

# Breakbone fever

## Dengue – you can help

### Jacqui Donegan tells of her battle with Dengue Fever

In the 15 years since I contracted dengue fever I've often wondered how the virus acquired an image make-over.

In the early 20th century, dengue was known as "breakbone fever" for the intense pain it caused in muscles and joints.

Even earlier, in the West Indies, the virus was called "dandy fever" because slaves debilitated by it took on such a stiff posture and stilted way of walking.

So intense and complex is the pain of dengue, I think they should bring back the name "breakbone".

My own experience with dengue started quite simply. Late on a Sunday night back in 1993, I woke at 11pm with a raging headache, fever and nausea. I went to a medical centre and an Irish doctor told me that I had influenza. I was in no state to protest; I took some codeine and went home to bed.

The next morning I knew I did not have influenza. My body was racked with pain and I was exhausted. A scattered rash had appeared on my legs, and it was the insane itching that eventually got me out of bed and back to the doctor.

This time I went to my GP in Railway Estate. Many of the frail and elderly patients in the waiting room had better posture and gait. As I approached the doctor's door he announced my condition: "You've got dengue fever. Go home, don't take Aspirin, drink plenty of liquids, and rest."

Blood tests later confirmed his diagnosis and I would take my place in the toll for the 1992-93 outbreak – approximately 1000 cases in Townsville alone.

The doctor outlined the many 'clinical features' that awaited me and I thought I would escape a few. Not so. Over the next week I encountered every single one of them.

I returned to bed and stayed there for the next seven days. There was little to punctuate my days. I couldn't watch television or read because the pain behind my eyes even prevented me from looking around the room.

The next week was a blur of fitful sleep, cold sweats and waves of nausea.

My hair fell out and then it grew back – curly. My nails developed vertical ridges. Conventional wisdom told me that I had, indeed, had a fever.

These days I am on the lookout for *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes – the ones with black-and-white socks. I have a regular reminder – every morning when I straighten my hair.

**Jacqui Donegan, media relations officer for the council, still battles the effects of the Dengue Virus.**



As a resident of North Queensland you need to be aware of the threat from the deadly disease—dengue fever. Dengue fever is transmitted by the dengue mosquito, whose preferred breeding area is around the home and even workplaces.

Dengue Fever is an unfortunate part of living in North Queensland, but it does not have to occur. Every resident is responsible for ensuring Townsville remains safe.

Environmental Health is urging the community and council workers to support the inspection and treatment program by looking in their back yards (including workplaces) and removing any pot plant bases, old tyres, plastic containers and plants that hold water (Bromeliads).

A check around your home and workplace is not hard to do and involves a simple walk around the property. Any mosquitoes wrigglers found should be tipped out immediately and the container washed with the inside edge wiped clean, as this is where the eggs are laid. If containers are found that could hold water, they should be put in a position or location that will not allow this to occur, or if not needed—dispose of them. Check your yard every 7-10 days.

During dengue fever outbreaks Queensland Health and Townsville City Council have activated the dengue fever action plan. Council officers authorised under public health legislation will enter properties to search for breeding sites; if occupiers are home officers will identify themselves, however they can carry out their duties even if people aren't home. Inspections are conducted on premises within a 200m radius from the affected residents.

## Steadfast community commitment

It is always good to hear when businesses give back to our community. With the nation's economy slowing down, the Together Townsville partners are steadfast in their commitment to the program.

Tony Ireland aptly explains why it is important to continue being part of Together Townsville and the community.

"It is as simple as knowing that we are here for the long haul and we support the community and its people. We are like any other business, we struggle as much as anyone in times like these because we live or die by the health of our community; and that's why we put in during the good times and try to maintain the same level of commitment in the bad. Not always possible but we try. If we can, we do!"

Tony Ireland Townsville has continued its support for the Tony Ireland Stadium for a minimum of five years. This venue is a popular facility for our community, with many flocking to cricket and AFL games, meetings and functions.

Tony Ireland's sentiments are backed by the North Shore developers. Leah Finlay from Stockland said "North Shore is the largest master-planned community ever delivered in North Queensland and will eventually be home to 15,000

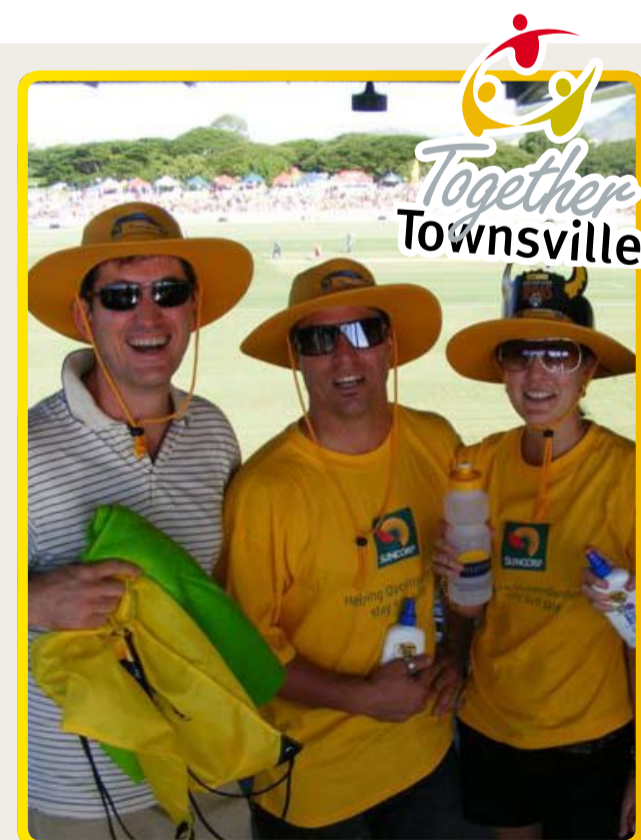
Townsville residents. That's a big part of Townsville and that's why we at Stockland support the Together Townsville program. Stockland believes that to create great developments you need to support great communities. Stockland is proud to partner with Townsville City Council in the Together Townsville program."

Townsville Mayor Les Tyrell endorsed their comments. "Our city is indeed fortunate to have the Together Townsville partnership program where local businesses and the council combine resources to continue to deliver important community initiatives. This would not be possible without the support of our Together Townsville partners," he said.

"I encourage everyone to get involved and support the program and our partners as it will only benefit our city."

In 2008/09 the Together Townsville partnerships will contribute more than \$1 million to our community. Some of these initiatives include Townsville Safe Community, Welcoming Babies Ceremony, Seniors Picnic, Let's Read, Baby Rhyme Time, Sunsafty, markets and much more.

To find out more about Together Townsville please contact council on 47279000.



Sunsafty » A Together Townsville initiative.