



In this month's 'Member Profile' we talk to Kelly Lash, managing partner of the Cape Tribulation Pharmacy.

Dealing with everything from chopper flights to spider bites, Kelly's experiences as a community pharmacist in one of Queensland's most remote (and spectacular) locations are quite unique.

### Where did you complete your pharmacy training?

I completed a Bachelor of Arts at Chaminade University in Honolulu and went on to complete my Doctor of Pharmacy at the University of California. I did my pre-registration training at Stanford University Medical Centre.

### When did you move to Cape Tribulation?

We moved to Port Douglas in 2001 after discovering my brother had leukaemia and quality of life became more important than working six to seven days a week.

After several years working in Port Douglas, a partnership was turned down and we decided to open a rural pharmacy in the resort area of Cape Tribulation.



'Bungy' (far left) picks up medication from Kelly for delivery to a customer who was cut off by landslides.

### What are some of the services provided by your pharmacy?

We work from 8am to 6-7pm during the five months of the 'high season' which is from around mid May through to October servicing an area encompassing some 1700 residents from the Daintree River to Bloomfield.

Some people travel up to 50 kilometres to reach us. However the bulk of our customers come from the 600,000 plus visitors to the world heritage rainforest and reefs in the area.

We do not spend all day dispensing but we are most definitely at the front line of health service and this requires sharp diagnostic and clinical skills. We have to decide if a chopper is needed for a marine sting or spider bite, suture or a visit to the emergency room. For example we recently called an ambulance as a simple measure for a severely bleeding snakebite, but you really have to know your stuff and decide whether it is life threatening.

### How does your remote location affect the way you operate?

Our freight comes from 140 kilometres away and we never know when we will get it. Our OTC lines come from as far as Brisbane and may take up to ten days to arrive and the nearest doctor is 70 kilometres away.

The roads which are often our lifeline can flood at a moment's notice. This year we were not only flooded but were cut off by no less than six landslides



This spectacular aerial shot highlights the remoteness of the Cape Tribulation Pharmacy. \*Photo courtesy of Cape Tribulation Campground

and tourists had to be airlifted by chopper and evacuated by boat. During the drama, we had a local mustering pilot 'Bungy' fly in and collect medication for a neighbour who was cut off for days.

Sometimes if you need to get change or anything simple from another town, you have to take into consideration a four-hour turnaround drive.

We generate our own power, water and sewerage and pay dearly for them. For this reason the rural subsidy we receive is greatly appreciated.

### How does your pharmacy operate from a Quality Care standpoint?

The pharmacy is state of the art with integrated dispensary and POS/Internet access. We are QCPP accredited and are currently running our new pharmacy assistant through the ropes of Quality Care.

We do about a 5/95% split with our shop and therefore we have had to improvise some of what we sell and maintain top levels of service.

### What are some of the other major challenges you face as a pharmacist?

Another major challenge is getting locums for days off or even finding a pharmacist to work when I am not here. I cannot thank Sue Muller enough for her efforts in placing locums at a pinch in such a remote location.