



On completion of the trek, left to right, George Ciolka, Bruce Payne, Luke Riley, Leif Hovland and David Mitchell

# TACKLING KOKODA FOR LEGACY

by David Mitchell

April 2016 saw the 11th annual New South Wales Police Legacy team of current and ex-service men and woman of multiple emergency services take on the challenge of the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea. The team raises money to sponsor and accompany a number of Police Legatees. Over the last few years, Northern Territory Police have been fortunate enough to be extended a warm invitation to participate.



NT Police Legacy Legatee Liam Riley at various stages of the Kokoda Trek.

I had the pleasure to attend the 2016 NSW Police Legacy Trek with a group of amazing people who all had their own amazing stories to tell. Our NT contingent comprised of Bruce Payne, Leif Hovland, George Ciolka and myself. We accompanied Liam Riley as our sponsored Legatee who is now residing in Queensland. Some of you may have previously worked with Liam's father as a member of NT Police. Many thanks to those who supported our Bunning's sausage sizzle, trivia night and made personal donations towards the team.

Our walking encyclopaedia, Aidens Grimes who was on his 102nd Trek, provided daily history briefings on the track. His knowledge, which is based on years of research and interviews with members of the campaign, provided an unprecedented insight into the actions of the then, young Australians. The trek would also not have been completed had it not been for the ongoing support of the descendants of the famous 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels.' The local Papuan men weighing around 50kg, were carry packs in excess of 30-35kg in a pair of pluggers; all while negotiating treacherous accents, descents and water crossings. They would carry our tents and food and assist at every available opportunity and when we thought we had had a rough day, they would break out a guitar and sing gospel music while preparing our evening meals. Legends.

## To the Board of Management Northern Territory Police Legacy

A few days ago I completed a life changing journey that would test every fibre of my being but leave me a changed individual.

For nine days I walked in the footsteps of those who came before me, many of which who never came back to their loved ones whose tales of courage, blood and sacrifice meant I could enjoy the freedom to carry on their stories for future generations

Kokoda challenged me in body, mind and spirit, its lessons will stay with me for as long as I live and I will cherish them for ever more along with the amazing people I had the privilege of sharing it with.

None of this, however, would be possible without the help of the NT Police Legacy and the amazing work they have achieved over the many years they have been active.

This letter is my way of expressing my heartfelt thanks to every single member of NT Police Legacy that has made it possible for me to undertake this incredible journey of discovery. NT Police Legacy has been there for me for many years, helping me along the way through every stage of my short life but being chosen for this privilege was, in my opinion, the greatest example of just how far they are willing to go for their Legatees.

Although I find these words of mine inadequate at conveying the gratitude I feel towards you, the amazing men and women of the NT Police Legacy, know that I am forever grateful and I will do everything within my power to repay your kindness and generosity and to spread the very meaning of Police Legacy.

3400 died to protect our freedom  
NT Police Legacy gave me the chance to experience it

**Forever grateful, Liam Riley**  
NT Police Legacy recipient and Kokoda walker

In line with the awe inspiring terrain and the diggers heroic stance, it was easy to see how the pillars of Kokoda (courage, sacrifice, mateship and endurance) were formed. Those young Australia's displayed intestinal fortitude well beyond their young years. That was not lost on our group as people suffered personally from day to day through physical, mental and emotional challenges. During those times of struggle, members of the group drew on the knowledge that brave Australian souls had suffered many more burdens than we had, all while fighting a war and stopping the Japanese advance South towards Port Moresby and Australia.

I have attended ANZAC Day dawn services over many years in many Australian states and internationally including the Middle East. This year I was in awe of my surroundings as I participated in the service at Bomana War Cemetery, Port Moresby. Surrounded by the 3824 Commonwealth burials as well as the hundreds of people that turned out to show support, was most humbling. I am truly grateful to have been offered the opportunity to be a part of the 2016 Kokoda Trek an encourage you all to consider it in the future.

**'Their name liveth forever more –  
Lest we forget.'**