

Dr Fiona McEachern

22 April 1959 - 25 September 2010



Memorial Service

1 October 2010

Members of the Australian Parachute Federation are mourning the loss of one their friends and ambassadors, a true champion and an inspiration to all who met her. Fiona was involved in a fatal canopy collision at Tully on the 25th of September, whilst taking part in the FS 4-way event at the NQ State Championships.

Fiona made her first jump at Picton DZ in October 1984 and since then accumulated almost 7500 skydives, being a driving force in our community for over 26 years.

She has been an instructor in the sport for over 20 years, not only guiding beginners in their first steps in the sky, but as a coach/mentor to experienced skydivers in Australia and beyond.

As a team player, she competed in almost every Australian National Skydiving Championships since 1988 – missing only 2004 due to an injury. She has represented Australia more than once including winning a silver medal in the women's 4-person team event at the World Cup in Portugal in 1998, for which she received an APF Achievement Award.

Most recently, in June 2010 she was part of contingent of skydivers who set three new largest formation Australian records in one day, culminating in a group size of 112 skydivers linking up in the skies of California – smashing the previous Australian record set in 1999 of 81 skydivers.

In 2005 Fiona was part of the previous World record for the largest women's formation at that time of 151.

Fiona has many hats in the sport of skydiving, taking on many volunteer roles at State, National and International levels. She was not only the Director of Competitions for the Australian Parachute Federation, but also the APF delegate with the International Parachuting Commission (IPC).

In her position with the IPC, she was honoured in 2002 with being elected to the position of Chair of the Formation Skydiving Committee – an international committee committed to setting competition rules in skydiving – and making them easy to understand.

Fiona has left a legacy of inspiration to all skydivers in Australia with her attitude of: "If I want to do good jumps with people then I have to help them get there. You can't just turn up and expect to have a great jump without helping each other."

Fiona was the 'Mother Hen' of Australian skydiving. Every Australian skydiver owes her gratitude and respect for what she has done for the sport in this very large country.

Programme

4.30 – 5.30 pm

Dave Smith
Alice Reynolds
Russell Weaver
Dale Chaffey
Graeme Windsor
Mark “Stretch” Szulmayer
Greg Jack
“One of the Girls”

Others who wish to speak

Dr John Cusack

5.30 – 6.30 pm

Audio / visual Presentation
and
Light refreshments, cash bar

6.30 – 7.30

Cash bar continues

7.30

Those staying over may wish to avail themselves of the
Novotel restaurant, or other places nearby.

Please remember to place your name in the attendance book,
which will be passed to Dr John.

Curriculum Vitae

International

Chair of the IPC Formation Skydiving Committee

IPC delegate for Australia

Australian Parachute Federation:

Director Competiton

Administrator, NSW Parachute Council

Committee Member, Awards Validation Unit

Committee Member, Funding Committee

Disciplinary Chair

Citations

“Southern Aurora”

Silver medal, Women’s World Cup 4-way Formation Skydiving

Evora Portugal 1998

Australian Sports Medal 2000

APF Achievement Awards

1998: “Southern Aurora”, An outstanding performance at the Womens World Cup
In Portugal 1998, where the team set a new Australian record of 16 points.

2006: Largest Australian Women’s Freefall Formation of 47 Skydivers at
Toogoolawah, Queensland on 21st April 2005

2006: Largest World Women’s Record Freefall Formation of 151 Skydivers on
30th September 2005 at Perris Valley, California USA.

2010: Future Fifties Award, For her energetic and enthusiastic coaching, to bring
out the best in skydivers, and her tireless efforts to build the APF’s competitor
base and competition standard both locally and internationally.



Fédération Aéronautique Internationale
The World Air Sports Federation

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The FAI suffers a great loss: Fiona McEachern, IPC Committee Chair

It was with great sadness that we learned that Fiona McEachern, Chair of the IPC Formation Skydiving Committee, died in a tragic accident on 25 September 2010, at Tully airfield, North Queensland, Australia.

