Darwin Division. The main challenge in moving from Tennant Creek to Darwin was that he had to learn radio procedures as in Tennant Creek these were very basic and on Code 1's in the rural area you had to leave the lights and sirens on.

In the early eighties both Casuarina and Darwin Division provided Volunteer Ambulance crews after hours and at weekends. It was difficult to get on the roster if you didn't put your name down weeks ahead.

Peter enjoyed the Ambulance work, because he met a totally different group of people within St John Ambulance and patients he had attended, from those in his work and family life. The other contrast with real life was that at the end of an ambulance shift you rarely revisited any of the cases again; in the work environment projects went for months and years.

From an operations point of view Peter has enjoyed being a Divisional Officer and then Divisional Superintendent a few times, both of Darwin Division. He was District Superintendent for 5 years and Commissioner for 3 years. He is now an active member of the Darwin Adult Division.

Peter has represented the Northern Territory many times in



Peter Poole with his family.



Peter Poole being promoted to Knight.

national First Aid Competitions, and he has been involved with running competitions and also training of teams. His shed and yard were a great training venue, his sons were excellent casualties and wife Adina was an excellent host. Adina's scouts were invaluable if not sometimes overdressed patients. One scout although advised to wear old clothes chose to wear his new expensive designer tee shirt, the shirt was cut off him very early in the scenario.

Supporting Cadets has played a large part of his Volunteer Career with training, proficiency badges, competitions, and lectures. Peter said it is rewarding to see ex cadets who are now young adults, some of whom have become involved in the medical / ambulance profession.

It is interesting to see the philosophy of "One St John" being advanced, this reminded him of the early years of his involvement where the Association, Brigade and Service actively took part in each of the fields of service delivery. The mechanic for the Service was also a member of the Brigade, Brigade members delivered training courses for the Association; Association members were actively involved in delivering training to Brigade members. We were one St John in the eighties but times change and we became a multi faceted organisation.

Why did he end up here?

Peter was born in Melbourne in November 1947, second of four children, two sisters one brother. His father was a tradesman Fitter and Turner, who took up teaching, mother was a mother. He had a wonderful childhood except for failing first grade as hand writing was illegible. Peter came to the Territory in 1967 as his Great Aunt and her husband, who lived in Katherine, had written suggesting that if he wanted to see the Territory before it changed he should come immediately. They also suggested that he travel by train and bus so he realised how far it was. He met a girl from Umbakumba in 1971 and married in 1972 and moved from Katherine to Darwin in 1973. Adina was a violinist and school teacher on a world tour when they met. Peter and Adina have three adult sons and four grandchildren.

Peter has many interesting stories about his time as a volunteer. Here are a few cases that stuck in his mind

The Cathay Pacific Diversion – An Irish man on a Cathay Pacific flight presented with a cardiac problem, and the aircraft was diverted to Darwin. The patient was loaded into the ambulance, and it was apparent that his condition was not cardiac, so Peter said "Your not having a heart attack, what is really wrong with you?" the Irish man replied, "I'm fed up with flying, what time does the train leave for Melbourne."

A Proud Captain – The captain on a Russian Registered freighter moored on the approaches to Darwin Harbour was complaining of cardiac related chest pain. Peter along with Able Sea woman Jan Rowell, travelled to the vessel in a small workboat not at all suitable for the open seas. The weather and sea conditions were rough and tying up to the freighter was a frightening experience. The captain refused to allow the crew to carry him from his ship. He insisted he walk down the steps to our small boat and then sat proudly upright on a chair on the rear deck of the workboat for the trip back to the wharf.

Treating Patients as Garbage – Travelled to Mandorah on the Emergency Services boat with Jenny Gehrig to treat a male who had suffered a spinal injury whilst diving into the pool. No one met us at the wharf so we start walking with the scoop collars kit etc. Picked up on the way by a traditional owner and his family, hopped in the back of the troop carrier with the rest of the family and pets. Found the patient asleep on a bed in a motel room. Treated as spinal, put on collar ,scoop etc. Asked motel owner does he have a vehicle we could use to carry patient to wharf he apologises and advises that the only vehicle that works at present is the garbage Ute and it is full of garbage. The garbage was levelled off a sheet placed over the rubbish and then the patient on the scoop on top. The patient asked what the strange smell was; we were honest and said we did not know.

An Impromptu Tour of HMAS Jervis Bay – The most memorable experience however was Simon Spillett's tour of the Jervis Bay fortunately prior to Terrorism becoming a problem. Peter states he never slept in an ambulance again, except at the drag racing.

The Chemical Spill at the Wharf – This incident was comprehensibly reported in an article in Outback Ambulance authored by Virginia Dowson. Peters involvement resulted in his mobile phone being commandeered by the organisation as no one else at the scene had any communications. Didier Palmer head doctor of A & E refused to accept any casualties into A & E until they had been decontaminated; this was achieved by hosing them down in the garden adjacent to the access ramp to the old A & E. At the completion of the decontamination any officers of child bearing / fathering age were also decontaminated to ensure the survival of the species. (Peter fell into neither category so he remained clothed and dry.)

Tony Illiou – One Sunday, Tony attended a duty at Hidden Valley and the next day he was tragically taken from us. Tony died in front of his family's home from a heart attack at the age of 19 years. Peter was there to form the guard of honour at Tony's funeral.

