

TAKING CPR OFF DUTY

As a police officer of 26 years, Sergeant Darryl Conroy has always been prepared for the potential need to perform CPR at some point during his career.

But he wasn't expecting to find himself administering CPR during his weekends off while playing soccer as a member of Sydney's Granville Waratah over 35s team.

Darryl has been on the scene twice during games where a player has suffered a sudden cardiac arrest. Sadly, the two players did not survive.

The two incidents were several years apart and, on both occasions, there was no defibrillator available at the club where the game was being played.

Darryl said the first incident occurred at the Granville Waratah Soccer Club in Parramatta. The second incident was at the Dundas Soccer Club's Curtis Oval just last year.

"At the Parramatta game, I was actually out injured and standing on the sideline when I noticed a player who appeared to be fitting being cradled by a team mate," he said.

"One of the spectators, Michelle – who works as an enrolled nurse – called to me that the player was turning blue so I immediately ran onto the field and yelled for someone to call 000 for an ambulance.

"The player wasn't breathing, so Michelle and I decided straight away that we had to commence CPR, with me doing the compressions and Michelle the breaths.

"We continued CPR for at least 20 minutes until the ambulance arrived."

The second incident occurred at Curtis Oval, Dundas in 2015. This time, Darryl performed CPR for over 25 minutes on his own, and said it was physically exhausting, leaving him feeling the effects of his efforts for several days.

His experiences have shown the importance of knowing exact location details in case you ever need to call 000 in an emergency.

"People absolutely need to know their surroundings so they can communicate to the ambulance, whether it's the correct name of the park or shopping centre for example, or the name of the street they are on. It's also helpful to be aware of the nearest intersection and the best access to the property such as location of gates and driveways."

Both soccer clubs have since installed a defibrillator. As a committee member of the Pendle Hill Football Club, Darryl continues to rally to have defibrillators issued at every club within the district, along with the Pendle Hill President and the Granville District Soccer Football Association.

“I encourage everyone to step in and have a go at CPR and using a defibrillator,” he said.

“Don’t be scared to get involved. Any effort to save someone’s life is better than no effort – particularly in a cardiac arrest situation.”

For Darryl, being a first responder to two cardiac arrests while being off duty continues to have a massive impact on his day-to-day life.

“There has been a widespread emotional impact in the community of losing two well known and respected players in this way,” he said.

“When I play soccer on weekends now, I’m always assessing my opposition for signs of not feeling well.

“I find myself looking for defibrillators – not just at sporting grounds but at shopping centres, transport hubs etc.

“And I think of both the players involved on a very regular basis, always asking myself, could I have done more?”

ENDS

The Michael Hughes Foundation donated a defibrillator to both the Granville Waratahs and Pendle Hill Soccer clubs in 2015 from the fundraising efforts of Remember Mike and Save a Life Dinner in October 2014.

The Michael Hughes Foundation was established in honour of Michael Hughes who passed away in 2013 from sudden cardiac arrest at 38 years of age. The aims of the Foundation are to raise awareness of sudden cardiac arrest, the placement of defibrillators in the community and turning bystanders into first responders.

For more information, visit www.mhf.life