In this issue...

02  A message from our CEO – Vicki O’Halloran  
Christmas Appeal thanks to 105.7 ABC Radio Darwin

03  Somerville’s meet and greet with NDS  
Well worth the trip for treasurers at Palmerston  
Uniting Church Opportunity Shop

04  High tea celebrations for International Women’s Day

06  Northern Territory Young Achiever Somerville  
Community Service Award

08  Legal service knowledge for Somerville’s finance workers  
Neighbourhood Watch IMA Safety House Birthday

09  Making waves in the Gold Coast  
Low-cost insurance for low-income earners

10  National Youth Week 2017  
Sandra Nelson visits Somerville in Katherine

12  Staff profile - Bonnie Solly

13  Get to know our board –  
In this edition: Bruce March

16  Staff profile: David Sheasby

2017 Margaret Somerville Award

The 2017 Margaret Somerville Award winner was recently announced at a ceremony attended by Somerville board members, managers and staff.

The Margaret Somerville award was established in 2015 to recognise exemplary service and to acknowledge outstanding performance of an individual in our organisation.

Nominees for the award are judged using the following qualities:

• displays an empathetic approach
• has a ‘can do’ attitude
• is a positive, committed person who goes the extra mile, and
• has a work ethic that is aligned with Somerville’s mission.

This year Lin Mu, Finance Officer, was awarded the 2017 Margaret Somerville Award.

Lin joined Somerville’s Finance team in 2011 as an accounts payable officer and was promoted to her current position in 2016. Lin is a quiet achiever and her dedication to her role is to be commended.

She works diligently to ensure best practice in all that she does and willingly assists her peers, sharing her knowledge and experience with her team.

Lin is always the first to volunteer outside of her normal duties when this is required and she is often seen assisting our administration team in a variety of duties.

Congratulations Lin, you are a very deserving recipient.

Photo above L-R: Vicki O’Halloran AM, Somerville CEO, John Duguid, Somerville Board Member, Lin Mu, Finance Officer and winner of the 2017 Margaret Somerville Award, Jeff Collins, MLA for Fong Lim, and Daphne Read AO, President of the Somerville Board.
A message from our CEO – Vicki O’Halloran

Welcome to the Dry Season edition of our newsletter.

I am writing my message to you in Katherine after visiting our services. Somerville in Katherine offers a range of services to people with disabilities, youth and families, with commitment to our Mission to enhance the quality of lives of Territorians.

To all of our Katherine staff and readers, thank you for your incredible support over so many years. It is the cohesive approach in Katherine that best serves our mutual clients.

As I visit services and talk with staff I am consistently impressed by the incredible commitment of “Somervillians” who have such a positive approach to their work. Margaret Somerville’s legacy lives on.

Transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) continues to demand our attention.

The implementation as it currently stands is all-consuming, and needs attention due to inadequate design and the overall rapid pace of implementation that in most States is beyond the scope of the sector. Nonetheless, we remain fully committed to the introduction of the NDIS and to this end, have begun working with the Disability Sector’s peak body, National Disability Services NT.

On a lighter note, the Pumpkin competition at Somerville is in full flight! Which service will have the largest pumpkin to enter into the Royal Darwin and Katherine shows? The Katherine Office is leading “the race” at the moment – and we will keep you posted. Our fruit and vegetable basket is also hoping for the top gong again.

Congratulations to Lin Mu, Finance Officer, for being the 2017 Margaret Somerville Award recipient, see page 1 for more details. You are an absolute inspiration to us all.

Special thanks to Jannie Bacus and her team – Kai Whipps and Dean Metcalfe who are keeping us “high-tech savvy” and responding to our many demands during an ongoing period of rapid change in all areas of information and communications technology.

Enjoy this edition’s profiles and get to know our board member, Bruce March, and staff members David Sheasby and Bonnie Solly a little better.