The Bali Evacuation – The Bali Bombing was a shocking example of man's inhumanity to his fellow man however it allowed the members of St John Ambulance NT to demonstrate their ability to provide a response "For the Benefit of Mankind"

Lesley King – Our First DStJ in the NT

This is the story of a woman who has lived through a time of great sacrifice and nation building events, she has history and knowledge from this time and I would like to introduce you to Ms. Lesley King DStJ.

She is our first 'out of the ranks' Dame of St. John in the Northern Territory.

Talking to Lesley you find yourself caught up in the whirlwind of her generation and the time from both pre and post World War II. These events had a huge impact on what was to become a lifetime dedicated to St. John Ambulance and the greater community.

Lesley King was born in Port Augusta South Australia. Her family lived in Whyalla and Adelaide and moved to Kadina in South Australia when she was around 12 years old. She says that at the tender age of six years she made a statement to her family that was maybe an indicator of what was to become her career, she said "she was going to be a nurse and help those people who had their tonsils out."

You could listen to Lesley for hours as you enjoy a good old cuppa tea and scones as she tells of these events. During World War II, around 1943, she recalls seeing tea chests and food rations being packed bound for England. She did eventually become a trained Nurse and worked in the Accident and Emergency Department at the Royal Adelaide Hospital in South Australia. From there she wanted to join a para medical organisation and formed great respect for the work of St. John Ambulance Brigade, as it was known at the time, as a possible venue to continue to train and maintain her own skills.

Eventually she moved to the Northern Territory and in 1977 Lesley joined the Casuarina Adult Division as an adult member and she recalls assisting Cadet units at the time which started her passion for the Cadet movement, you might say, and led to her commitment to child protection.

The uniform of the time was black slacks with a tunic transport top with the St. John logo.

She loves the organisation because she feels that there is a unity and family presence and she experienced that family bond when she attended the 2010 Priory Conference in Melbourne.

- Time served in St John – 33 yrs
- Promoted Corps Nursing officer in 1981
- District Nursing Officer 1982-1986
- District Superintendent 1986 -1993
- Deputy Commissioner 1993 – 2002
- Territory Officer HR 2002 to present

Highlights of her achievements and her career

- Qualified Nurse & Nurse Educator.
- Qualified Music Teacher
- Qualified Counsellor – theory and practice.



- At Darwin Centre she conducted a 10 week Nursing Care course for 45 members, all of whom qualified.
- She lectured to the Ambulance Service on Psychological Patients and Psych Management at scenes, and to her credit taught home Nursing from 1984 – 1988, during which time Lesley formed a 'Home Nursing' group of those who successfully completed the course. These members were much in demand by the Community Health Nurses who at that time did not do out of hours work, and our members were needed to attend homes where carers needed some brief respite from their 'constant care' family members being nursed at home. It ceased when St John Australia discontinued the Home Nursing course for volunteers in the late 1980's.
- She researched and instigated child protection policies and protocols for the NT and assisted with the new National policy on child protection.
- Lesley has attended Priory 1982 -1998 and again in 2010

Lesley was promoted to a Dame of the Order of St John in 2009 for her lifetime of achievement and her outstanding contribution to St John in the Northern Territory. She received her award at a ceremony in Government House in May 2010. The first female in the Northern Territory (other than our Patrons) to receive this honour.

It was a great pleasure to be able to sit and chat with Lesley, a very special lady.

Benny Butler

2010 Paramedic of the Year Awards



Congratulations to Samantha King on being awarded NT Paramedic of the Year for 2010!

The Northern Territory 2010 Paramedic of the Year Awards were presented by the Minister for Health, Hon Kon Vatskalis MLA, at Parliament House on Monday 9 August 2010.

A total of 26 nominations for 20 nominees were received from the community by individuals who have been directly treated by Paramedics, from those who have witnessed and been comforted by the work of a Paramedic and from staff who have nominated their peers. The awards herald the outstanding performance of Paramedic Officers working in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Darwin and acknowledge the professional conduct of Paramedics who often perform their role under extreme and difficult circumstances.

Paramedics are often the front line of human tragedies, saving lives, tending to the injured and comforting the distressed. Reader's Digest for the seventh year in a row have announced that Paramedics had been voted the most trusted profession in Australia, something which would come as no surprise to those who have experienced their work first hand. Their work often goes unrecognised by many in the community — but not by all.

Originally from South Australia, Samantha King moved to the Northern Territory as part of her 8 year career with the Australian Army. Her role as Transport Officer saw Sam confidently respond to challenges both here in Australia and as part of two overseas deployments to East Timor. Sam's easy going and approachable nature was an asset to other roles she has undertaken in recent years, including as Cabin Attendant with Airnorth and as Assistant Promotions Manager at Palmerston Sports Club. Her desire to pursue a new and inspiring career, lead her to commence her St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc Paramedic Traineeship in 2007. Sam was awarded her Diploma of Paramedical Science in 2010 when she also achieved "Student of the Year" award for her application as a student.

Mrs Doris Mullet of Sandringham, Victoria nominated Sam in this year's Paramedic of the Year Award after receiving medical treatment from Sam and her colleague Chris Davies. Doris was on holiday, travelling on the Ghan when she fell ill and required immediate treatment upon arrival in Darwin. In her nomination, Doris described Sam as being "just great, so patient, helpful and caring. The



attention I received was very comforting." There is no doubt that Sam's professionalism, rapport, compassion towards her patients has earned her this recognition of her peers and the Territory community as 2010 Paramedic of the Year.

Now in its 11th year, the Paramedic of the Year Awards was established by the Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise to recognise officers who demonstrate the highest standards in professionalism and compassion. St John Ambulance Paramedics rarely seek attention or accolades for the assistance they provide. The Awards provide an opportunity for people who have had first hand experience with the professional service provided by Paramedics to give feedback, and ensure that officers are continually encouraged and rewarded for their outstanding efforts.

Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise president Wendy Mackay said: "As with my predecessors, it is my honour as president of the Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise to be involved with this year's award."

"The role that paramedics play in our community is a vital, but often overlooked one. Their devotion to a role that puts them at the front line of incidents, that the majority of us would hope to avoid in our lifetimes, is admirable. "However, it is, for the most part, a role that goes unnoticed or at the least, unrecognised.

"Through these annual awards we are able, in some small part, to lift the profile of these amazing people and to highlight the truly wonderful part they play in our community. It is our small way of saying thank you to a group of people, without whose dedication to their chosen profession, we would be much worse off."

St John Ambulance and the Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise would like to congratulate all nominees, thank all community members who submitted their nominations and also thank the sponsors of the Awards – Northern Territory Government, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, JR Telecommunications & Cabling, Fire Protection Professionals, Darwin Airport Resort, Territory Surgical Supplies, Country Classics and Zip Print.

Past winners of the Paramedic of the Year award: 2009 – Sue Gibson (Alice Springs); 2008 – Beverley Hellyer (Katherine); 2007 – Chris Wilson (Tennant Creek); 2006 – Annette Ingham (Darwin); 2005 – Anthony Wood (Darwin); 2004 – Trevor Keatch (Katherine); 2003 – Sue Murphy and Karen Joyner (Darwin); 2002 – Peter Poole (Darwin); 2001 – Anne-Marie Muscat (Darwin); 2000 – Jim Leigh (Darwin).



Giving the gift of sight

St John Ambulance has once again given the gift of sight to the people of Oecussi, in East Timor. A team of Australian doctors and nurses from the East Timor Eye Program was flown to Oecussi by the United Nations in July.

The trip was made possible due to funding by St John, which pays for the team to visit Oecussi every year to perform operations such as cataract removals.

And a team of volunteers from St John accompanied the doctors to the Oecussi Hospital, providing first aid training and giving staff some basic English language skills.

St John has been assisting the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in sending teams to Oecussi since 2006 and aims to eradicate cataract blindness in Oecussi enclave, which has a population of 60,000 people – many of whom live on less than \$1 a day.

St John Ambulance has donated microscopes, surgical consumables and a number of first aid kits and chairman Mike Mooney accompanied the team.

St John has a long history of supporting ophthalmic work through its support of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.

The funds raised support several outreach nurses to provide ophthalmic services in the West Bank and Gaza strip.

The ophthalmic branch of St John also raises funds to support eye care programs in indigenous communities in Moree in New South Wales and Katherine in the Northern Territory.

Ophthalmologists Bill Glasson and Kevin Vandeleur flew to Oecussi in July, accompanied by nurses, optometrists and several medical students.

They performed 64 operations in five days and, along with the optometrists, examined hundreds of patients with a range of diseases from dense cataracts to leprosy, while 350 people were fitted with glasses.

East Timor Eye Program founder Dr Nitin Verma said the support from St John was invaluable, as it allowed the doctors to access one of the most remote and disadvantaged areas in East Timor.

“Blind people can now see, thanks to the financial support from St John,” Dr Verma said.

Brian Ch’ng is one of those Volunteers fortunate enough to travel to Oecussi, and this is his story...

From the 24th through to the 31st of July I was fortunate to travel to Oecussi, Timor-Leste as a part of a St. John Ambulance team in partnership to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Our mission was to provide assistance to the RACS Ophthalmology/Optometry team and provide assistance to the Oecussi Referral Hospital where we could. Two youth members Charmian from NSW and I were selected to accompany the St. John team of a number of other pre-selected people. So off we went early into the morning to meet the team at Darwin Airport and

hop onto the AirNorth flight to Timor-Leste. The team was quite a bit larger than I first thought consisting of about 14 people with an additional person joining us in Timor. It seems almost everyone had already been to Timor before so Charmian and I were going to be the new people.

We arrived in Dili and a number of the teams headed straight off to get a flight to Oecussi to start setting up the equipment while the rest of us headed off to have a look around Dili for a couple of days. Dili was a little rough around the edges but overall not a bad place. Still a developing country there still seems to be a lot of poverty around and infrastructure wise there is still a lot of development to do. Open drains in the street provide a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes and this can be particularly hazardous as malaria can be rife in some areas. The effects of over 10 years of UN and other developments are clear with quite a number of foreign owned businesses catering to the foreigners and everywhere you look there is an abundance of UN marked cars.

Day 2 was another opportunity to have a look around Dili. We visited one of the local markets and it’s certainly no Mindil but probably 10 times the size of it. Various shacks sell an assortment of foods and other goods and strangely enough there were little tin sheds, a number of which had satellite dishes on top of them.

Day 3 Saw my first light aircraft ride as we took a short hop into Oecussi. First impressions are that whilst Dili is quite well developed with all things taken into consideration the Oecussi province is more of the third world and developing country that Timor is. It is fortunate to have a relatively modern hospital but a couple of the hotels only recently having flush toilets installed they are a luxury and a relatively new addition within the last year. Showers are only in a couple of rooms with most of them having a mandi instead. A mandi is like a big tub of water and you stand on the bathroom floor and pour freezing cold water over yourself. Electricity coverage can be a bit patchy too, at best usually only available during the night hours.

