It was a typical Sunday at the CareFlight base, at the end of a hot weekend, when the 000 emergency call came - a six-year-old boy found unconscious at the bottom of a pool.

Within four minutes CareFlight was in the air, the pilot and aircrewman on the lookout for a safe landing near the scene while the doctor and paramedic prepared for what was ahead.

“With drownings every minute counts,” CareFlight’s Dr Colin Xavier said.

“The brain needs oxygen. For every minute without it, the risk of permanent damage increases.”

Little Lachlan Matthews was at the water’s edge. Thankfully, he was conscious after a family friend had performed potentially life-saving CPR.

But he was cold and scared.

“We started giving Lachlan oxygen. I assessed his responses and checked for injuries. His tiny frame shivered so we dried him off, removed his wet clothes and warmed him up,” Dr Xavier said.

When Lachlan was stable, he was taken by road ambulance to the nearest hospital with his terrified mum Tracey close behind in a police car.

Lachlan would soon go home unharmed by the ordeal, the same beautiful boy who had arrived at the barbecue that afternoon.

But the experience was a stark reminder that drowning can happen to anyone.

No one noticed as Lachlan slipped beneath the water. It’s a chilling fact that most drownings are silent. When a child drowns there’s no splashing. No cries for help. It only takes a moment.

“We deal with the consequences of drownings regularly and when a child is involved it’s especially tough,” Dr Xavier said.

“When you see a little two-year-old who isn’t going to pull through, that’s hard. Really hard. The whole crew feel it. “But you can’t afford to reflect on what’s happened until your work is done. In those hectic, initial moments, you’re 100 percent focused on saving the life in front of you.”

Quick thinking saves lives

Lachlan was pulled from the water by his best friend, Christian. It was only later, on the way to hospital, that CareFlight learned just how brave Christian had been. He had rescued his friend from the bottom of the pool, holding Lachlan’s head above water while calling for help.

Knowing what to do in an emergency can mean the difference between life and death. The crew thanked Christian for his heroic efforts when he visited the CareFlight base. His courage and quick thinking meant his best mate Lachlan, was also there to share the experience.

Trek Kakadu with CareFlight and help keep us flying

Wild and wondrous, be part of this incredible nine day adventure as you discover the majesty and mysticism of Australia’s Top End.

Together with outdoor experts Inspired Adventures, CareFlight will be trekking Kakadu, Nitmiluk and Litchfield National Parks in the Northern Territory, and you can join us.

Only 20 places are available for this unique adventure, and all money raised will go towards keeping CareFlight in the skies.

CareFlight’s MediSim program celebrated another milestone earlier this year when the total number of people trained in life-saving skills passed 2,000.

The program is aimed at regional and rural areas where volunteer emergency services can be the first to arrive at the scene of an accident and need to make critical decisions very quickly.

It is in these situations that emergency service volunteers need to know how to sustain a life until professional medical help arrives. What they do in the first five, 10 or 20 minutes can make all the difference.

In 2015, CareFlight held over 47 MediSim workshops in locations across the country – from Geraldton in Western Australia to Shepparton in Victoria to Kakadu in the Northern Territory where we provided training to park rangers.

MediSim’s expert trauma training is delivered by highly experienced emergency response doctors, nurses and paramedics. Life-like mannequins and a unique Car Crash Rescue Simulator capable of simulating a realistic motor vehicle accident give volunteers an opportunity to practise in a safe and controlled environment.

Now in its fourth year, MediSim has conducted over 140 workshops.

MediSim is delivered at no cost to participants thanks to the generosity of CareFlight supporters and the help of Origin Energy and Johnson & Johnson Medical.

Participants have been overwhelming in their praise for MediSim and in recommending the training to their colleagues. Feedback comments from emergency service volunteers include:

“This course saves lives.”

“Absolutely quality training delivered by quality instructors.”

“It was practical and gave me confidence.”

“Best first aid course I have done.”

“Very informative and very good to know what to do in an actual scenario.”

Head-on crash
Five people including one child were left injured following a head-on crash.

The driver of one of the cars was trapped for some time before being freed by fire and rescue officers. As well as suffering serious chest and limb injuries, the man was unconscious and needed to be resuscitated at the scene. He also required a blood transfusion and was intubated before being urgently transferred to hospital in a critical condition.

A seven-year-old child in the second vehicle was ejected from his booster seat by the impact of the collision.

Training our emergency service volunteers
Life is never dull for CareFlight’s long haul medical evacuation teams as they traverse the globe taking seriously ill patients to the care they need.

But few missions were more memorable than the one with their very special guest Zach Armstrong, who touched the hearts of everyone.

