

# The Islander



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Hon. Warren Snowdon Paying his respects to the cliffside

## Memorial Service for the December 15<sup>th</sup> Tragedy

Island residents and mainland visitors attended the Memorial Service for the December 15th 2010 tragedy at the Recreation Centre last Saturday before participating in the procession down to Tampa View to lay flowers at the cliffside memorial.

Speakers addressed the audience and spoke about the courage and compassion, resourcefulness and audacity shown by both volunteer and professional rescue teams as well as the resident rescuers who were the first onsite that day helping those in need.

Tributes to the islanders were plentiful as well as praise for the men and women of the CV Triton and HMAS Pirie, with a special musical performance from Homaira Azodolmolki and Mohsen Amidi to thank the rescuers. Messages of thanks and gratefulness written by the Janga survivors were read out to the audience.

*'When the sun rose, angels were sent to an island in Australia called Christmas Island to rescue innocent people who were caught in the infinite ocean. You risked your lives to save us in the broken boat. Words are not enough to express our gratitude. We do not know how to thank you. May God bless you all.'*

*'We appreciate all the residents for coming out of their houses at the very early time of morning only to help us. We also thank you for a great deal of effort made by everyone at the time of the incident. If you had not provided us with life jackets...we all would have died in that horrible incident. We will never forget the help and support we received from the lovely residents of Christmas Island.'*

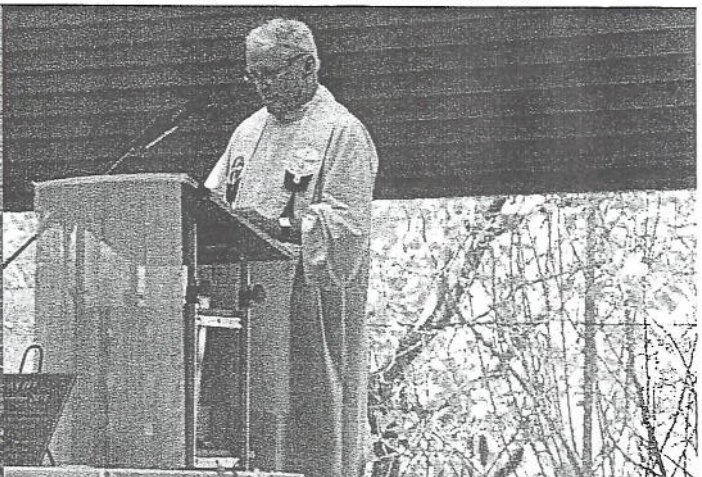
Photos by Darren Marsh



Above: plaque and flower presentation at memorial service



Hon. Warren Snowdon throwing the flower wreath to where the incident occurred.



Father Peter Curraan conducting his speech at the memorial

# Letters from victims and victim's family members of SIEV 221

بنام خستگان سلامت  
 گرد در اقیانوس بیژان سرگردان شویم به از آنکه در وطن اسیر یا سودان شویم  
 جان من خداوند را می ستایم چون او به ما نجات خور تو القدر است ای  
 وقتی سید که صبح دمید فرستاد از جانب خدا به جبرودای نه نام مرسیس  
 در کشتی استرالیا واقع شده فرستاده شدند تا جان اطباء بیگناه که در آبهای  
 اقیانوس بیژان گرفتار شده بودند نجات دهد به هر وسیله ای که بود  
 نجات دهند آنها از جان خود گذشتند تا جان ما را نجات دهد  
 بگزارند کافی که در این حیرت زاغ این حادثه بودند یا بی تاب جلوه  
 نجات و انوار حق طناب سعی در نجات مردم این کشتی سرگردان در  
 اقیانوس داشتند مصیبت نیروهای ارشد و دیگران که برای امر مشارکت  
 داشته سعی داشتیم با هم زبان گوئی از نجات آنها بشکر و قدر دان  
 کنیم باشد خداوند بزرگ یاری کن کند

"If I get stuck in the endless ocean better than being captured by wicked men in our homeland."

My soul praises God who showed his great kindness to us.

When the sun rose, angels were sent to an island in Australia called Christmas Island to rescue innocent people who were caught in the infinite ocean.

They risked their lives to save the survivors of the broken boat.

Residents of the island who witnessed the incident tried to save us throwing life jackets and ropes. And so did the Navy and Police.

Words are not enough to express our gratitude. We do not know how to thank them.