The hospital itself is lucky to have continuous electricity and it is here where we spent most of the day. I was fortunate to assist with the optometrists in initial screening for cataracts whilst they carried out further investigations. Besides cataract surgery the optometry team is able to offer screening and treatment for a number of other eye conditions and even had the facility to provide very cheap spectacles for the local population that needed them. I was lucky to be able to be taught about a number of eye conditions and also learnt how to use some of the optometry instruments too. Quite a steep learning curve but an enjoyable and valuable one all together.



Dr Bill Glasson, of Brisbane, examines a woman under a tree outside Oecussi.



Chairman Mike Mooney in Oecussi Hospital with a patient.



Doctors removed both cataracts from this formerly-blind woman's eyes to restore her vision.

Whilst we were able to help a number of people have cataract surgery and have better sight with the assistance of glasses, unfortunately there were a number of people that we couldn't help. A number of people whom were blind in both eyes had to be turned away as there was nothing we could do to help them.

Day 4 provided another opportunity to assist the optometry team further and refine my skills that I had learnt the previous day. Due to the lack of eye care available a number of the cataracts that are seen in this setting are particularly dense and severe and something not often seen in Australia. Today provided the first opportunity to see some of the fruits of our labour with the first post operative patients returning to have their eye pads and shields removed and being able to see outside of that particular eye for the first time in a number of years. Quite a number of people had to be led in to the hospital by others or utilise sticks to help navigate their way around but now after surgery they are able to leave independently without any assistance.

This day also provided the opportunity to meet the ambulance staff from the hospital. There is one ambulance officer who received his training in Malta of all places who is paired with a driver. The signs of multiple organisations and some of the slap shot nature of the development of the country are evidenced to some degree in the ambulance service. The troop carrier has different front and rear tyres, one ambulance is provided from Korea but not terribly practical for the terrain here and the ambulance staff have been trained by people from a number of different countries. Modern equipment is sadly lacking as the ambulance doesn't even have a defibrillator despite the staff being trained and able to operate one. I take away the fact that the staff have the skills and knowledge to do more but don't have the equipment to perform to the best of their abilities.

Following a quick meeting with the hospital management staff we were asked to provide a very impromptu English lesson for some of the hospital staff. So after a quick scramble to prepare we managed to deliver a very basic

conversational English class and arrange for further classes during the week. Speaking English is a highly prized skill as those who do are generally able to get higher paying jobs with the UN or other aid agencies and for the hospital staff it provides a means to be able to further enhance their education by travelling to other countries.

The next two days involved assisting the optometrists further and we were also fortunate enough to conduct some training with the local ambulance officer to refresh some skills. We also held meetings with the United Nations and conducted first aid lessons with both the international UN police contingent and also the PNTL – local Timorese police. The Oecussi Referral Hospital is staffed by a team of Cuban doctors and we were privileged to be able to accompany them to see a number of patients admitted to the hospital. Like the ambulance service the Cuban doctors are highly competent but are unable to perform to the best of their abilities due to the lack of equipment available.

We saw a number of children with severe burns and respiratory infections but essentials like oxygen equipment and medications are missing. No ducted oxygen in the walls here, the best they can do is offer an oxygen concentrator for people with lung disease like the ones people have at home in Australia. I have a feeling that a number of people here die simply because they don't have the correct medications and equipment to treat them. In the end the Optometry team saw over 400 patients and I believe the surgery team performed nearly 40 operations.

Overall my first trip to a developing country and the opportunity to assist with an overseas medical team was quite an experience. This trip is aimed as a youth development opportunity and having the chance to participate was the opportunity of the lifetime. Not many young people are able to say they have been to a far flung province in Timor-Leste and assisted a surgery team from Australia. I'd encourage any young people looking to expand their horizons to consider applying for the program next year.

Trials, tribulations & challenges

Trials, tribulations and challenges in the journey, that come with being a Student Paramedic in the Northern Territory.



Reading up on notes for an examination I have at the end of the week. I glanced up for a second to view the tropical storm that was cracking above me. A reminder of why I love living in the Territory. I caught a glimpse of my reflection sitting at my desk with books all around me, studying late, studying to be Paramedic!

Physically exhausted from a week of hands-on training, extricating patients from fallen rubble, burning buildings, trapped in cars and off cliff faces. Being taught to Abseil, use-breathing apparatus, tie knots, make stretchers, use equipment called 'Jaws of Life'. My job is all that I ever wanted it to be, and much, much, more!

My path so far has been a forever challenging experience. Three years of patience and persistence with St John Ambulance (SJA) to finally receive the letter of acceptance and the offer of appointment as a Trainee Paramedic – Darwin.

Now six months since stepping out of the classroom from Clinical 1, for some reason I seem to attract what is referred to as the 'big jobs'. Acquiring the nick name from my work colleagues of 'Resus Robyn'. I soon learnt the importance of peer support and why it's so important to have a mentor I can call regularly to discuss and debrief after some of the jobs.

One of my hardest days on road happened just 6 weeks after coming out of clinical one. It was one of those days that just got bigger and bigger. It started from 1am, whilst at home tucked in bed, I was woken by an intruder breaking into my house, up instantly to defend myself, and I called the police.

I was upset, recalling a similar incident that happened 6 months prior, following which I had taken several measures to make sure it wouldn't happen again. Eager to get away from home to take my mind off what had just happened, I started work at 7am at Palmerston.

Our first job for the day: my partner and I were dispatched to pick up a patient approximately 1 hour out at sea on a massive British tanker. We travelled out on a police boat to get to him. It was a great trip, something a bit different but the sea was rough and we both felt a little seasick. Fortunately, (for our patient) and us, our patient was stable so it turned out to be a basic transport into RDH (via a boat).

