

# CareFlight NEWS

Issue 41 • Autumn 2008

## The angels watching over us

*This outstanding feature article by senior journalist TONY VERMEER appeared in the Sunday Telegraph just before Christmas. Reprinted by permission of News Limited, Sydney.*

One minute, corporate captain Richard Longes was enjoying an exhilarating, wind-through-the-hair drive in his elegant 1959 Jaguar convertible.

A moment later, he was trapped in his classic car's crumpled wreckage after a head-on collision with a Hyundai sedan on Barrenjoey Rd, Palm Beach.

That Mr Longes is alive today has nothing to do with the serious wealth he accumulated during a career as chairman and director of a host of blue-chip companies such as MLC and Lend Lease.

He survived because of an NRMA CareFlight helicopter trial funded largely by community donations and corporate sponsorship. It aims to put a specialist doctor and ambulance paramedic at the scene of head-injury accidents around Sydney in the time it takes to listen to the news and weather on the radio.

### Join the NRMA CareFlight Support Crew

Tens of thousands of our loyal NRMA CareFlight supporters have been invited to join the NRMA CareFlight Support Crew.

Support Crew members will receive regular mission updates, a limited edition t-shirt, plus a special membership key ring. This key ring has a unique membership number and our contact details, with the promise of a reward for the finder, should the keys ever be lost.

The NRMA CareFlight Support Crew is part of a longer term plan aimed at building regular income. This includes a new marketing campaign targeting employers and asking them to invite their employees and colleagues to give regularly through their salary.

This initiative is aimed at helping us to plan and budget ahead with more certainty as



A REFLECTION OF THE NRMA CAREFLIGHT FLYING TRAUMA SQUAD'S AGUSTA 109 POWER HELICOPTER; WITH DR BERNIE HANRAHAN AND AMBULANCE PARAMEDIC PETER BITTNER. PHOTOS © NEWSPIX, DEAN MARZOLLA.

The trial was set up to see whether death and injury tolls – and the cost to the health system – could be cut by early intervention by medical specialists.

In Germany, which has a network of 60 medical helicopters, the ratio of road accident patients who end up in a vegetative state is about half that in Australia.

The trial was almost derailed when Canadian firm CHC won a government contract last year to provide helicopter rescues.

members of the Support Crew move to regular monthly donations, rather than one-off gifts at appeal times.

Moving to monthly donations will make a big difference, allowing us to plan ahead for new equipment, training and other life-saving services.

NRMA CareFlight co-founder Ian Badham says regular giving will take the peaks and troughs out of the income stream: "Over the years, our supporters have been fantastic with their generosity but, as a business, it's almost impossible to gauge the amount that will come in from one appeal to the next. Moving more of our supporters into regular monthly direct debits will help us to plan ahead. In the long run, this will save money and make more efficient use of funds."

For more information about how you can help, please go to the back page of this newsletter.

But NRMA CareFlight has managed to maintain its helicopter crew and medical team – with government support – at its Westmead Hospital base.

There, team members monitor the ambulance computer system, looking for accidents that fit the criteria for rapid intervention.

As soon as details are confirmed, the switch is hit on the Agusta 109 Power helicopter and the pilot, air crewman, doctor and paramedic scamper on board.

They aim to be aloft in three minutes and at the accident scene – in a catchment area bounded by the Central Coast, the Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands – in less than 15 minutes.

The pilots are skilled enough – and have official permission – to land anywhere they choose.

On the ground, they work with road-based ambulance crews to determine the best initial treatment before the patient is transported to hospital, sometimes by chopper and sometimes by road.

"It is crucial, in some cases, to be able to stabilise low blood pressure and we can administer blood product," CareFlight veteran Dr Bernie Hanrahan says.

"We can control breathing earlier. This reduces carbon dioxide levels, and there's evidence it reduces the severity of brain injury."

CONTINUED PAGE 3 (HOW THE NRMA CAREFLIGHT TEAM IS SAVING LIVES)

## New Chairman



The Board of NRMA CareFlight at its December meeting late last year appointed two new Directors to help lead the organisation in its next phase of development.

The former NSW Deputy Premier, Dr Andrew Refshauge (photo, above), and the General Manager of the NSW Motor Accidents Authority, David Bowen, accepted roles on the Board to help guide the organisation's future direction.

The Board elected Dr Refshauge as Chairman after Ian Badham decided to step down, having led the organisation since its inception in 1986 and through a number of major recent changes.

New aeromedical retrieval arrangements by the Ambulance Service of NSW in 2007 resulted in a long-term contract for NRMA CareFlight to provide doctors on Ambulance Service aircraft.

