

EASTLAND HELICOPTER RESCUE TRUST

A HISTORY



EASTLAND
Helicopter Rescue Trust
SAVING TIME SAVING LIVES





The organisation was formed in Ruatoria by a group of enthusiasts after Cyclone Bola, which hit the area in March 1988, demonstrated the value of a helicopter for emergency works in such a remote and geographically hostile environment.

Denis Hartley, a local helicopter owner/operator, participated in a talk back session on Radio Ngati Porou to talk of his experiences flying in the area in the clean up phase of the Cyclone. The session was supposed to last for 30 minutes, but the response was so great it expanded to two hours. Denis apologised to the listeners for the fact that the helicopter he usually used for aero-medical work was out of action due to damage caused by vandals, and that he didn't have a stretcher to fit his replacement helicopter.

The switchboard went mad with calls from afar as Bluff, Australia and the Chatham Islands from people with connections to the East Coast, pledging assistance. People walked into the Radio Station and emptied their pockets of loose change. When he walked out after the programme Denis was given \$300 in loose change and by that night \$6000 had been pledged. He realised this was too much public money to hold in his business, so he decided to approach some key people from the communities he serviced, and set up The Helicopter Rescue Trust (East Cape). The founding document was signed on 1/12/1988 with the following Trustees:

- Tangiora Mapu-Tohiariki, of Maraenui
- Arthur Waititi, Waihau Bay

- Sydney Clarke, Te Araroa
- Ropata Rauna (Bob) Kaa, Ruatoria
- Michael Cotterill, Makarika, Ruatoria
- Roger Jefferd, Tokomaru Bay
- Denis Hartley, Ruatoria
- Kevin Webb, Opotiki

The current Eastland Helicopter Rescue Trust still uses the original Westpac, Ruatoria, bank account!

On 30/9/1992, Denis Hartley and Arthur Waititi resigned as trustees and the following were appointed:

- Robert Tait, Opotiki
- Roger Murphy, Tolaga Bay
- Paranihi Tamepo, Waihau Bay

Over the next few years the following retired:

- Kevin Webb, 26/3/96
- Tangiora Mapu-Tohiariki, 8/8/96
- Robert Tait, 28/1/99
- Michael Cotterill, 24/5/99
- Paranihi Tamepo died in office.

The operation ran as a 50:50 partnership with Denis Hartley's Heliwing Agricultural Helicopter business. If Denis received a call while out working, he would return to his Ruatoria base, change from his agricultural equipment

ECT Rescue Helicopter.



(spraying, lifting etc) to his aero-medical equipment, and respond to the emergency. Along the way he would get an appropriate crew (Doctor or Paramedic) from either Ruatoria or the hospital at Te Puia. At that time there were no restrictions on the dedication of the service and Denis's business helped fund the rescue side of the operation.

In order to provide equipment, further original funding was provided by the community from farm owners, progressive associations, rugby and netball clubs and the Maori Womens Welfare League, residents, local businesses and the like.

As time went on, ACC (Accident Compensation Commission) standards increased and demanded a helicopter totally dedicated to rescue work. The call centres stopped dispatching Denis's helicopter, and the service became unsustainable.

The decision was made in 2000 to move the service to Gisborne to get access to a greater

level of funding and to build a closer relationship with St John to crew the helicopter. At a meeting on December 14, 2000 it was resolved to change the name to Eastland Helicopter Rescue Trust.

Michael Cotterill had retired as Chairman and been replaced by Sydney Clarke. Chris Torrie, a Gisborne accountant, Graham Smith from Tokomaru Bay, and Thomas Jex-Blake, a Gisborne farmer all joined as trustees.

Expressions of interest to provide a helicopter were called for and Wayne Ashworth of Ashworth Helicopters, who had already been active in the aero-medical field in Gisborne in much the same way as Denis Hartley had in Ruatoria, was invited to provide the service.