After clearing from the hospital, we were sent Code 1 to a two car MVA (motor vehicle accident) in Palmerston. There were 2 patients involved with no major injuries, all refused transport and we were cleared from that scene.

It was now just after 2pm, we are both getting very

hungry, we were told to go back to centre for a break so we picked up a sustaining bite to eat at the servo and headed back to Palmerston Centre. We had just pulled up on centre and we were paged again for a Code 1 at Robertson Barracks.

A young male had come off his motor bike. To get to the patient we had to travel down on a dirt road into the bush near the quarry it was dusty and dirty as we followed a Ute into the scene. The patient was lying several meters away from his bike and a bystander was applying CPR.

My partner and I and an attending Intensive Care Paramedic (ICP) attempted to resuscitate the patient for about 30 minutes, but we went through the motions. Unfortunately, the patient showed no signs compatible with life. That was the third death I had witnessed/attended that week, all the patients were less than 25 years of age.

I stayed at a friend's house that night and called my mentor the following day, we had a long chat over coffee. I would be lying to say if what I had been through did not affect me, I would not be human and not suited for such a caring profession.

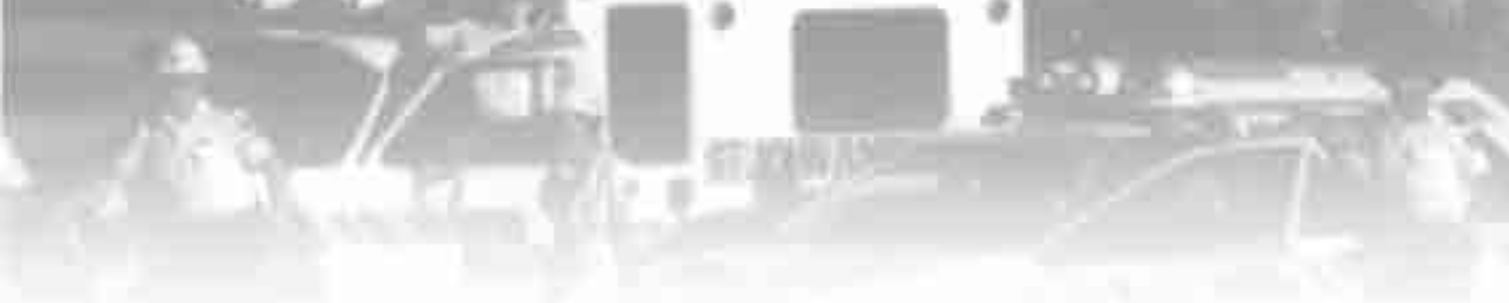
The following day my partner and I were sent to a one-year-old girl post drowning. She had been found floating in a creek at the rear of the property in the rural area. Her Grandfather had commenced EAR/CPR prior to our arrival and she subsequently survived! I saw her picture in the local paper the next week, happy, and playing with her brother. It was a nice feeling to be part of it.

I love this job, as you never know what you are to be faced with next. I have been sent to jobs hours out on the ocean and others have had me bogged in the sand on Strangways road at Humpty Doo in the early hours of the morning.

Seeing the Indigenous camps and different lifestyles people have constantly has me intrigued. The people you meet can be lovely and some of the situations you have to deal with just have to make you laugh later on. The job is certainly character building.

I chose to study in the Northern Territory because of the 'on-the-job learning and hands-on experience' that may not arise as often in other States. I look forward to going to work everyday, I feel slightly nervous before every shift. I am challenged constantly, but I would not want it any other way. I am living my dream! Student Paramedic in the NT.

Robyn Orchard



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Nhulunbuy events 2010

Nhulunbuy has had a busy year and one thing that must be highlighted is the number of volunteers who have made the move to full-time employment with St John NT. Karl Visser, Rhian Davies, Kylie Newport, Rob Webster and Rebecca Dexter have all been accepted to work full time and as they all had put in so many hours as volunteers with the Nhulunbuy Division, will be greatly missed. We all wish them well in their new careers.

We may have lost a few people from Nhulunbuy, but we have also had some new additions to the St John family. Both Melanie Ferguson and Kristen Jurd have had babies this year. Perhaps new members of the Cadet Division??

The Cadets have branched out of town and started a group in Yirrkala, based at the school. A small group of students received basic first aid training and it looks like this will continue with help from Darwin.

Nhulunbuy Cadet Division has covered quite a few topics, including Fire Training, Caring for animals and soon to start Cookery and Nutrition. Mandy Paradise, Cadet Superintendent has had some excellent assistance from Teresa Holdsworth, throughout the year.

The NT Cadet Camp was held in Darwin and 3 Cadets from Nhulunbuy attended, coming a credible fourth in the competitions. Well done, Emily, Hannah and Makaela. A very good effort for our first comp.

Nhulunbuy has seen an enormous increase in the amount of Public Duties which we are requested to attend. There have been Youth Events, School fetes, Speedway, Netball, Touch Football, Careers days, Skate Park and Rugby League games, to name a few. It seems that all the organisers want our volunteers at their events. Luckily, we have some dedicated members who make sure that these duties are covered.

Training for the volunteers has often gone down the path of scenarios, with Mark Ferguson, Divisional Superintendent going all out to make the evenings both interesting and fun. We have rescued damsels in distress from the top of Mount Saunders, saved souls from car wreckages and triaged the entire population of Nhulunbuy with a disaster scenario.