Vicki O’Halloran AM
CEO, Somerville Community Services

Christmas Appeal thanks to 105.7 ABC Radio Darwin

Somerville’s staff recently visited the studios of 105.7 ABC Radio Darwin to thank their staff for the contribution they made to Somerville’s 2016 Christmas Appeal.

The Appeal ran for two weeks during December and included a daily broadcast asking the community to donate food items and gifts for the cause.

The response was overwhelming and we were able to provide hundreds of families with hampers and gifts for Christmas. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

We are thrilled that ABC have committed their support for the 2017 Somerville Christmas Appeal.

Photo: ABC staff welcomed Somerville on a recent visit to their studios.
Somerville’s meet and greet with National Disability Services (NDS)

NDS State Manager, Noelene Swanson, and staff from National Disability Services NT, recently visited Somerville to meet with our staff and tour our facilities.

Noelene, who has recently been appointed as the NDS State Manager for the Northern Territory, has more than 15 years’ experience in the development and delivery of services and programs in health, housing and community development in regional and remote areas of the NT.

Somerville look forward to working with the NDS NT team as we transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Photo: Somerville staff with representatives from the NDS NT team.

Well worth the trip for treasures at Palmerston Uniting Church Opportunity Shop

The Palmerston Uniting Church Op Shop operates out of the Palmerston Uniting Church at 3 Bonson Terrace, Palmerston on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month, between 9 am and 12 midday.

There is a great range of children’s and adults clothing, toys, books, household items and much more, with items priced between 50 cents to $2.

Worth a visit as you never know what treasures you may find!

Alternatively, if you would like to donate items to the shop there is a collection bin on the corner of Bonson Terrace and Tilston Avenue, or you can drop off your donations when the Op Shop is open.

Somerville would like to take this opportunity to thank the Palmerston Uniting Church Op Shop for their ongoing support of our many programs.

High tea celebrations for International Women’s Day

As part of 2017 International Women’s Day, with the theme #BeBoldForChange, Somerville hosted a high tea for over 200 Territorians at the Darwin Convention Centre. The event was a joyful celebration of women’s achievements and contributions and the progress towards equality for women.

Thank you to the individuals and businesses who supported the event and made it such a success.
As proud sponsors of the Northern Territory Young Achiever Somerville Community Service Award, we are very pleased to announce Aditi Srinivas as this year’s winner.

Aditi (pictured top right), 28, of Darwin, is an advocate for marginalised groups in the territory. She is co-founder of the volunteer organisation WHAT RU4 NT?, a group dedicated to reforming NT law. She is a passionate advocate for LGBTIQ and women’s rights, serving on numerous committees and through paid work as a Legal Aid Solicitor. She also raises awareness and appreciation of Indian culture. Congratulations Aditi!

Congratulations also to the other Somerville Community Service Award Finalists:

Ashlee Coleman (pictured bottom left)
Ashlee, 27, of Farrar, has volunteered for 10 years with programs including the RSPCA and Sony foundation Children's Holiday Camp. Ashlee completed a Certificate in Community Service working with women and children at risk and those affected by alcohol and drugs. She won NT’s vocational Student of the Year in 2016, and became a territory ambassador. Ashlee is also studying a Diploma of Psychology.

Olivia Purdue (pictured bottom right)
Olivia, 18, of Humpty Doo, is a regular volunteer with RSPCA Darwin. Olivia has special needs and is supported by a carer. She helps with the cats and puppies, enriching their lives with play, pats and cuddles. Olivia completes tasks to the highest quality, whilst maintaining safe work practices. She is a passionate animal welfare advocate and an important volunteer at the shelter.

Overall Winner - Northern Territory Young Achiever of the Year
Mark Munnich, 24, of Driver, is completing a Bachelor of Law and works as a Community Legal Educator. He is an ambassador for the Office of Indigenous Student Support and volunteers with the Bilata Indigenous Legal Pathways Program. Mark is a member of the Winkiku Rrumbangi Indigenous Lawyers Association, and Treasurer of the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council. He is the youngest board member of Danila Dilba Health Service.