Funding a dedicated service with a helicopter available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, was still a major hurdle. The J.N Williams Memorial Trust became a major benefactor and professional fundraisers from Auckland were enlisted to help. They secured naming right

Clockwise from top: Lion Foundation Rescue Helicopter team hard at work. HUET training for pilots and paramedics.



funding from The Lion Foundation, a charitable gaming fund, and the service was branded “The Lion Foundation Rescue Helicopter”. Also at that stage the Trust became a sub-contractor to the Hawke’s Bay Helicopter Rescue Trust, who held the ACC contract for the area, and the EHRT became responsible for the area from Mahanga Beach on the northern side of Mahia Peninsular, to Mangapohatu in the Urewera National Park, to just west of Te Kaha in the Bay of Plenty.

In 2001 Hamish Williams, representing the J.N.Williams Memorial Trust, and Patrick Willock, a farmer from Whangara and ex Gisborne District Councillor, joined the Trust. Thomas Jex-Blake retired.

In 2002, at the end of the contract period, the major funders demanded that the service be put out to tender, and that the tender be conducted according to strict contestable terms. Skyline Aviation from Hawkes Bay won the tender. They have continued to provide the service to this day. As standards have continued to rise it has become harder for those not involved in specialised aero-medical services to get involved. Also in 2002 the demands of running the service increased and in a reorganisation, Sydney Clarke resigned as Chairman to become C.E.O, and was replaced by Patrick Willock as Chair.

In 2005, the service was struggling. Low utilisation, dispatch decisions not favouring the service, and increased costs were working

against the service. Meeting increased operational standards, and replacement of equipment as it got past its “use-by date” was also putting financial pressure on the Trust. The decision was taken to cut overheads and so the position of CEO was abolished and the work spread among trustees all working on a voluntary basis. That position remains today. Chris Torrie and Patrick Willock went to Wellington to meet ACC representatives and explain that the funding model was unsustainable and, if some changes were not made, the Trust would cease to operate within 12 months. It had been a policy to keep one year’s operating expenses in reserve to enable a managed withdrawal if this sort of situation arose. Further, they explained to ACC that it would be them who would need to come to the Gisborne East Coast area to explain to its people why, when paying the same levies as the rest of the country, they would enjoy a much reduced service if we were forced to withdraw.

ACC responded by introducing a capacity funding fee, whereby we were paid for 6.25 hours each month whether we flew them or not. If we flew more than this we were paid at the normal rate for any hours in excess of this.

In 2006, we started exploring the possibility of building our own hangar. Over the years we suffered badly through lack of profile. Although the helicopter was based at the airport, it was tucked away and few people were aware it was there. That fact had an adverse effect on

Lion Foundation Rescue Helicopter visits Tolaga Bay Area School students.



our ability to totally connect with our community. Our financial position was not such that we could responsibly invest in “bricks and mortar”, so we concentrated on consolidating our position aiming to get our rescue equipment up to standard and having an objective of creating a reserve fund to meet any possible withdrawal as mentioned above. As part of this strategy, we also contracted Dana Kirkpatrick and ExpressPR to provide our promotional, profile lifting, and fundraising activities.

In 2003, 04, & 05, Syd Clarke, in association with Ian McLellan of Opotiki, ran successful fundraising Horse Treks through the back blocks of the East Coast. Other groups, seeing the fundraising success of these, started up in competition so we withdrew from that activity. In 2006, Roger Murphy saw the potential to run a Charity Golf Tournament and, with the support of The Poverty Bay Golf Club and the late Juliet Rickard, set in place a blueprint for a successful day which still operating today.

In 2006, we became aware of a Charity Auction run by one of the local Lions Clubs in Hawke’s Bay to raise funds for their Rescue Helicopter. We decided to try and emulate it. Prue Younger, a trustee at the time, enlisted the help of Bridgette Dixon (now Bridgette Penny-Todd) and we ran our first one in September that year at Montana Wines in the Industrial sub division. Rico Gear (a Gisborne born All Black) was our guest speaker and we struggled (with a lot of telephone pleading) to get around

80 people to attend. We raised \$18,700. We decided that it was worth persevering with and in 2015 we will hold our 10th Auction. It has developed into one of the “must-attend” functions held in Gisborne. It is now held in The Showgrounds Event Centre, and attracts about 350 attendees who queue for tickets. It regularly raises over \$50,000. Over time, ExpressPR have taken over the running of it as part of their contract with us.