Zach is nine and suffers from an aggressive form of a rare and incurable genetic disorder, fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva, sometimes known as stone man syndrome. It causes tendons, ligaments and muscle tissue to turn into bone, progressively paralysing his body. One in two million people are afflicted, 15 in Australia and about 800 around the world.

Recently Zach needed to fly to Brisbane from his home in South Penrith, in Sydney’s west, for medical reasons. His breathing is badly affected by the condition, ruling out normal air travel. So CareFlight was called in.

The hop to Brisbane is a short one for our jet team, who dash all over Australia, south-east Asia and the Pacific. But they made sure Zach and mum Laurin enjoyed their VIP trip in a private jet.

The flight crew even let him borrow their navigation iPad so he could track the flight.

And as a surprise, they ordered a stretch limousine to take Zach and Laurin home afterwards. Sydney’s jet base is often the scene of celebrity comings and goings and Laurin asked what big name star the limo was for. You couldn’t wipe the grin off Zach’s face when the crew told him he was the celebrity! They also gave him a showbag of CareFlight goodies to remember the big day.

A six-year-old girl was left in a critical condition after being found unconscious on equipment at a children’s play centre.

The girl’s scarf got caught on play equipment, which left her hanging from the equipment. She was deprived of oxygen for a short time and found unconscious.

CareFlight’s emergency response doctor worked with paramedics to stabilise the child at the scene, including placing her in an induced coma and intubating her. Given her injuries and requirement for ongoing treatment, the young girl was transferred by road ambulance to hospital with CareFlight’s medical crew continuing to provide treatment en route.

CareFlight airlifted a woman to hospital after she was gored by a bull on her semi-rural property.

The CareFlight rapid response trauma team were able to land on the property and treat the woman – aged in her 40s – immediately.

The woman’s injuries were confined to her legs.

A female driver suffered neck and head injuries in a crash on the Brooklyn Bridge, involving her car and a truck. She was seven months pregnant.

CareFlight was called to the scene and landed on a grassy area near the crash. The woman was airlifted to hospital for tests and observation.

Zach follows the flight details on his way to Brisbane.

Zach follows the flight details on his way to Brisbane.

Zach receives his CareFlight gift pack in the surprise stretch limousine.

Zach receives his CareFlight gift pack in the surprise stretch limousine.

Zach – our celebrity for a day

Six-year-old girl left critical on play equipment

Woman gored by bull

29-year-old female driver injured on Brooklyn Bridge
New NT crash car rescue simulator

An innovative CrashCar simulator presented to CareFlight will help save lives across northern Australia.

Darwin International Airport and its partners raised $30,000 at their annual charity golf day in August to fund the impressive training rig.

It will be based in Darwin for training across the Top End of the Northern Territory and adjacent remote locations.

CareFlight’s nurses and doctors will use the simulator to help train rescue and medical volunteers at remote and regional communities in how to initially treat people when they are injured or trapped in a vehicle.

Built on a 4WD frame so it can be towed over rough roads to training sessions, the CrashCar has a removable roof and windscreen to allow realistic training without having to cut up an old car wreck.

It’s the third simulator built for CareFlight’s training team by a longstanding supporter in Sydney, Western Smash Repairs. Other improvements include power for lighting for evening sessions – which suit volunteers – and a sound system to add realistic noise to the crash simulation.

By helping remote community volunteers gain extra skills in the initial treatment of car crash patients until aeromedical teams can fly in to support them, this CrashCar can help improve the lives and recovery of children and adults injured in vehicle crashes.

The education team at CareFlight will use the CrashCar rescue simulator and manikins as ‘patients’ to train the aeromedical team’s own doctors and nurses in advanced treatment techniques. These techniques can be applied to stabilise severely injured patients even before rescue while they are trapped in a vehicle.

The innovative $30,000 CrashCar with removable doors, windscreen and roof allows CareFlight to train volunteers how to deliver advanced treatment to simulated patients when it is towed to training sessions at remote communities.

Every cent helps keep CareFlight in the air

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I would like more information on including a Bequest to CareFlight in my Will.

Arrange a visit to the CareFlight base or for a speaker to visit your group.

Donations of $2 or more are tax deductible.

Here is my single gift of:

- $25
- $35
- $55
- Other $

Yes, I would like to become a CareFlight Support Crew Member by giving:

- $20 a month
- $30 a month
- $50 a month
- Other $

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- Option 1: Cheque / Money Order (made payable to CareFlight)
- Option 2: Direct debit (Monthly donations only. An authorisation form will be sent to you)
- Option 3: Credit card: Mastercard | Visa | Amex | Diners

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