



Step up and learn first aid

Comment by Kate Matthews

Every year, thousands of motorists and their families pack up their cars and head off on highways and country roads for their annual break to rest and recuperate.

But the two most important things to pack are left behind — the knowledge from a first-aid course and a first-aid kit.

A year ago, I did a two-day St John Ambulance first-aid course at the sub centre in Cranbrook.

There were a handful of locals present — mostly mums.

There was also a shearer and shed hand who helped revive a colleague who had a heart attack in a shearing shed, miles from town.

Since completing the course I've become a born again first-aider and tell everyone I see to do one. I'm so glad I did the course because in the past six months I've come across two serious car incidents on a major highway.

When I stopped, I had with me the two most important things besides a mobile phone — the knowledge from the course and a first-aid kit.

At both accidents, nurses also stopped but there were many other people who just didn't know what to do or how to help.

Last financial year, 148,288 people received first-aid training by St Johns and external trainers. It sounds like a lot of people but when there are 2.3 million people living in WA, it equates to just 6 per cent of the population.

Living in remote and rural areas, we all know an ambulance isn't always just around the corner and can take precious minutes or hours depend-

ing on the location.

But if you know simple first-aid skills, you can do something in an emergency says Greg Mas-sam from St John.

"In an emergency, every second counts and if you follow the basic steps you learn in a St John Ambulance first-aid course, what you do to help can make a difference.

"First aid can just be clearing an airway or calling an ambulance, but that one simple thing could save a life."

While St John hopes that soon at least one member of every WA household is a trained first aider, I hope we can do better.

Get your whole family together and do a course, get your football club, netball club or golf mates together and do a first-aid course.

Get everyone in your town together to do the course.

Courses range from a few hours to two days and cover topics from resuscitation to choking, burns, managing fractures, bleeding, allergic reactions and heart attacks.

So if you have been thinking about doing a course, get on the phone and book in.

And get a first-aid kit.

Put one in your family car, the ute, the house, the tractor, the header and truck.

Just like they say on the website, St John Ambulance volunteers and first-aiders 'are ordinary people doing extraordinary things'.

Be an extraordinary person and help save lives.

■ **To register or for information on your nearest course, call St John Ambulance on 9334 1233 or visit www.stjohnambulance.com.au**