Around 2008, we had strengthened our financial position and again turned our minds to the provision of a hangar. But a tragic accident inland from Ruatoria reminded us that we were still short of a vital tool in our helicopter – Night Vision Goggles. We asked Skyline Aviation for an all-up price to provide these (encompassing the goggles, specialist helmets, required training and cockpit reconfiguration). It came to \$150,000, which for a small Trust like ours was quite a target! Dana and her ExpressPR team launched a “Mission for Night Vision” campaign. We received valuable support from the local branch of Farmers Trading Company as part of a national fundraising celebrating their centenary. The campaign culminated in a festive day in June 2009, when local Gold Medal Kayaking Olympians, Alan Thompson & Grant Bramwell were joined by their team mates from Auckland, Ian Fergusson & Paul McDonald (celebrating 25 years since their 1984 Olympic success). They participated in a variety of events alongside local celebrities

Launching the newly branded ECT rescue helicopter. EHRT chairman Patrick Willock (left) with ECT chairman Richard Brooking.



and school children. The day ended in a Charity Auction held in the No 3 Wharfshed. The Farmers Trading Company Head Office were sceptical about our ability to raise our target (as they were adding to it on a \$ for \$ basis up to a predetermined figure) and the Eastland Community Trust were prepared to underwrite us in the event the \$150,000 was not reached by that evening. With tremendous support from the community we hit our target without ECT's intervention and claimed our maximum contribution from Farmers Trading Company. It was not until 2010 that the purchase of the NVGs, training and cockpit reconfiguration was completed and we were operational with Night Vision.

In 2009, The Lion Foundation gave us advance warning that (a) they were changing their funding strategy, and (b) their gaming machines were not returning enough locally. They would no longer be able to support us to the extent that they had been doing.

We were forced to examine our funding model once more. We determined that there were two components in the costing of hiring a helicopter that would not be there if we owned one. The return on the capital employed by a commercial operator and the taxation component of that return (as we were a registered charity and so exempt from taxation). At that time The Eastland Community Trust were looking for local infrastructural projects to support, so Chris Torrie & Patrick Willock

approached them to see if they would have the appetite to purchase a helicopter for the Helicopter Rescue Trust. We presented a business case and were successful. Just as we were trying to source a suitable single engine helicopter (preferably a Squirrel as that was the predominant make used in air ambulance work in NZ), the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) began to look at and enforce the regulations around the class of helicopter flying into medical facilities in built up areas. Until the uncertainty of this was cleared up, we felt we could not responsibly recommend a purchase at that time. But thankfully the ECT transferred their support to providing us with a large portion of our operating expenses, became our naming right sponsor. They have continued that support till this day.

At about the same time the majority of Rescue Helicopter Trusts around the country and a number of the operators came together in a group known as the Air Rescue Group (ARG). The main purpose was to try and collectively negotiate with ACC and The Ministry of Health a longer term contract for the provision of services. For many years ACC had simply been rolling over their contract on an annual basis, but this gave no certainty especially considering the level of investment required at an operational level.

It took many months but finally in late 2012 all the Rescue Trusts and operators signed 5 year contracts with the Crown (through

Eastland Helicopter Rescue Trust
Charity Auction, 2013.



NASO, the National Ambulance Sector Office, a joint initiative between ACC and Ministry of Health). Ours was co-signed along with Skyline Aviation as the service provider.

We now had greater security of funding through ECT and greater security of service provision through our 5 year contract than we had enjoyed throughout our existence and were able to turn our minds back to “bricks & mortar” that had been on hold since 2006. Since 2002 we had been operating out of a sub-standard shed tucked away in an unseen part of the airport. It had no services whatsoever, was cold and draughty, chemical wash from a nearby helicopter operation ran over the floor of the shed. The whole situation was unsatisfactory from an operational point of view.

In early 2013 we pulled together a Building Committee under Murray Ferris’s chairmanship comprising of Patrick Willock the Trust Chairman, Francis Yates, a respected local builder as project manager, Chris Tyerman from Westpac bank to oversee finances, Murray Bell, manager of Gisborne Airport, Matt Todd CEO of The Eastland Group (our landlords), Neil Dodds our pilot and Kerry Donovan from ExpressPR to provide fundraising and administrative support.