May God bless them all

## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

هذه الرسالة من أفراد السفينة 221  
 آتى أهالي جزيرة كريستس المحترمة  
 تقدم جزيل الشكر والامتنان لى أهالي جزيرة كريستس المحترمة ونشكرهم  
 على مساعدتنا وانقاذنا من الحادث الذي وقعته بتاريخ 15, 12, 2010  
 وذهب طيبتها أكثر من 50 شخصاً بينهم أطفال ونساء وشباب  
 ونشكر الجميع الذي ساهموا في انقاذنا من جميع أركان الدولة الأسترالية  
 ونشكر دائرة الهجرة لمساعدتهم لنا والمشاركة في اعزائنا  
 ونشكر مؤسسة سيركو وجميع العاملين الذين شاركوا في مساندة  
 ونشكر بالاخت Lucia ولاف DARRAN من السيركو.

- 221, 032



8- 221, 16

- 221, 033

9- 221, 19

- 221, 06



10- 221, 23



+ - 221, 05



11- 221, 37



5- 221, 04



12- 221, 38

6- 221, 20



13- 221, 25



7- 221, 29



14- 221, 40



15- 221, 27



This letter is from members of boat 221.

With respect to the people of Christmas Island, we would like to show our thanks and appreciation.

We thank the people of Christmas Island for the help and effort they showed during the incident that occurred on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

More than 50 people including women and children lost their lives.

We thank all the people who put in their efforts to save us including all the government departments, in particular the immigration department who provided help and assistance and also shared in our sadness.

We also wish to offer our thanks and appreciation to Serco and all of their staff who helped and assisted us during this disaster and in particular Darren and Lucia from Serco.

1. 221/032
2. 221/033
3. 221/006
4. 221/005
5. 221/004
6. 221/020
7. 221/029

8. 221/016
9. 221/019
10. 221/023
11. 221/037
12. 221/038
13. 221/025
14. 221/040
15. 221/027

in the name of god

من و خانواده ام در کشتی 221 بودیم. بدینوسیله از تمامی ساکنین محترم جزیره کریسمس به خاطر کمکشان در هنگام حادثه تشکر می کنیم و از صمیم قلب از اینکه در آن موقع هیچ زود از خانه ایشان بیرون آمدند و با تمام وجود از هیچ کجایی به ما دریغ نکردند سپاسگزاریم.

شاید اگر آنها جلوه های نجات یا در اختیار ما قرار نمی دادند، بحسب سببی دیگر از قربانیان این حادثه محارمی بود، ما تا آخر عمر ساکنین این جزیره را از یاد نخواهیم برد.

همچنین از کلیه پرسنل محترم و زحمکش Serco و ایملرین و کارکنان دلموز بیمارستان که با ما بهمدردی کردند و در کنار ما بودند تا بتوانیم این حادثه دردناک را تحمل کنیم قدر دانی می کنیم.

ضمناً لازم به ذکر است در تمام مدتی که ما در این جزیره اقامت داشتیم دو نفر از آفسیبرهای که بیشترین احترام را برای ما قائل بودند لوشا و درن عزیز بودند که لحظه به لحظه شاهد محرابی ایشان بودیم و واقعاً مثل یکی از اعضای خانواده با ما رفتار کردند. اگر این دو بزرگوار در کنار ما نبودند تحمل آن روزهای سخت واقعاً بر ایمان دشوار بود، به همین خاطر خواهیم دید بر طوطی که صلاح می دانید از این دو عزیز تقدیر به عمل آورید.

از طرف خودم و خانواده ام به این دو دوست هراتمان می گوئیم که درن و لوشای عزیز واقعاً دوستان داریم و همیشه در قلب ما جا دارید و بیچسبیت شما را فراموش نمی کنیم و از خداوند بزرگ در تمامی مراحل زندگی مریستان آرزوی سلامتی و موفقیت را خواهیم، دلتان شاد و لبانتان خندان باد.

Roya - Abbas - Saffie - Sara - Tara.  
 11                      13                      14                      12                      10

In the Name of God

I and my family were in Boat number 221. I hereby want to thank and appreciate all the residents of Christmas Island for helping and supporting us at the time of the incident (boat crash).

We also appreciate all the resident for coming out from their houses at the very early time of morning only to help us. We also thank them for a great deal of effort made by everyone at the time of the incident. If they had not provided us with life jackets, my wife would have been one of those who died in that horrible incident. We will never forget the help and support we received from lovely residents of Christmas Island.

We also thank all the staff of Immigration, Serco, Interpreters and Medicals for their empathy and sympathy and also for their great deal of effort and support provided during difficult times. They really did their best to ease the difficult situation and circumstances for us.

