

MEDIA RELEASE



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SA YOUTHS COMPLETE KOKODA TRACK

Port Augusta resident Shaun Gerschwitz and Loxton resident Eleanor Garrard are safely back on home soil after walking the Kokoda Track as part of the 2011 Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge.

The 16-and-17-year-olds completed the 155km trek over the past 2 weeks as part of a group of more than 30 young people who had been sponsored by Clubs SA.

Shaun, a Year 10 student at Prince Alfred College, and Eleanor, a year 11 Loxton High School student were selected by Clubs SA because of their outstanding contribution to their local community.

At the completion of the ten day trek, the group visited the Bomana War Cemetery. The cemetery contains 3,819 Commonwealth burials from WWII, 702 of them still unidentified.

Shaun said trekking through rain and heat with a 20kg pack strapped to his back was a life changing experience.

"It was amazing, challenging but amazing," he said.

"It's tough but you push on and everyone supported each other; the experience made me think I can achieve anything."

Eleanor said being a triathlete gave her a physical advantage however it was only part of the trek.

"It was mentally harder than I thought; you just have to push through to achieve."

Almost 200 people aged 16-22 have now participated in the Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge over the past 7 years, which covers all costs associated with the arduous trek.

Clubs SA General Manager, Helen Martin congratulated Shaun and Eleanor for successfully completing the extended Kokoda Track, which at 155kms, is 61kms further than the typical route.

"I commend Shaun and Eleanor for finishing the Kokoda Track; it's a major physical and mental challenge and they completed it with flying colours," she said.

"Shaun and Eleanor are true leaders for all young people in their hometowns of Port Augusta and Loxton as well as Australia.

"Shaun and Eleanor have not only learnt about Australia's history in WWII and the story of the diggers but also about his and her strengths. This experience has made them even better leaders, and this opportunity will help them to inspire and teach others."

Applications for 16-25 year olds to be part of the 2012 Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge will open in April 2012.

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