We determined we wanted a prime spot at the airport with high visibility to improve our profile in the community and a building that fulfilled all the functions we needed, with a degree of future proofing. We also determined

that we would not start until all the funds were in the bank or firmly committed. We need the support of the community to operate so we didn’t want any loss of credibility through being unable to pay for work done.

The total project cost was \$720,000, of which we needed to raise about \$520,000. The rest was provided as in-kind donations, and providing services for the building which was done by The Eastland Group in return for us paying a commercial rent. We also had to be clear in our fundraising that this was a one off project and we still needed the Community’s support for our operational funding.

The support we received was absolutely amazing. We were running concurrent with a \$6,000,000 fundraising effort to upgrade the War Memorial Theatre so the community was being asked to “dig deep”. Murray Ferris and Patrick Willock started canvassing for support in July 2013 and Kerry Donovan started the job of filing application to funding organisations. By December 2013 we had the money in the bank and construction started. We opened the hangar in May 2014.

We have gone from operating out of arguably the worst rescue helicopter facility in the country, to, if not the best, right up with the best. Our community has every reason to feel very proud.

*Patrick Willock
November 2014*

Awaiting the opening of the Eastland Helicopter Rescue Trust Hangar, May 2014.

Eastland Helicopter Rescue Trust Trustees (as at July 2014)

Michael Cotterill	1/12/88 – 24/5/1999 <i>First chairman</i>
Roger Jefferd	1/12/88 – 2007
Bob Kaa	1/12/88 – 12/2004
Syd Clarke	1/12/88 – 2007 <i>Syd was also CEO 2002 – 2007, and Chair from 1999 – Jan 2002</i>
Roger Murphy	30/9/92 – 2008
Graeme Smith	1999 – 2005
Thomas Jex-Blake	1999 – 2001
Chris Torrie	28/1/99 – 14/6/2011
Hamish Williams	8/2001 – 12/2004
Patrick Willock	8/2001 – present <i>Chairman from Jan 2002</i>
Mark Foreshaw	4/2002 – 8/4/2004 <i>Lion Foundation</i>
Patrick McHugh	2005 – present
Ben Tahata	2005 – 8/2011
David Conroy	2005 – 2006 <i>Lion Foundation</i>
Prue Younger	2006 – 2008
Joe Faram	2006 – 2/2014
Chris Williams	2008 – present
George Williams	2008 – 8/2011
Jane Williams	2009 – present
Murray Ferris	2010 – present
Ian Parker	20/4/2011 – present
Dan Kawhia	14/6/2011 – 12/2012
Dan Griffen	2012 – present
Dan Russell	2013 – present
Peter Moore	2/2014 – present

In addition Don Judkins (Lion Foundation) attended meetings from 2006–2010 but chose not to become a Trustee.

In addition, the following should be mentioned:

Peter Franks – came on board as secretary in 2006 and is still with us. Peter performs the bulk of the administrative tasks and plays a huge part as the “glue” that holds together the various roles carried out by some of the trustees on a voluntary basis.

ExpressPR – initially led by Dana Kirkpatrick and more latterly by Kerry Donovan. In 2006 we took Dana on to co-ordinate our promotional, fundraising and profile lifting functions. She subsequently formalised her business into ExpressPR.

Pilots

The original Ruatoria pilot was Denis Hartley.

When the service relocated to Gisborne, Wayne Ashworth of Ashworth Helicopters was the pilot.

Since 2002, our resident pilots have been employed by Skyline Aviation Ltd as part of the contract to provide a helicopter. They have been:

Dave Greaves	2002 – 2009
Peter Moore	2009 – 2011 (<i>Gisborne Helicopters</i>)
Jeremy Bruce	2009 – 2011 (<i>Gisborne Helicopters</i>)
Hamish Ramsay	2009 – 2011 (<i>Gisborne Helicopters</i>)
Jeremy Bruce	2011 – 2012
Neil Dodds	2012 – present

The Helicopter Rescue Trust (East Cape) Trust Fund signed 1/12/1988

Trustees when the service was based in Ruatoria were:

Tangiora Mapu-Tohiariki (Maraenui)
Arthur Waititi (Waihou Bay)
Sydney Clarke (Te Araroa)
Ropata Rauna (Bob) Kaa (Ruatoria)
Michael Cotterill (Makarika, Ruatoria)
Roger Jefferd (Tokomaru Bay)
Denis Hartley (Ruatoria)
Kevin Webb (Opotiki)

30/9/92

Denis Hartley and Arthur Waititi resigned.

