

Qweekend

lost & found

Natalie Imbruglia reinvents herself

analyse this

Carl Jung's journal of the mind



**“AMBULANCE
SERVICE ...
WHAT'S THE
PROBLEM?
MOTORCYCLE
ACCIDENT, ONE
LEG IS BROKEN
AND HE'S LOST
THE OTHER LEG
COMPLETELY.**

**Real life dramas behind
000 emergency calls**

By Amanda Watt



Story Amanda Watt

hold

Delivering a baby, dealing with terrible wounds, keeping

the

someone alive ... Each day, ordinary people are thrust into

line

medical emergencies. That's where triple-0 operators come in.



Theirs are the voices you want to hear during the most gut-wrenching of crises. They are the people on the Queensland Ambulance Service's front line: the people who answer a triple-0 call. While paramedics rush to the scene, it's the operator who will talk panicked callers through possibly life-saving procedures. They have scripts to follow for almost any emergency, but some scenarios come out of left field.

"Maybe there are language barriers," says Brisbane Emergency Medical Dispatcher Kieren Reed, "or the person on the other end of the phone is a young child or the scene is so disturbing that all the caller is doing is screaming. In those cases, what you have written in front of you is not going to strictly apply. You need to have enough common sense to work around whatever circumstances they are in."

The way people step up when confronted with gruesome and/or life-threatening scenarios inspires dispatchers. On the other hand, expressions of thanks are rare but appreciated. As quickly as call takers are thrust into a stranger's life, they are out of it when ambulance crews arrive on the scene. Here are three triple-0 calls, taken by different dispatchers, that made all the difference in those critical minutes.

Motorcycle accident, Samford.
June 15, 2008

Caller: Lindsay Pickstone

Victim: Christian Pedersen

Operator: Janet Park

Ambulance – Exact location of the emergency?

Lindsay: Samford Road, heading towards Mt Mee.

Operator: On Samford Road. Have you got a number for me?

L: No, no. It's outside the Pine Rivers Council depot.

Op: What's your name?

L: [provides name].

Op: What's the number you're calling from?

L: [provides number].

Op: What's the problem – tell me exactly what's happened?

L: Motorcycle accident – we've got an amputated leg.

Op: Are you with the patient now?

L: Yes.

Op: How old is the patient?

L: Twenty-three.

Op: Is he conscious?

L: Yes.

Op: Is he breathing?

L: Yes, he's alive. He's breathing. Yup. [Pedersen screams] He's lying outside the Pine Rivers depot. Samford depot. The number is 2204.

Op: Are there any chemicals or hazards involved?

L: No.

Op: Is anyone trapped in their vehicles?

L: No.

Op: Does he appear to be completely awake?

L: Yes.

Op: Is there any serious bleeding?

L: Yes.

Op: I am organising the paramedics, so stay on the line and I'll tell you exactly what to do next. Don't move him. I need to tell you how to stop the bleeding. Get a clean dry cloth or towel, press down on the wound. [More screaming in background] Apply the pressure. Is the leg still bleeding? Is the leg intact? [Pedersen: "Oh my god, my leg!"]

L: Ah, yes.

Op: Is the leg intact?

L: No. No. It's definitely separated. He's got a broken leg. He's got a broken leg.

Op: You need to get the bleeding controlled on the leg and place the other leg back to near the body where it is supposed to be.

L: What's got to be done has got to be done. ►

Op: Is the bleeding starting to be controlled now?

L: Yeah, I think so. There's a tourniquet above his leg.

Op: They've applied a tourniquet?

L: Yes.

Op: Okay, the best idea is not to apply a tourniquet.

L: [To people assisting] Not the tourniquet. Stop the tourniquet. We have to stop the blood coming out with pressure.

Op: I need to make sure he also doesn't have anything to eat or drink. [Pedersen screaming] Is it the upper or lower leg that has been amputated?

L: The lower leg.

Op: How's his colour? Is he still breathing?

L: Yes.

Op: Is he still conscious? [In background: "You're doing really well, mate."] Do you have the leg?

L: There's a lot of people helping us. We have the leg on ice.

Op: You need to apply a lot of pressure to stop the bleeding.

L: I am not doing that. People here are applying a lot of pressure to the wound.

Op: Is the other part of his leg intact? What have you done with the other part of his leg?

L: It's sitting beside his body in ice.

Op: Is it directly in the ice or in a plastic bag on ice?

L: It's in a plastic bag with ice.

Op: Is the ice in contact with his leg?

L: Yes. Yes.

Op: The ice should not be in contact with his leg. It needs not to be on ice directly. The ice needs to go around it. You need to take the ice out of the bag and pack the ice around the leg in the bag.

L: They said don't put the ice on directly.

Op: Not on directly. Put it around it. How is the patient now?

L: I think he is unconscious.

Op: He's unconscious?

L: He's still breathing.

Op: How is his breathing? [In background: "Lie down mate, lie down. Everything's good." Pedersen: "My leg. My leg."]

Op: I need you, if he becomes less awake or vomits, to put him on his side. Okay?

L: Okay.

Op: You're doing really well.

L: Thank you.

Op: How is his breathing at the moment?

L: He's talking.

Op: He's talking. What else can you see around you? I've got you at 2204. I am just needing to make sure you are on Samford Road.

Bystander: It's on the corner of Burton Road, Samford Road. [Screaming in background.]

Op: What is the condition of the patient now?

L: He's still breathing. He's in a lot of pain.

One leg is very broken and he's lost the other leg completely. [Moaning] His breathing is fine.



Friend in need ... Lindsay Pickstone (left) and Christian Pedersen at the scene of Pedersen's motorcycle accident.

Op: What are they doing with his [severed] leg?

L: It's on ice.

Op: The bleeding. How is the bleeding?

L: It's slowing.

Op: The other caller said the leg is in a bag with ice around it.

L: I'll just check that. Hey guys, is the leg in ice completely? No.

Op: You've done a really great job.

L: The ambulance is here now.

Op: I'll let you go now.

L: Thank you.

Christian Pedersen's right leg was severed below the knee and could not be reattached. His left leg was badly fractured and had to be set in place with four locking screws, a tibial nail and a plate and seven screws. He now walks with the aid of a prosthetic limb. Pedersen was a chef before the accident but is now studying to be a personal trainer.

"I am actually thinking about getting into some sort of rehabilitation field, maybe helping other amputees or people with injuries," he says.

His friend Lindsay Pickstone, now 24, who was riding on a separate motorcycle when the accident happened and called triple-0, has only a patchy memory of the phone call.