Below: Somerville Manager Skye Lee, speaking at the NT Young Achiever Awards, before presenting the Somerville Community Service Award. Bottom left: Somerville Manager Skye Lee with finalist Ashlee Coleman. Bottom right: Somerville Manager Skye Lee with finalist Olivia Purdue.

Opposite page top: Skye Lee presenting the Somerville Community Service Award to the winner, Aditi Srinivas. Bottom: Somerville staff at the NT Young Achiever Awards.
Legal service knowledge for Somerville’s finance workers

Somerville Community Services regularly hold a Financial Workers Forum for Financial Counsellors, Financial Capability Workers and Emergency Relief Workers.

The purpose of these forums is to bring staff from all service providers together to inform, build networks and strengthen referral pathways.

At our last forum Mary Hawkins, Principal Solicitor from Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS), spoke on the variety of services they can provide to clients including tenants’ advice, employment law, discrimination, guardianship, consumer law, child support, domestic violence and victims of crime compensation.

Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS) is a free confidential service to assist disadvantaged members of the community protect their legal rights. Their aim is to provide the community with access to legal advice, support and seek to challenge unjust laws and procedures, and ensure that people are aware of their legal rights.

DCLS can be contacted on Freecall: 1800 812 953

Photo: Sector staff who attended the Financial Workers Forum.

Neighbourhood Watch IMA Safety House Birthday

Somerville staff once again participated in the annual Neighbourhood Watch IMA Safety House Birthday.

Another successful year celebrating our partnership with Neighbourhood Watch’s safety houses initiative with the community.

The event was held at Jingili Water Gardens with games and a rest area provided for attending families. Children enjoyed the quality time spent with their parents and caregivers playing Jenga, Connect 4 and other festivities of the day.
Somerville’s Financial Services team recently travelled to the Gold Coast for the annual FCA Conference.

The theme for 2017 was ‘Making Waves’. After all, that is what Financial Counsellors do best. We work hard every day making waves to influence fair and better outcomes for our clients and the community.

With over 570 Financial Counsellors and Financial Capability Workers from around Australia attending, it was a great opportunity for networking.

The fast-paced two-day program consisted of a wide variety of speakers including:

- Jenny Stanger’s opening address titled ‘Modern Day Slavery - No action is too small’.
- Delia Rickard, Deputy Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, provided an update on the year’s biggest, nastiest scams and rip-offs.
- Moo Bauch, CEO of Domestic Violence NSW and board member for The Luke Batty Foundation, spoke of the challenges we still face to end domestic violence and some exciting changes underway to help this happen.
- A live theatre performance focused on the harms of gambling called “Three Sides of a Coin”.

There were also a number of breakout sessions that delegates could attend including:

- consumer & credit law
- workplace law and issues
- victims of crime
- mortgage stress, and
- superannuation.

The final speaker, Deng Adut, gave an inspirational presentation sharing his incredible story.

Growing up in Sudan, he was kidnapped by the Sudan People’s Liberation Army at 6 years old, forced to learn to use weapons and witnessed many atrocities as a child soldier. At 12 years old, whilst trying to escape, he was shot in the back. His half-brother then helped smuggle him out of Sudan and they both spent the next 18 months at a refugee camp in Kenya.

From here the UN granted both boys refugee status, where a visa and trip to Australia ensued. Deng then taught himself to read and took a plethora of part-time jobs whilst studying and eventually gained entry to the University of Western Sydney to study law.

Whilst studying he lived in his car and continued to work at night. After graduating with his Bachelor of Law degree, Deng then went to Wollongong University to finish his Masters in Criminal Prosecution.

He now works as an immigration lawyer helping people like himself fight the system and gain freedom in Australia.

This was a fitting close to the conference and the team came away having learnt many new skills.

Low-cost insurance for low-income earners

One in five adults in Australia goes without general insurance protection for their household contents, car or home. Many of these people are uninsured because they can’t afford traditional cover.