The training has been of the highest standard and even as we lose Volunteers, either to the service or through moving from town, we have been able to attract new people. The volunteers are well received throughout our small town and recognised for the great job that they do.

One of our volunteers, Jamie Kokles-Ridgway is a nursing student and recently received a Scholarship from TIO. Well done Jamie.

Jamie was also one of the participants of the Beach Volleyball team which the volunteers entered into this years competition. It is a fun day with nets set up along the beach and teams playing 3 or more games each. Our team was named the Zucchini's, with green team shirts made by Mandy. Although the team was not able to win



Mark Ferguson & Mandy Paradise.

any games, it was a great day for fun and team building. We shall definitely try to enter a team next year.

The volunteers have been fortunate in being able to acquire a trailer to take to events. As this has only recently arrived, it is still being set up with all the necessary equipment. It is going to make a fantastic difference for the volunteers.

During the past year there has been a change of face within the local Fire Dept and Police in Nhulunbuy. Colin Snowdon is now the Station Officer, Fire Department and Officer in Charge for the Police is Brendan Muldoon. We have had some very interesting training nights with the Fireies, with car cutting and rescue events. Great training for us all, working together.

The Annual Inspection was well attended this year and it is an opportunity to recognise the great work that, both Adult and Cadet Volunteers do. Our local member, Lynne Walker has been very supportive and was the donor for our Adult and Cadet member of the year trophies.

This year the recipients were: Kylie Newport, Adult Member of the Year and Kasey Baker, Cadet of the Year.

New First Aid Services Trailer for St John in Nhulunbuy



St John Ambulance NT have this year been fortunate to receive much needed funds to support the purchase of a new Storage and Transport Trailer from the Foundation of Rural and Regional Renewal, in collaboration with the Pratt Foundation.

The St John Ambulance Trailer will be used by the Nhulunbuy St John Volunteer Division and will enhance Volunteer safety and response capability for public and emergency duties.

"By equipping volunteers with safe and secure storage and transport facilities, the Nhulunbuy community will benefit in having better prepared St John Ambulance volunteers at various Nhulunbuy events and public activities into the future" said Mark Ferguson, St John Ambulance Officer In Charge – Arnhem Region. "We are very grateful for the support of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal for their support of St John through this worthwhile grant opportunity" said Mark.

The Foundation of Rural and Regional Renewal Small Grants Program is targeted at small rural Australian communities and offers about \$900,000 a year in grants to benefit people in rural and remote communities.

St John Ambulance has been serving the Nhulunbuy community through its ambulance service and division of volunteers since 1979 and ensures that members of the public have access to first aid services at a range of community and public events. Many public events are not eligible for public liability insurance without the presence of qualified first aid officers. St John Ambulance is proud



to provide this service in exchange of voluntary donations from organisations or purely as a community service.

Nhulunbuy St John Ambulance Volunteers provide First Aid Services at many public events each year including Motocross and BMX Events, Festivals and Cultural Events, School Sports Carnivals, School / Childcare visits (with the ambulance as a community service). This year's events have included Youth Week Activities, launch of the Yilpara Band, Garma Festival, Ivan Danks Festival, Yirrkala NT Football, Rio Tinto Alcan Open Day and the Rotary Club Variety Bash.

Of particular note, the new Volunteer Cadet Division in Yirrkala will significantly benefit from the new capability of being able to transport all training equipment to their school location for future training activities.

St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc is an incorporated charitable organisation, operating throughout the Northern Territory and manages the provision and training of a volunteer and youth movement, in addition to a comprehensive response service to the sick and injured. The Volunteer Division of St John Ambulance manages and equips well over 500 volunteers across 17 divisions Territory wide. Last year, St John Ambulance Volunteers in the Northern Territory contributed over 19,000 duty hours, over 20,000 training hours and over 26,000 hours volunteering in other activities including Ambulance duties.



Words are not just words

I have written a number of times regarding the roles we have as paramedics. Some of my comments have come from personal experience and many have come from observing others in the course of their duties.

The catalyst for writing this time was in response to a recent case that I attended. We were at the Katherine Hospital when a call came through with the dreaded words "possible paediatric resuscitation"

We responded straight away and began mentally preparing ourselves for what we might face when we arrived. On arrival I saw two people at the front of the house, and immediately recognized the female who was in fact the mother of the child involved. Whilst not needing to go into details of the case because it is not relevant to what I want to share, this was a SIDS case and the child passed away.

During the transport and for a short while at the hospital, I was aware of the anguish of the parents. I wasn't able to speak with the parents immediately afterwards as they were caught up in their own emotions and grief. There was however a week or so later, the opportunity to speak with the mother. We approached each other and began to talk to each other about what had happened.

I have a philosophy where I won't try to "cheer someone" up by using the typical phrases some might use in this situation, but rather I prefer to be there and stand with them. She asked me a number of questions about what had taken place as she grappled with this incredibly painful situation. I tried to answer them as honestly and accurately as I could. My answers seemed to bring her some comfort as it helped her put some things into perspective. She also asked me why it had to happen, to which I replied that I didn't know. This was followed up with the statement that "this was simply not fair". I answered her by agreeing, not trying to add any more to that, and again just standing there with her.

The reason I am stating these things is to reinforce the powerful effect that as paramedics, our words and our attitude and our presence can have in the course of our work. We may think that we don't have much to offer a grieving person who has lost a loved one, but often our response, verbal and non verbal can assist them to move in a positive direction. I realize that when someone is going through grief like this, words may not be remembered, but a caring and compassionate attitude will shine through.