"These changes have allowed NRMA CareFlight to focus on its core strengths in medical retrieval, training, innovation and research," Dr Refshauge said.

"Some exciting opportunities are emerging both within NSW and elsewhere and I look forward to playing a role in building on the organisation's proud track record of serving the community."

Mr Badham will remain a Director and will focus on supporting and further developing NRMA CareFlight's large community support network.

"Our community partners and grass roots supporters have been the lifeblood of NRMA CareFlight for more than two decades," Mr Badham said.

"It's because of them that we continue to be able to deliver world class medical services and it's vital that we recognise their contribution and support their efforts to support us."

## Tribute To Ian Badham

As Chairman of the organisation over the last four years and prior to that as Executive Director for seventeen years, Ian has played a pivotal role in CareFlight's history and made a huge contribution to its development. Many of our most enduring community partnerships and loyal donor relationships have their origins in work done by Ian a decade or more ago. Often, when NRMA CareFlight achieves a milestone or a win, Ian will light-heartedly ascribe it to "overnight success". The truth is that much of that success is better ascribed to Ian's dedication to CareFlight and to the passion, energy and enthusiasm that are the hallmarks of his character. Although Ian steps down as Chairman, he remains a Director, and will still be active in the organisation, with a special focus on nurturing and liaising with our community partners and grass-roots supporters, who have been the life-blood of NRMA CareFlight for more than two decades. Ian will also continue to handle all media liaison on operational activities.

**Derek Colenbrander – CEO**

## New MAA funding agreement

Just prior to Christmas the General Manager of the NSW Motor Accidents Authority, David Bowen visited the NRMA CareFlight base with MAA Director, Ron Dyer to sign a new funding agreement under which the MAA will provide \$7 million to NRMA CareFlight over seven years. The agreement also gives the MAA the right to appoint a Director to the CareFlight Board and General Manager David Bowen has been appointed.



CHIEF PILOT JEFF KONEMAN, MAA DIRECTOR RON DYER, DEREK COLENBRANDER, MAA GENERAL MANAGER DAVID BOWEN, IAN BADHAM, DR ALAN GARNER, NRMA INSURANCE SENIOR MANAGER GOVERNMENT RELATIONS MARK LEVER

## Oktoberfest

### 2007's top fundraiser

More than 500 guests attended the NRMA CareFlight Oktoberfest and turned it into NRMA CareFlight's most successful fundraising event ever. This was the eighth major corporate fundraiser that NRMA CareFlight Director John Szangolies has organised and in terms of fun, entertainment, supporter turn-out and financial return, the 2007 Oktoberfest must rank as an outstanding success. Held for the first time at the Bavarian Hospitality Group's spectacular new venue at the Entertainment Quarter, Moore Park, it was a night to remember. Master of Ceremonies was former leading Rugby League referee Bill Harrigan who arrived in the NRMA CareFlight helicopter. Dr Ken Harrison outlined NRMA CareFlight's medical capability which was

emotionally enhanced by high school teacher and accident survivor Rachel Waldron-Bowers. There were Swiss Yodellers and bell players, an incredible live auction with a great mixture of humour and cajoling by Stuart Gregory of Liquid Ideas, the best Bavarian three-course meal, countless steins, wines and schnapps plus dancing and music. The whole night was a tribute to the organisational skills of hosts John and Sandy Szangolies and their key staff Emma Cook, David Schlesinger and Jessica Arena; and to the auction sponsors including chef Danny Russo and sommelier Christopher Morrison, Harvey Norman, Business Coaching Systems, Matt Giteau (for his boots), Peppers Guest House Hunter Valley, Tower Estate Wines, Roberts Restaurant, BMW, Coca-Cola Amatil, South Sydney Rabbitohs, Sony and Audi. As the result of the generosity of guests and supporters, the function raised a total of \$234,000.



HOST JOHN SZANGOLIES AND A BEVY OF BAVARIAN BEAUTIES ENJOYING THE FESTIVITIES AT OKTOBERFEST

# Central Coast service officially starts

The NSW Minister for Health, Reba Meagher and the Minister for the Central Coast, John Della Bosca have formally welcomed the arrival of NRMA CareFlight to the region under a new agreement.

Ms Meagher said the program would operate under an extension of an agreement between the Ambulance Service of NSW and NRMA CareFlight.

"The NRMA CareFlight Head Injury Retrieval Trial has been operating in the Greater Sydney metropolitan area since 2005 and this expansion to the Central Coast is good news for the local community," Ms Meagher said.

"Medical retrievals across the Central Coast are also covered by the Newcastle Westpac helicopter and the Ambulance Service emergency medical helicopters based in Sydney."