We have to mention the names of two Officers who were brilliant and down to earth; Darren and Lucia. We were treated like a family member by them at all times. There were tentative every single minute. If it wasn't because of their presence, it was really impossible for us to put up with all the emotional challenges. Therefore we would like to kindly ask you to honour them, in a way they deserve.

On behalf of my family, I'd like to tell Daren and Lucia: We love you from the bottom of our heart and we will never forget you. We wish you health and success all through your life. We also wish you joy and happiness. Days come and go but our love for you both is for all times.

Warm regards,

Roya (11), Abbas (13), Saffie (14), Sara (12), Tara (10)

## **SIEV 221 Janga Memorial**

The memorial for those lost on 15 December was conducted at the recreation centre on Saturday 5 March. The memorial ceremony was followed by a procession to Tampa View where flowers were laid at the cliff side memorial. Warren Snowdon MP and Senator Trish Crossin represented the Australian Government at the memorial. Several speakers addressed the assembled residents and visitors.

### **Warren Snowdon**

*We are honoured to be present today on behalf of the Australian government to acknowledge and thank the Christmas Island community for your efforts in the aftermath of the crash of the SIEV 221.*

*From all accounts the community, emergency personnel, and Australian Government workers showed courage, leadership and resourcefulness to help those in the tragic emergency on 15 December.*

*The circumstances were diabolical – terrible weather conditions, the port at Flying Fish Cove closed and none of the locally based vessels could be launched.*

*I can only imagine the sense of helplessness you must have experienced wanting to save these people but being powerless to support the emergency effort except through land based support.*

*The rocky landscape where this occurred is also notoriously razor sharp – meaning even land based support was fraught.*

*I want to commend the skills and bravery of Border Protection command personnel involved in the rescue effort. Together with the community they put their lives at risk to save 42 people.*

*I know it is not much consolation to say that without your efforts the number of casualties would have been much higher – but speaking on behalf of the Australian community we express our heartfelt thanks.*

### **Brian Lacy**

*The events of 15 December represent one of the worst tragedies ever witnessed on Christmas Island. Our community can be proud of their own efforts, the efforts of our Navy and Customs personnel and the efforts of our doctors and hospital staff and the members of the police and emergency services. You have all shown courage, leadership and the spirit of resilience that can only be known in remote localities like Christmas Island.*

*Christmas Island is place where displaced persons; people made homeless by terrifying and horrific acts of inhumanity, can find safety and care. We are in that unique part of the world that can provide safe harbour to people who, driven from their homeland, want to be Australian. We are able to care for asylum seekers and refugees and we do our best to do just that.*

*We did our best on 15 December 2010, and I believe I can say, ... that nothing more could have been done on that day to help the victims of the tragic event. Nonetheless,*

*as Chair of the Emergency Management Committee I will ensure that consideration is given to ways in which our response to and recovery from such events might be improved.*

*I am proud to stand here amongst you today; proud to say that Joan and I are members of a community that receives and cares for the asylum seekers who choose to come to our shore, despite the many challenges that confront them. I am proud of our police and emergency services, our doctors and hospital staff and you the members of our community. Some of your actions are deserving of bravery awards and all of you are deserving of commendation. I will take such steps as I am able to secure the awards and commendations.*

**Gordon Thomson** read two messages from Ramin and Hadi.

Ramin came to Christmas Island on another boat. He lost his wife and son and his brother and his brother's wife when the *Janga* (SIEV221) sank. He is caring for his orphaned nephew.

Hadi was on the *Janga* (SIEV 221). He lost his brother and his brother's wife. He is caring for his orphaned nephew. Ramin's wife and son were in Hadi's group on the *Janga*.

### **Ramin**

*I don't know how to bring forward my feelings and thoughts to you. It's amazing that people who live together here have such a big heart and that everyone tried their best to help other humans. This is not just me saying this to you. It's my family, my relatives over there in Iran and here in the camp. Here on Christmas Island we have met the kindest people on earth.*

*From my heart I appreciate all your help. I hope this never happens again.*

*Some people, they like to hide the facts, the differences between people cause them to hide the facts.*

*I wish I could talk in your language to Australia and Iran and all countries how it is here, how kind you are.*

*This is an Island in the middle of the whole ocean and facilities might be limited, we appreciate the limited things here, we are grateful. I hope if one day we get the honour to be Australians, we'd like to meet people like you in our life.*