Robert Tait (Opotiki), Roger Murphy (Tolaga Bay) and Paranihi Tamepo (Waihou Bay) all appointed.

24/5/99

Cotterill, Mapu-Tohiariki, Webb and Tait retire, Tamepo died in office.

14/12/00

Chris Torrie (Gisborne), Thomas Jex-Blake (Gisborne) and Graham Smith (Tokomaru Bay) all appointed.

Eastland Helicopter Rescue Trust Trustees May 2014

Patrick Willock (Chair)

Appointed 2001. Chairman since 2001.

Born and raised in Gisborne. Retired Sheep and Cattle Farmer. Gisborne District Councillor 1989–2001. Director Ravensdown Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd since 2000, Deputy Chair 2005–14. Federated Farmers Provincial President 1995–1998. School BOT Chair 1989–95. JP and Marriage Celebrant.

Dr Patrick McHugh

Appointed 2005.

Born and raised in Gisborne, trained in medicine in Dunedin during the 1980s. After graduation returned to Gisborne, worked for ten years running his own General Practice and then in 1998 worked for ten years as Clinical Director for the Gisborne Hospital Emergency Department. Over the last four years he has worked as GP Liaison and co-ordinator of a local DHB supported generalist medical training programme as well as still working part time in the Gisborne Hospital Emergency Department. He is also a trustee of the Gisborne East Coast Cancer Society and Tairāwhiti Complementary and Traditional Therapies Research Trusts.

Chris Williams

Appointed 2007.

Born and raised in Gisborne. Sheep and cattle farmer. Trustee of family philanthropic trust, supporting, amongst other organisations, EHRT.

Jane Williams

Appointed 2008.

Born and raised in Gisborne. Trained as a nurse at Waikato School of Nursing 1978–81. Extensive experience in a variety of nursing fields since graduating in 1981, including experience in the UK 1983–85. Member of Hospital advisory Committee Tairāwhiti DHB since 2011. From 1992 till now, extensive experience on school Boards of Trustees (including as Chairperson) both involving East Coast and Hawkes Bay Schools. Involved with her husband in farming ventures both on their own account, and currently as NZ manager of a large international farming company. Resident of Ruatoria (now only part time) so has an appreciation of remote locations.

Murray Ferris

Appointed 2010.

Born and raised in Gisborne. Recently retired from a management position after over 40 years in the print industry. Still involved in many community committees and organisations, life member of Tourism Eastland. Chairman Eastland Region of Fish & Game. Been a member trustee of Eastland Helicopter Rescue Trust for several years. Loves the outdoors and is a keen hunter and flyfisherman. Married almost 40 years with two grown sons. Past President local JP's association.

Ian Parker

Appointed 2011.

Accountant, Associate at BDO in Gisborne, leads the Not for Profit sector for BDO Gisborne. Is the treasurer for EHRT. Past registrar local JP Association.

Part owner of Family Funeral Directing Business until 2007. Previous governance roles with Cancer Society, Child Cancer Foundation, and Funeral Service Training Trust.

Dan Griffen

Appointed 2011.

Sheep and cattle farmer from Motu, an isolated corner of our district.

Dan Russell

Appointed 2012.

Resident of Te Puia Springs. Sheep and cattle farmer. Former pilot flying Air New Zealand planes on the regional network, including in and out of Gisborne. Has close connections with Des Beale-Williams, one of the original supporters of the Trust.

Peter Moore

Appointed 2014.

Owner operator of Gisborne Helicopters. Has extensive helicopter and local knowledge. Spent a time as the Rescue Helicopter pilot.

Peter Franks (secretary)

Retired sheep and cattle farmer with extensive community involvement. Has been local Federated Farmers President, Chairman of Port Gisborne, and now does a lot of voluntary work in the community, including involvement with The Cancer Society, Sunshine Bus, Coastguard, and the Trust. His behind the scenes administration is the 'glue' that holds things together.