"Expanding the NRMA CareFlight trial to the Central Coast adds another dimension of pre-hospital care for our local community."

The Minister for the Central Coast, John Della Bosca, said a \$7 million sponsorship agreement with the NSW Motor Accidents Authority had assisted in the expansion of the trial to the region. (See story page 2).

"Improving access to quality health care is a priority of the Government's State Plan and this initiative will deliver on that commitment to the Central Coast," Mr Della Bosca said.

"Severe head injury received in a car crash is a leading cause of death and disability and expanding the trial to the Central Coast will save lives and reduce the impact of road trauma" said Mr Della Bosca.

Under the NRMA CareFlight Head Injury Retrieval Trial (HIRT), the charity's specialised medical teams are dispatched directly to the scene of serious head injury.

NRMA CareFlight co-founder and Director Ian Badham welcomed the expansion which he emphasised was being undertaken in co-operation with the Ambulance Service of NSW.

"Under this extension, NRMA Careflight is authorised to fly our specialist trauma doctor and duty ambulance paramedic direct to the scene of injury for adult and child patients on the Central Coast," he said.



NSW MINISTER REBA MEAGHER AND JOHN DELLA BOSCA, GREET THE NRMA CAREFLIGHT TRAUMA TEAM AT GOSFORD TO FORMALLY WELCOME THEIR EXTENSION OF OPERATION TO THE CENTRAL COAST. L TO R: PARAMEDIC PETER BITTNER, PILOT STEVE HINE, NSW HEALTH MINISTER REBA MEAGHER, NSW MINISTER FOR THE CENTRAL COAST JOHN DELLA BOSCA, AIRCREWMAN DAVID GARDINER AND MEDICAL DIRECTOR DR ALAN GARNER

## How the NRMA CareFlight team is saving lives

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

In Mr Longes' case, the NRMA CareFlight team diagnosed a dangerous leak from a punctured lung.

As air escaped beneath the skin of his neck and torso, he swelled up like a Michelin man. He was saved by punching a hole in his side and feeding in a tube to release the air.

He also had a potentially fatal tear in his pulmonary artery that miraculously clotted and closed long enough to allow him to be transported by air to the Royal North Shore Hospital.

Doctors say Mr Longes' injuries were remarkably similar to those suffered by the Princess of Wales in her fatal tunnel crash.

Mr Longes, who remembers nothing between getting behind the wheel and waking up in hospital 10 days later, says a permanent

helicopter early intervention team is essential in Australia.

"I'm alive today because of the rapidity of the response and the care I received by all concerned," he says. "This is an essential service, and should be available for anyone who needs it."

It cost \$11.2 million to fund the first three years of the trial. But it is money well spent, according to NRMA Insurance, because of the potential savings it promises.

Over a lifetime the cost of treatment and ongoing care for victims of catastrophic injury runs into millions. And there are an estimated 80 or more catastrophic injuries in the Greater Sydney area each year.

"Even with just a small improvement in patient outcomes, you can see how it is value for money," Dr Hanrahan says.

## Great golf days

Two golf days held recently raised close to \$100,000 for NRMA CareFlight. The Wentworth Falls Golf Day in the Blue Mountains was once again organised by NRMA franchisee John Wilkinson. Despite the inclement weather over 120 golfers took to the fairways. The many auction and raffle items were assembled by Rebecca Brown, Manager of the NRMA branch at Katoomba. Thanks must go to the staff of Wentworth Falls Golf Club for their help on the day and a special mention of NRMA CareFlight volunteer Max Goddard who spent his day sheltering under an umbrella at the fifth hole checking which golfers got their ball into the \$20 prize circle.

Two weeks later it was the Wiseman's Ferry Community Golf day held sixty kilometres from Sydney's CBD on the Hawkesbury River. The local community, led by Senior Constable Mick Elvin, organised the day rounding up almost 100 golfers to take part. The teams, some dressed in Christmas outfits, battled the flies and bunkers as they covered the nine holes, enjoying breakfast and lunch in a marquee on the course. Other unavoidable obstacles included a chocolate wheel and raffle ticket sellers. After lunch the players adjourned to the historic Wiseman's Ferry Hotel for the auction of over 40 items, ranging from signed sporting memorabilia to a Gold Coast holiday.

## It's all go for Night Vision Goggles!

CASA has now formally approved NRMA CareFlight to undertake night operations using night vision goggle (NVG) technology. This is the first NVG approval granted to a not-for-profit Emergency Medical Service operator in Australia under the new CASA regulations governing NVG operations. Congratulations to Chief Pilot Jeff Konemann and NVG Senior Pilot Greg Ohlsson for their perseverance and dedication in achieving this milestone. Jeff and Greg will resume their talks with the Ambulance Service regarding the introduction of NVG into our operations and in the meantime, the NVG ground school and airborne training of the aircrew is well underway.

