

STAR OF COURAGE

Mr Robert COOK, deceased,
Late of Laquey, Missouri, United States of America

On 29 July 2006, Mr Cook shielded an Australian passenger during a plane crash at St Louis, Missouri, United States of America.

Whilst visiting and working in the US, a young Australian woman joined a group of people to make a tandem skydive. Her instructor was Mr Robert Cook with whom she would be harnessed for the skydive. Soon after take-off from an airport near St Louis, Missouri, the plane experienced serious engine malfunctions and the pilot attempted to return to the airstrip. Mr Cook, an experienced instructor, turned to the woman and calmly told her that the plane was likely to crash. Instructing her to focus solely on his instructions, Mr Cook clipped his skydive harness to hers, demanding that the woman wrap herself around him so that he could cushion her fall. As the aircraft lost altitude and crashed through a tree, the woman remembers being jostled around and slipping to the floor of the plane. Mr Cook pulled her back onto the seat and again pressed her against him. Moments later the plane hit an electrical wire and, as it plunged towards the ground, Mr Cook tightened his grip around the woman, acting as a human shield to protect her. Having entirely understood the implications of his actions, and as a result of his selfless courage, the woman, although seriously injured in the crash, survived the impact. Sadly Mr Cook died instantly as a result of his injuries.

By his actions, Mr Cook displayed conspicuous bravery, thereby losing his life

Miss Kerri-Anne O'Meley, deceased, Late of Wallsend NSW 2287

In the early hours of the morning of 17 June 2005, Miss O'Meley went to the aid of family members during a vicious attack in their home at Wallsend, New South Wales.

Just after midnight, Miss O'Meley's estranged husband illegally entered the family home of his former wife, her parents and her two teenage children. The man located Miss O'Meley asleep in the house, woke her and, in a frenzied attack, stabbed her repeatedly. Miss O'Meley's mother and father were awoken by the noise and, caught between their daughter and the offender, they too were viciously stabbed. The man made his way to his daughter's bedroom where the attacks continued. He repeatedly stabbed his daughter, injuring her legs and throat. She tried to fend him off and, as a result, was also cut across the hands. Despite significant stab wounds to her chest, and weakened by the considerable loss of blood, Miss O'Meley displayed extreme courage in frightening circumstances. Without regard for her own life she protected her daughter from further attack by grappling with her estranged husband, pushing him away. As a result, Miss O'Meley was stabbed again, several times, before the offender fled the scene. Sadly, Miss O'Meley and her father died as a result of their significant injuries sustained in the tragedy.

By her actions, Miss O'Meley displayed conspicuous bravery, thereby losing her life.

STAR OF COURAGE

Mr Shane Robert WARBURTON, Theodore ACT 2905

In the late afternoon of 2 April 2005, Mr (then Leading Seaman) Warburton rescued a leading aircraftman from a Royal Australian Navy Sea King helicopter which crashed at Tuindrao, Nias Island, Indonesia.

During its deployment to assist earthquake victims in Indonesia, a Royal Australian Navy Sea King helicopter crashed near the village of Tuindrao on Nias Island, Indonesia. Leading Seaman Warburton was aboard the helicopter and sustained severe injuries. He was trapped in the rear of the cabin which was on fire and quickly filling with thick black smoke. The cockpit had caved in and the two pilots were deceased. Leading Seaman Warburton tried to rouse other passengers, and found one other person alive. He inched his way through the debris and found a service colleague with horrible leg fractures and other injuries. Although almost overcome by exhaustion and restricted by choking black smoke, he summoned his strength and determination and dragged the victim as far as he could to a small opening in the tail of the helicopter, where he shouted for help. As Leading Seaman Warburton was pulled from the wreckage by local villagers he pleaded with them to rescue his mate from the aircraft. After the second rescue attempt succeeded, Leading Seaman Warburton attempted to return to the crash site to search for other victims but was restrained by the villagers when a series of explosions accelerated the fire. Sadly, the remaining personnel on the helicopter died in the crash.

By his actions, Leading Seaman Warburton displayed conspicuous bravery.