Replacing essential items like computers, whitegoods or repairing a car can cause financial hardship. It can significantly disrupt daily life as these items are simply too expensive to replace.

Fortunately, Essentials by AAI is insurance tailored to the needs of low-income earning Australians. Essentials by AAI allows customers to ‘mix and match’ insurance and premiums start as low as $4.00 per week. Key features include cover options for contents ($10,000/$20,000), and up to two cars valued at $3,000 and $5,000.

Policyholders also have access to standard two excess-free claims, with a low $100 or $300 excess applying to subsequent claims.

Somerville is a provider of Essentials by AAI. Please call us on 08 8920 4100 to find out more.
The theme for National Youth Week 2017 was Dream Big – empowering youth to think about their future as well as their individual and collective identity.

This theme is especially important for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged often left without support and guidance for their self-development and planning of their futures.

Youth Big Day Out – Palmerston

As part of National Youth Week, the Youth Big Day Out event was held in March at the Magpies Northline Oval.

This alcohol and drug free event bought Palmerston youth together in the spirit of dreaming big for their lives and celebration of their value and worth in society.

The event was joined by several community and youth support service providers, sharing important information and resources about how and where young people can seek help for mental health, homelessness, family violence, personal health, employment and education.

A variety of games and activities such as bubble sports, rock climbing, giant Connect Four, giant Jenga, giant ring toss and festival face art made the day full of fun. Attendees particularly enjoyed making a contribution to the Selfie Dream Wall; adding dreams for their future alongside a Polaroid selfie.

Somerville would like to thank the Northern Territory Government for their support of the Youth Big Day Out and to Planet Nightcliff, Kingpin, Time Zone, Cmax Cinemas, DKH Kart Hire and Flip Out who donated prizes.
Somerville was pleased to host the Member for Katherine and Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence & Women’s Policy, Sandra Nelson, for morning tea on 12 April.

Our Disability Services & Family and Financial Services teams met with Assistant Minister Nelson to update her on the instrumental work they do for our community in Katherine.

Supporters and friends cheered competitors through the qualifying rounds, with the top 8 competitors making it to the final tournament. Off-screen, real-life gaming including giant Connect Four, tower building, fish game and various board games were available for friendly, non-competitive games.

Youth and family support workers from Somerville and other youth service providers were on hand to share a game; a great way to provide informal coaching, mentoring and to connect young people with support services within the Katherine and wider communities.

Tournament winners left triumphant with prizes, while all participants celebrated with pizza and soft drinks all round!

Photo left: The tournament winner with his prize.

Photo right: Katherine Somerville staff preparing for the Somerville Gaming Competition.

Sandra Nelson visits Somerville in Katherine

Somerville Gaming Competition – Katherine

Mario, Yoshi and around 70 young people, parents and service providers attended Somerville’s Gaming Competition for Youth Week 2017. The Gudinyayin Yirard River Arts and Cultural Centre hosted the four-round tournament over two huge screens, giving up to four players at a time, a rare chance to test their skills against others in a friendly competition.
Staff Profile – Bonnie Solly

I was born in Napier New Zealand and grew up in the country side of Gisborne in the North Island.

At the young age of 15 I decided I needed to spread my wings and move to Australia to begin my world-wide travel. What an adventure!

I had never been on a plane or to a big city and I did all this in one day and wondered what I had got myself into – I was petrified.

I found work in the first week of arriving and my first pay was 4 times the pay I had in NZ, so of course, the next 6 months was a big spending spree.

Six months in one place seemed too long so my partner and I decided to hit the road and spent nearly two years touring every nook and cranny until we hit Perth where I had my daughter, Leshra. When she was three months old we again packed up and began another 12 months of touring which ended in Darwin.

Darwin appealed to me as it was the gateway to a lot of other countries so we thought we would stay for a few years.

We had two more children and thought I would study while I was raising them to keep my mind occupied.