LEAVE A BEQUEST IN YOUR WILL TO SAVE FUTURE LIVES

# New Motoring Event – The 4WD Venture



The inaugural NRMA CareFlight 4WD Venture got under way in November when the crews assembled at the Westmead base for a hearty breakfast of egg and bacon rolls to give them the strength to battle the peak hour traffic from Westmead to Castle Hill. Within an hour of the start the 4WDs were crossing the Colo River and heading towards Putty.

The Putty Community Association had prepared the quintessential country meal of succulent steaks, sizzling sausages and scrumptious salads and after lunch there was a relaxed game of toss the coin at the bottle - in this case a Darwin Stubby. The afternoon offered the most serious 4WD driving experience of the event using the Commissioner Road through the Wollemi National Park. This road, in part a neglected rain rutted track, provided the best opportunity for the more novice 4WD drivers to gain some tougher experience and everyone was up to the challenge.

NRMA CareFlight Director Norm Hilton travelled with Michael Milward who piloted his

ML Mercedes along some steep, rough sections of the track and what the ML lacked in ground clearance it made up for with an automatic gearbox which Michael used to good effect. By comparison, Gary Humphries in the big yellow Hummer H2, seemed totally oblivious to the trials and tribulations of lesser mortals in more mundane carriages.

Before arriving at the overnight stop of Denman the 4WD Venture paused for afternoon tea on "Apple Tree" a property owned by the Barry family who were participants in the event. Allen Barry, his wife Vivian and their daughter Tiegan hosted a relaxing end of the day gathering and provided billy tea and scones in the shade of a eucalyptus grove.

At land-locked Denman the publican of the Denman Hotel had shipped in two tonnes of sand, some palm trees and a blow-up swimming pool to the hotel courtyard for a beach party. Here the band set up and entertained over two hundred locals who had come to celebrate the arrival of the NRMA CareFlight 4WD event.

The hotel staff got into the swing of the night by dressing in costume and the band played long and loud. A very successful raffle was conducted in the hotel with the Venturers and locals chipping in over \$750 for NRMA CareFlight.

After breakfast on Saturday the venture travelled to Fighter World at Williamtown RAAF Base for morning tea before heading to Stockton Beach. Scruffy Gallagher was the tour guide for the drive and he imparted his extensive knowledge of the history, flora and fauna of the area to a very appreciative group of Venturers. The drive along Stockton Beach to Anna Bay included a visit to the wreck of the Sygna and to Tin City.

At Shoal Bay Event Director Peter Longhurst handed out the certificates of appreciation to all those taking part and the highest fund raising trophy was awarded to Kevin O'Donnell, a long time supporter of NRMA CareFlight.

## Next 4WD Venture March 28-30 2008

Entries are now being taken for the next 4WD Venture which will start on Friday March 28th at the Westmead Base and finish on Sunday 30th at Hawks Nest on the northern shore of Port Stephens. To enter, visit the NRMA CareFlight website [www.careflight.org](http://www.careflight.org) and click on the 4WD Ventures picture on the home page. For more information contact Motoring Events Manager Peter Longhurst on (02) 9689 8123 or 0417 430 763.

## DONATIONS

YES! I would like to make a donation.  MONTHLY DONATION  SINGLE DONATION

TITLE FIRST NAME SURNAME

ADDRESS

STATE POSTCODE

SUBURB/TOWN

PHONE

DONATION AMOUNT

\$

EMAIL

### PAYMENT DETAILS

MASTERCARD  VISA  AMEX  DINERS  CHEQUE/MONEY ORDER

CREDIT CARD NUMBER

CARDHOLDER'S NAME EXPIRY DATE

CARDHOLDER'S SIGNATURE DATE

Once completed, please return this coupon to CareFlight, PO Box 159, Westmead NSW 2145

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

08FEB

Donations Toll Free 1800 655 876

## NOW - Online Donations

Without the generous support of community minded people, NRMA CareFlight would not be able to take off – literally. Now you can donate using our website. Go to [www.careflight.org](http://www.careflight.org) and on the home page click on the DONATE NOW button.

On the next page simply click on one of the buttons which will give you the option of making a single donation or donating on a monthly basis.



## Other ways to help:

If you would like any information on the following, please contact CareFlight:

- Organising a fundraising event
- Arranging a base dinner and interest visit
- Making a gift to CareFlight through your Will
- Making donations to CareFlight through your payroll

### CONTACT

Paul Freeman  
02 9891 6144  
[info@careflight.org](mailto:info@careflight.org)