



## KOKKY

Peter "Kokky" Kokkeler joined Mullaloo Surf Lifesaving club in 1990, at a time when he had been working long hours running a business and was looking to spend more time with his children. He attended an open day at the club, liked what he saw, and joined. He became involved in the under 10s with his daughter Deanne, and joined Dave Cronk & Peter Wells, who were also involved with that age group, as Group Leaders for about three years.

Kokky completed his Bronze Medallion in 1992, IRB Drivers in 1994, IRB Instructors in 1995, ARC in 1997, and his IRB Examiners, Senior First Aid and SLSWA Examiner Certificates in 1998. He was Mullaloo Patrol Person of the Year in 1994/95 and 1997/98, and has been a Patrol Captain since 1997. He received his ten-year Patrol Service Award in 2003/04.



Kokky receiving his Citation of Merit Award

On Australia Day in 2000 he was awarded the City of Joondalup Citizen of the Year Award for his voluntary contribution to the community and Surf Life Saving.

His obvious passion is Surf Rescue Boats (IRBs). He was the IRB officer from 1993 to 2002, and developed a Safe Patient Recovery technique that was later nominated for a WorkSafe Award. He has been involved in training many IRB drivers within the club (along with Ray Carter, in particular). He says there is something special about taking someone who has never driven a power boat before and training them to negotiate a 3 to 4 metre "greenie" safely.

Kokky was the team manager and coach of Mullaloo's first IRB racing team, and competed in IRB racing at the State Championships in the over 35s, winning a gold medal with Peter Bagnell in 2000 and a silver medal with Mark Hills in 2001. He coached a male and our first female team to a spot in the quarter finals at the Australian IRB Championships in 2001.

Kokky can still be seen on the beach in the middle of winter, dispensing advice to IRB hopefuls.

Kokky's life changed dramatically on 8 March 2006. It is only through video footage and through talking to witnesses and other people that were involved that he has since been able to piece together what happened.

He was travelling south on the freeway towards Osborne Park, going from one job to another as a workplace safety inspector with the WA government, when he observed an accident. One car clipped another car (whose occupants ironically were also on their way to a safety meeting), causing the second car to veer to the left, hit a light pole and roll. The collision caused the first car to veer off to the right and smash through the guard rail between the freeway and the railway line. That car ended up on its side, tangled in the broken guard rail; the end of which extended right across the railway line.

Kokky parked his car and went to assist. A policeman and his son and two nurses had also stopped to assist, and the policeman and Kokky discussed pulling the unconscious driver out of the car. They were standing on the southern side of the up-turned car, with the railway line to the north obscured from them. Kokky indicated to the policeman that he wanted to assess the scene on the other side of the car before attempting to remove the driver. He walked around the end of the car nearest the track, and at that point saw a train heading towards him at 112km/hr. Kokky turned 180 degrees and began

to run. The train's video recording shows the train hit the guard rail that was lying on the track, along with the car, slamming both into the policeman and Kokky. Kokky was thrown about twenty metres through the air like a "rag doll".

The policeman's pelvis was smashed, and his son was knocked unconscious. Both nurses also sustained injuries.

Kokky's injuries included a broken pelvis, a broken right upper arm, a smashed left lower arm, 15 breaks to his ribs, a punctured lung, a ruptured liver, a haematoma to his right thigh, and lacerations to his arms and forehead. He was advised later that his heart had to be re-started three times prior to surgery. His wife Christine was told on two occasions by doctors that they didn't expect Kokky to make it through the night. He was in intensive care for two weeks, followed by a further six weeks in an orthopaedic ward where he underwent various medical procedures. He had to learn to walk and talk again.

Two years on he is still receiving treatment from various specialists, and undergoing frequent physiotherapy and hydrotherapy for his injuries and the constant pain he still experiences. Part of his rehabilitation is to swim and walk, and Kokky says he can't think of a better place to do that than on Mullaloo beach.

At the club dinner in May 2007 Kokky was presented with a SLSWA Citation of Merit by the Mayor of Joondalup for commitment and courage beyond the flags and his role in the events of 8 March 2006. He was given a standing ovation.

Kokky is still a Patrol Captain, and considers himself privileged to be able to remain involved in MSLSC, although he finds it hard not to be able to jump into the surf or go out in an IRB. He says that he is lucky to be involved in a club made up of like-minded people involved in similar activities; giving something back to the community. He believes that surf lifesaving attracts a particular kind of person: people who are willing to give up their time voluntarily, without reward.

**Ian Allen**