Trevor Keatch treating a patient.

Don't limit your work experience to just clinical treatment, pharmacology or the practical aspects of our job but recognize the relevance, importance and impact of the empathy and compassion we can and should bring and don't underestimate your ability to bring something positive into a negative situation and experience.

Trevor Keatch
Katherine Centre

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St John Ambulance iPhone Applications

125 years experience in First Aid education has been applied to iPhone technology by St John Ambulance Australia, with the launch of three medical applications for the iPhone this year.

Resuscitate (\$2.45) will find the closest defibrillator among the 300 registered with St John Ambulance Australia for public access to your home or office. At the push of a button, it also gives you voice prompts on where to place the defibrillator pads, screens a reminder video and gives tips on how to carry out CPR.

MediProfiles (free) stores vital emergency information on family and work colleagues - such as allergies, medications, medical conditions and doctors - that can be shared instantly electronically.

First-Aid (\$3.99), includes easy step-by-step details along with large clear images detailing how to respond to 13 of the most common and critical conditions that require immediate life saving First Aid, like choking, burns, fractures, asthma and severe bleeding.



The three iPhone applications were produced in response to the need for first aid apps in Australia to comply with Australian first aid protocols. St John's apps are made available as a refresher tool for people who have completed a first aid course and are not a substitute for first aid training. It is still strongly recommend that everyone attends a professional first aid course from a registered training organisation like St John.

iPhone users are downloading hundreds of thousands of great, creative and fun apps out there. The St John Ambulance applications are unique in the fact that they could potentially save a life!

With no loading screens, advertisements or complicated menus, the app ensures that life saving instructions are available faster than any other application available.

Since its release in March, the St John Ambulance Australia iPhone App Resuscitate remained in the number one position on Apple's App Store for more than 50 days. This was followed by the release of the First-Aid application in June, which debuted at number one on the Apple App Store Medical category. In August 2010, St John Ambulance celebrated achieving the ten-thousandth download milestone of the St John Ambulance Australia iPhone applications, reinforcing our belief that people in Australia understand the importance of knowing first aid.

For more information and to download these life saving apps, visit www.stjohn.org.au/apps/

The final adult First Aid Competitions

This year may have been the last time that we see adult first aid competitions held in the Northern Territory.

Adult competitions will no longer be held as part of the National Conference and each state and territory must decide whether they will continue holding state-wide competitions. This decision hasn't yet been made in the NT.

Although we only had two teams and two individuals competing in the event it was an exciting and successful event and our sincere thanks go to Competition Manager, Christine Turner and all the other members who gave up their Sunday morning to assist. A big thank you to the Emergency Services volunteers who became our patients for the day.

The scores in both the team and individual events were very close – Darwin Adult Division, Peter Poole, Les Anson and Brett Devitt, won the team event and Kate Anning won the individual section. The team travelled to Melbourne in June and represented the Northern Territory in the National First Aid Competition.



Darwin Adult Division winning team, from left: Peter, Les and Brett with Team Manager Kaye Griffin.



Glen Auricht with a patient.

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2010 NT Cadet Competitions

Fifty cadets arrived at the Lake Bennett Resort eager to spend the September School holiday week of fun, friendship and first aid.

As a part of the week long camp many of the cadets participated in the 2010 NT Cadet Competitions. Five teams, five individuals and one cadet leader took part in the competitions.

Congratulations to the winners of the competition:

Team – Band Division (Adam Ryan, Alex Chin, Matthew Fox)

Individual – Sarah McLaughlin (Band Division)

Cadet Leader – Amy McKay (Band Division)

The competition winners will be representing the Northern Territory at the National First Aid Competitions which will be held on the Sunshine Coast in January 2011.

Palmerston Cadet Divisional Inspection

The Palmerston Cadet Division held their annual Divisional Inspection on Monday 22nd March at their centre in Palmerston. Territory Officer Cadets, Kimberlee McKay officially inspected the cadets and juniors on parade and assisted with the presentation of awards. Commissioner Steve Peers, Naomi Gardiner and Al Ballinger also presented awards.

The awards presented are:

- Community Service Award (Donated by the Ballinger Family) – Geraldine Turner
- Most Outstanding Contribution to the Division by a Cadet – Kiana Murphy
- Cadet of the Year – Leanne Eltagonde
- Most Improved Junior – Steven Callaghan
- Junior of the Year (Trophy donated by Terry Mills) – Amelia Staben

A special treat for the visitors, parents and divisional staff was the supper prepared and cooked by the cadets as part of their Cookery and Nutrition Proficiency Course.

A special thank you to Divisional Superintendent, Kelly Raven, Divisional Staff, Juniors and Cadets for such a great night.



2010 NT Cadet Competition Individual Section Winner Sarah McLaughlin treating a patient.



Adjudicators at the 2010 NT Cadet Competitions.

Professional Development 4 x 4 Driving

— A picture says 1000 words





Nursing in the outback

I would like to thank RCNA for inviting me to write an article (just a glimpse) on my experiences as a nurse over two decades in remote areas – but I hold no degrees, I am simply a medication-endorsed enrolled nurse (EEN) with a multifaceted background.

Working in Central Australia, outback Queensland and Western Australia has seen me witness some shocking scenes together with some wonderful outcomes. I've spent most of my career as a paramedic, air ambulance officer, training officer, university lecturer in nursing and writing national texts for my favourite organisation, St John Ambulance Australia that I first joined as a 17-year-old in Adelaide in 1975.