I did a few odd jobs throughout my travelling and child rearing days but couldn't find anything that kept my interest.

I joined the Somerville team as a support worker and loved it. I went home every day feeling I had made a difference in someone's life and felt very fulfilled. I was soon promoted to supervisor which I enjoyed and then a few years later I did 18 months as acting manager. For the last 17 years I have been the Disabilities Program Manager at Somerville.

It’s a fast, busy role and not a day goes by that there is not a challenge to overcome. I am a people person and I am privileged to work alongside a diverse range of people. People who have inspired me to want to go and visit their place of birth.

I have now lived in Darwin for over 35 years but my husband Garry and I still go to a different country each year to learn their culture and to take in all the beautiful sights. We both scuba dive and over the years have done some magnificent dives and met great people and will continue to do so while we are still young, fit and healthy.

We have 6 grandchildren whom we both dote on and they are the first to go through our cameras to have a look at where we have just visited so we hope we have passed on the travel bug to them.

I have a great life, good friends, great job, and good work mates. What more could a girl ask for!

Bonnie Solly
Manager, Disability Services Program

Photo L-R: Jill May, Disability Services Coordinator, Bonnie Solly, Manager, Disability Services Program, Bev Dickens, DSC, at the Disability Services Awards.
Get to know our board
In this edition: Bruce March PSM

Bruce was born and raised on a farm in SA where he attended the small one teacher Pinery Primary School; travelling 5 kilometres each day, often in a horse and sulky, to attend classes. His old family farm was unfortunately destroyed in the 2015 Pinery bushfires.

After attending boarding school in Adelaide, Bruce returned to work on the family farm as a 16 year old. He participated in all the work necessary to keep a mixed farm operating. Bruce also became heavily involved in community activities such as rural and youth groups, sport and establishing a couple of country dance bands. It was a hectic “heady” time for a teenager.

However, after 5 years, Bruce recalls his parents suggesting he may not be “cut out” to be a farmer. In hindsight it was a wise observation. While farming has always been in his blood, Bruce had become restless and wanted to experience life outside the local farming community. Consequently, with some after-hours maths tutoring, Bruce matriculated in 1964 and was accepted into Flinders University (SA) as a foundation student. There he completed an Arts Degree (Hons politics) and a post graduate Degree in Social Administration. It was also there that Bruce met fellow student, Pip (Phillipa). Pip was a hockey fanatic, studying economics and then social administration. They married in 1970.

In 1972, Bruce was appointed Community Development Officer with the then Port Adelaide Central Mission’s Aboriginal Community Development Program. It was a cutting edge program and a life changing experience; a two way learning experience where both Aboriginal and European staff worked in partnership with each other and the 50 or so Aboriginal families involved. The program focussed on building on strengths through involvement in local social development activities including learning centres for children. Decision making was in the hands of the community members.

Bruce developed an admiration for the people he worked with, particularly the Aboriginal women, who in the face of great hardship, demonstrated enormous courage, hidden talents and a wonderful sense of humour. During that time Pip was employed as a social worker with the Department of Social Security and also spent 6 months on secondment as a research officer with the then national Henderson Poverty Enquiry.

Bruce became a passionate advocate of community development as a method of overcoming social disadvantage and so when he left the Port in 1974, he and Pip travelled through Mauritius, South Africa, Kenya, Great Britain and briefly Europe and Canada, visiting community development and welfare programs. In South Africa this included meeting anti apartheid activists and workers in black African townships. Pip was violently ill in Mauritius and at a subsequent doctor’s consultation in Durban was informed she was pregnant! Tricia, their eldest daughter, spent 7 months travelling the world as an unborn child.