*We lost wife, kids, a lot of people. The huge hole in my heart from that loss has been filled with the kindness of the great people here.*

*We wish we can give our thanks to the whole world about you people. That much effort for a such sudden thing was a lot.*

*We come from the worst place in the world, the worst human acts and we come to you, the most kind. I am so happy to have met people like you. Even if we don't end up staying in Australia, I appreciate meeting you.*

*Anywhere we go the sky is blue, it's the people who make the place beautiful.*

[Iranian proverb]

**Hadi**

*We'll never forget the kindness and help we got from the Christmas Island people.*

*Everyone who is alive, they know they are owing Christmas Island people for their lives, for their lifejackets, their life.*

*None of us would have survived if the people on the cliff had not given us the lifejackets.*

*Some people just heard that we were helped, but I saw it with my eyes. From their heart, they helped us, how much effort they put. I can't make a word sentence, this is too much to appreciate what you have done.*

*We say special thanks for the memorial. Thank you for remembering those we lost and putting your heart next to ours, the sad moments we went through, what a great honour.*

Hadi 23 February 2011

**Fiona Andrew (DIAC)**

*On 15 December the people of Christmas Island and all the agencies and organisations that are involved in irregular maritime arrivals saw human tragedy the likes of which most people should never have to see. Through it all, though, I saw people put themselves at risk on land and on water to save people. I saw people standing on the rocks attempting to stretch out as far as they could to save people - and I saw the look of despair when, exhausted, they realised they could do no more. I will never forget passing one man, who, with rope over his shoulder, just looked at me and shook his head and another crouched down beside me holding his head in his hands. I saw incredible bravery. And, most of all, I saw the lives of 42 people saved thanks to the efforts of the Customs and Border Protection and Navy and all who stood on the rocks that grey, wet, horrible day.*

*I also saw great tenderness. I saw a frightened young girl wrapped in blankets being carried by a frowning Serco officer and that image on his face of worry, tenderness, compassion and emotion will remain with me forever. I saw men and women just go up to others and hug them ... as all the volunteers and the hospital and Serco officers working so tirelessly at Ethel Beach, looked out for each other as they were caring for those who were saved. Throughout 15 December, I saw love and understanding.*

*I saw people - Christmas Island people and naval officers - making a huge difference to the lives of others. ... Thank you, Christmas Island.*

**Imam Abdul Gaffar Ismail**

*There is something that we share amongst us, not just as Muslims, but as a Community, as Islanders on Christmas Island, we have something, a unique thing that we can't find in other places that we visit, we are an island that we know that has 'hands helping hands'.*

**Father Peter Currucan**

*I'd like to offer this simple prayer for those who died; it's a simple prayer and it goes like this:*

*To all of you who died on that fateful day in Dec, may the songs of the angels go with you, may the smiles of the martyrs greet your own, where death is no more and when every tear is wiped away, may the songs of the angel sing new hope before the face of God.*

### **Zainal Majid**

Zainal Majid, President of the Islamic Council, spoke for the SES volunteers.

*15<sup>th</sup> of December is a day that we will never forget easily for the island and the island people and especially for the volunteers.*

*I can not stop seeing the eyes, the faces, of the people on the boat as it was dashed against the rocks, the father desperately clinging to the boat with one hand and with the other clutching his child to his side. Then a child swept from the arms of the mother. It was horrible.*

*We are sorry for the families who have lost their loved ones in their attempt to find a better place to be. On behalf of the Islamic community we are sorry we could not put their loved ones to rest in peace earlier.*

*Everything that happened on that day was beyond our control. Lastly I want to say again that I'm proud to be a volunteer in the rescue teams on the island. I salute again, all the volunteer groups. Keep up the good spirits. I'm proud to be a Christmas Islander.*

### **Dr Julie Graham**

*Many people died on that tragic day, but amazingly, many people also survived. The courageous actions of our Navy and Customs and those individuals on that cliff face saved many. The journey these survivors now face is a difficult one and we hope they have the strength to travel it.*

*For all of us on that day, we were there to help. On that day there were no reffoes, no queue-jumpers, no clients, there were just people in need.*

*For the survivors, we feel your tragedy. For the loss, we grieve and for the community of Christmas Island, we should be proud.*

*If you need help, seek support and keep an eye out for those around you.*

**Master of Ceremonies Chris Su** concluded the memorial with a quote from poet John Donne.

*The loss of each person's life diminishes our own, for we are all a part of humankind. All people are of one author, and are of one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language.*