It is my belief that nursing is also multifaceted – so many of us nurses bring into our profession life skills and knowledge that contribute to and enhance the nursing outcomes we strive to maintain. I have pounded the floors, experienced the sore feet and the frustration that only nurses can understand with demanding workloads on understaffed wards.

But the silence of the outback is an entirely different thing – and I mean silence when you pull over in your 4WD for a break and the red dust settles around you as you stretch and get the lactic acid moving from your body. It is still another eight hours drive to the bush clinic. Our Australian outback is literally a living desert – there is so much to see if you take the time to notice and enjoy.

Later that afternoon my wife who was the relieving registered nurse (RN) at the lone nursing post said something about a storm approaching. Storm! It suddenly hit and we were engulfed in a sandstorm like I have never before or since experienced. It went for hours and the day literally turned to night.

I was shocked to see my ambulance the next morning. One whole side had been sandblasted, ripping off the reflective stripes and red lights and I never found the siren.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) undertakes a huge role in outback medical care and it was my honour to conduct the very first School of the Air first aid course over RFDS HF radio in Queensland from Mt Isa. I was trained as a hospital-based nurse at the Mt Isa Base Hospital.

As a nurse and paramedic, tragedy has played an important part of my ongoing career. Looking back, it would be my posting in Tennant Creek NT that tore my heart out. It was an Easter weekend. The news kindly reported that there were three fatalities in road accidents in the NT. I attended them all. I will never forget the 13-year-old boy we lost when we operated with a craniotomy, when the surgeon met us halfway in another ambulance. He operated on him in the middle of nowhere on the side of the highway at dusk. It was awful – but we all tried our best.

But there is another side to nursing. Bringing a new life into the world in a remote outback clinic! I was only a

scout nurse and the team flew in – and the picture speaks volumes.

Sure I have saved lives over the years – and have even helped mums deliver their little ones in ambulances – but the most rewarding experience of all would have to be when I taught Aboriginal health workers. I did so for seven years in Central Australia.

I was at a remote community – no doctor or RN – I was there to teach kids at the local school and conduct a first aid course for the community. You will see from the picture the mail plane arriving on our red dirt strips. These strips are closed during wet weather; hence our communities in the bush can become totally isolated for weeks. I was asked to explain how a defibrillator works. Easy – and we grabbed the keys for the unattended clinic where I demonstrated how to use a defibrillator (an AED).

Early next morning I headed back to Alice Springs. Later that evening on arrival home, I received a phone call: a senior Aboriginal Elder had suffered a cardio-respiratory arrest. The community rallied immediately, opened the clinic and took the AED to his house. It 'shocked' him three times, recognising VF, but the outcome was sad. They had no knowledge how to IV cannulate or give drugs whilst administering CPR. They tried their best and were in constant contact with the RFDS medical officer.

It would be remiss of me not to mention two peak bodies in nursing that have helped in my journey as a nurse in remote areas. The College of Nursing in NSW helped me in the past with professional development and the Council of Remote Area Nurses of Australia (CRANA). The Bush Crisis Line at CRANA has saved my sanity on a few occasions when I have been able to access, via telephone, qualified counsellors when I have been bashed, shot at and my personal safety has been at risk.

There are highs and there are lows in nursing as anyone would attest. I am proud to be a nurse and to be a member of Royal College of Nursing, Australia. I am doubly proud to be an Aussie nurse and I too, still have much more to learn.

Alan Caust MRCNA Endorsed Enrolled Nurse, Alice Springs

RCNA would like to congratulate Alan on receiving the 2010 RCNA Edie Smith Memorial Scholarship. Throughout Alan's career as an EN he has demonstrated commitment to nursing and education in rural and remote locations and is a worthy recipient of the scholarship. Congratulations Alan!

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www.aussienascartours.com.au

or ring David on

0412 336 153

Aussie Nascar Tours is the best sports tour option for Australian motorsport fans – our Nascar tours are designed and run by a racing car driver and Nascar fanatic David Ling, so they are the genuine experience. Our tours also have a personal touch, because the groups are small, we all travel together and tour guide/driver David creates a fun, relaxed atmosphere. As well as the Nascar events, you also get to experience the local sights and attractions across the US, such as museums, auctions and shopping centres.

Aussie Nascar Tours also offers personalised tours, so if you've always wanted to experience Nascar racing with a group of your friends, contact us and we can design a tour for you.



PROTECT OUR NATURAL GAS PIPELINES

NT Gas is a key player in the Northern Territory's energy industry, transporting natural gas via underground pipelines from Darwin to Alice Springs and throughout the Territory.

Damage to our pipelines has the potential to interrupt the Northern Territory's energy supply and could cause serious injury.

The pipeline easement is marked by warning signs, and under the Energy Pipelines Act, unauthorised activity near the pipeline could incur severe penalties.



For your own safety...

- **Contact** NT Gas when planning work in the vicinity of a pipeline to obtain approval before starting work.
- **Notify** NT Gas if you see others working near a pipeline.
- **Ask** NT Gas for information or assistance regarding a pipeline.
- **Inform** NT Gas of any damage or erosion you may observe.
- **Don't** cross the pipeline with heavy loads.
- **Don't** blast within 200 metres of the pipeline.
- **Don't** excavate, sink wells, bore holes, erect fences or structure.
- **Don't** use vibrating equipment near the pipeline.

**DIAL 1100
BEFORE YOU DIG**



or contact **NT Gas on 1800 019 112**
www.ntgas.com.au Bringing Energy to the Territory

APA Group

NT Gas is part of the APA Group