Bruce was unemployed when they returned to Adelaide from overseas but in late December 1974 was asked if he would take temporary work with the Department of Social Security (DSS) supporting the evacuation of residents from Darwin after Cyclone Tracy. He subsequently started work in the public service at 10.00 am on New Year’s Day,
1975, with no intention of making a career in the public sector. In May 1975 he visited Darwin for the first time as a Research Officer with a small consultancy team. The consultancy was to help builders involve locals in the redevelopment of the city. Bruce recalls that as the team walked into the room, one crusty builder cynically smiled and said, “So you are the guys who have come to tell us how to get people involved in the rebuilding of Darwin are you?” Bruce thinks the most useful thing he probably did during his two week stay was to mark out a car park area with star pickets at Darwin High School for a Darwin Reconstruction Fair.

Bruce subsequently applied for a position as Regional Social Worker in Alice Springs with Social Security. He was the only applicant for the position which had been vacant for 2 years and was the first social worker in the office. He and Pip arrived in April 1976 and in July experienced two weeks of below zero temperatures at night. One night it was -7.5, one of the lowest on record. It was a difficult period. Social workers were new to the department and often not accepted by management.

Two and a half years later, Bruce was appointed as Regional Manager he learned that the buck stopped with him. As regional social worker he tended to blame the “system” for service problems but as manager he was responsible for office performance and outcomes; a rather more difficult role than it had appeared from the ‘other side of the fence’.

During their time in Alice Springs, Bruce and Pip both became heavily involved in local community activities. For a time Pip was employed part-time as a family planning educator, was a volunteer with a neighbourhood centre, and played and organised hockey. Bruce did some part time tutoring in Community Development for the Community College, was on the board of the Institute for Cultural Exchange, and was a member of the Social Security Board. The couple also established and ran a local community business.

“Bruce and Pip moved to SA in late 2013 and now live at Willunga, and are increasingly involved in local community activities.”

Photo: Bruch March and his wife Phillipa March during one of their overseas trips.
for Aboriginal Development and involved in tennis.

It was difficult to leave Alice Springs where Pip had spent her early childhood and primary school days in the 50s. However in January 1981, Bruce was appointed to a new welfare coordinators position with DSS in Darwin. Some 300 mm of rain fell the day they drove into Darwin. With three small daughters (Deanna and Vanessa having been born in Alice Springs), they were accommodated for a few nights in a local motel room before being allocated a Commonwealth Government house.

There was “no room at the inn” for the youngest daughter, Vanessa, who as a one year old slept on pillows in the bottom of a built in cupboard.

After arriving in Darwin, Pip became heavily involved with NT Hockey and subsequently spent 18 years as Executive Officer for NT Hockey Association. During this time she represented Australia as a technical officer at the Manchester and Melbourne Commonwealth Games as well as the Athens Olympics where she had the pleasure of seeing the Australian men win a gold medal for the first and only time so far.

In 1983, Bruce was based in Canberra for three months on secondment to a team charged with reviewing Aboriginal access to social security payments. The team consulted widely throughout Australia and Bruce had responsibility for consultations in the NT and WA including Perth, Broome and remote communities like Halls Creek and Balgo. Bruce recalls the review identified many impediments and injustices that prevented Aboriginal people, particularly, but not exclusively in remote areas, effectively accessing their entitlements, and made recommendations to the Minister aimed at overcome some of these.

In the mid-eighties, community service functions in DSS such as rehabilitation services and subsidies to non government organisations, were transferred to a new Department of Community Services. By 1993, after a series of amalgamations the Department became the Department of Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services; the Department of “long names”. Bruce was appointed as the first Director (NT) of the Department in 1985, a position he held until he transferred to the NT Department of Health and Community Services at the end of 1993.

During his time as NT Manager, a key aim for Bruce was to improve remote area servicing. This included advocating for more streamlined and appropriate remote program models, increasing Aboriginal staffing and expanding and increasing on the ground services in remote areas. Together with the SA and WA state managers, he instigated a joint state funded arrangement in Alice Springs that attempted to better reflect the movements and needs of people living in the Pitjantjara homelands crossing three state/territory borders.

In 1995 Bruce was awarded a Public Service Medal for his work with the Commonwealth. Coincidentally this award was presented to him by the then Administrator and now Somerville Patron, Austin Asche.

Bruce was employed for some 12 years in the NT Government, most of the time as the Director of the Family and Children’s Services Branch covering a diverse range of policy development functions, at various times including child care, homelessness, home care, women’s health, child protection, family support, foster care and adoptions.

In 1985, Bruce joined the board of Somerville. However the night prior to a board meeting in the mid 90’s he was advised by the then CEO that a motion for Somerville to divest itself of child care services would be put to the board the following evening. As director of a policy branch with the NT Government that included child care, this presented a clear conflict of interest so Bruce resigned from the board that evening; a wise decision as shortly thereafter the Minister at the time sought advice about the issue. Sometime later Bruce accepted an invitation to rejoin the board.

Since his retirement Bruce has continued voluntary involvement in community activities. Apart from Somerville, this has included being an Ambassador for Opportunity International, a NGO microfinance organisation that provides funds for, and supports, poor entrepreneurs in West Timor, the Philippines and India to start or expand businesses, receive training, repay their loans and work their way out of poverty.

Bruce and Pip moved to SA in late 2013 and now live at Willunga. They are increasingly involved in local community activities and when possible enjoy time with family and five grandsons, three of whom live in Perth. However Bruce does admit that after spending a week with grandsons aged 5-9 it feels a bit like having been in a washing machine with Energiser Bunnies!

Bruce feels privileged to serve on the Somerville board. He has greatly appreciated the opportunity to work with other board members, a dedicated CEO and staff, supporting people as they develop the courage and skills to overcome, often, major disadvantage.

Bruce is also appreciative of the many and varied work opportunities he was afforded whilst living in the NT, made even more special because of the tremendous support of mentors, family and work colleagues.

Bruce is appreciative of the many and varied work opportunities he was afforded whilst living in the NT.”
Staff Profile – David Sheasby

I am the eldest of six children and was born into a services family, my father being a pilot with the Canadian Air Force and my mother from an English Army family.

From the very beginning I was never going to be the poster child my parents had envisaged or planned for, deciding to start making my entrance into the world (albeit a month or so early), 12,000 feet in the air somewhere between Canada and France. After an emergency landing in the UK and a short trip to the Canadian base hospital and I had arrived. Unexpected, yes, but should have forewarned my parents that I would be a wild child from the start.

The next few years were spent travelling around between airforce bases around the world. When I was eight my father died in an aircraft accident in Germany, we were shipped out the day after and moved in with my grandparents in the UK. A short time later my mother remarried and it was decided to relocate the family to Australia. The idea of living the idyllic Australian lifestyle of surf beaches, sunshine etc. was short lived when it was decided that Alice Springs was to be our new home, red dirt, dust storms, heat and flies.

I spent the majority of my youth to mid-twenties on or around cattle stations. I became heavily involved in anything that had to do with horses, from mustering to race horse training and anything in between before deciding in the mid 80s to leave the NT and try my hand at the professional showjumping circuit in the eastern states. The next couple of decades were spent travelling the length and breadth of Australia with a business partner, competing at national and international events, having horses selected for the Olympics and educating horses prior to selling them on the lucrative international market. We had established a successful business. In 2000 we dissolved the business partnership due to injuries I had sustained, which at the time made it impossible for me to ride.

A career change was needed and in 2001 I got my a job working with people who had a disability. Later I moved into the training sector. In 2009, I moved to Darwin for six months with a training organisation, where I first started working with Somerville staff in a training role. In 2013 I commenced work with Somerville as the Training and Compliance Officer.

With the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) my role has changed. While still training, my position has diversified and I am now working in the newly established Life Skills Development Program which will assist people with a disability to gain the skills needed to meet their life goals and will enable them to become valued members of the wider community.

I have over the past few years again become involved with the local equestrian community, riding again, teaching coaches and also heavily involved with Equestrian Northern Territory where I am currently in the position of Board Chairman/CEO.

David Sheasby
Training and Compliance Officer