Fiona was Chair of the IPC Formation Skydiving Committee, IPC delegate for Australia, and Director of Competitions for the Australian Parachute Federation. She was best known for her exceptional organisational ability, and her warm and friendly personality. She was an inspiration and mentor to many skydivers, from the novice to the highly experienced skydiver, and was held in the highest regard in parachuting circles not only in Australia, but all over the world.

Fiona stood alone as a shining example of peace and friendship and there was always a place for her in any skydiving gathering. She was a quiet achiever and an excellent role model for all those that knew her. Fiona's death is an enormous loss to the sport of parachuting, her many friends, and to the FAI Family.

The FAI President, the Executive Board and all the FAI Community express their sympathies and condolences to Dr John Cusack, Fiona's husband, to their families, as well as to the Australian Air Sports community. Fiona will be remembered in the world of Air Sports as a leading figure who achieved great things. We have lost a great Air Sports supporter, contributor and friend.

Submitted by fias on Mon, 27/09/2010 - 13:33 | [news](#)

From IPC and FAI Member Organisations around the world

In a tragic accident involving a canopy collision, Fiona McEachern, was killed as a on 25 September 2010, at Tully airfield, North Queensland, Australia.

Fiona was Chair of the Formation Skydiving Committee of the International Parachute Commission, IPC delegate for Australia, and Director of Competitions for the Australian Parachute Federation.

Fiona was best known for her exceptional organisational ability, and her warm and friendly personality. She was an inspiration and mentor to many skydivers, from the novice to the highly experienced skydiver, and was held in the highest regard in parachuting circles not only in Australia, but all over the world.

She will be sadly missed by all those who new her. She stood alone as a shining example of peace and friendship and there was always a place for her in any skydiving gathering. She was a quiet achiever and an excellent role model for all that new her. Fiona's death is an enormous loss to the sport of parachuting and to all those who knew her.

Thoughts of support and friendship go to Fiona's husband, Dr John Cusack and to both Fiona and John's extended families.

Graeme Windsor, IPC President

It was with great sadness that we learned about Fiona's tragic accident last Saturday.

On behalf of the FAI President, the Executive Board and all the FAI Community, I would like to express our heartfelt sympathies and condolences to Fiona's family and friends, and in particular to Dr John Cusak her husband. Our thoughts are with them, as well as with the Australian Air Sports community who have lost one of its great supporter and contributor.

Even for those who did not have the chance to meet Fiona on a regular basis, we all have in mind her positive attitude, and we can appreciate why her friends and colleagues praise her warm and friendly personality. Fiona will be recognized in the World of Air Sports as a leading figure who achieved great things with both the Australian Parachute Federation and the FAI. We shall remember her with affection.

With our sincere and deep friendship.

Stéphane DESPREZ
FAI Secretary General

Such a tragic loss; Fiona was a lovely person and will be sorely missed.

My thoughts are with John at this terrible time.

John Hitchen

IPC Chair of Style and Accuracy

On behalf of the Dutch Parachuting Federation, and the old and present IPC delegates we would like to express our sincere condolences to John, family, friends, australian skydivers and APF for the loss of Fiona McEachern. The world has lost an avid skydiver and kind person.

We wish you all strength in these difficult times

Ronald Overdijk, Henny Wiggers,

Igor van Aperen, Marc Hoornweg

I had the greatest of pleasure to work with Fiona within the IPC and also during different World Championships. I admired her quiet strength and appreciated her friendship. We also shared a love of animals and pictures of our respective pets. I will miss her tremendously and feel deeply for John and all her family and friends.

Gill Winter

May your spirit live on in each person and place you've touched and visited, and there are many!!! Thank you for your advice and the good times shared these past years, Africa will miss you dearly!!!! Our condolences to Dr. John and all her family and friends.

Jacqui Bruwer

IPC Delegate South Africa

Words cannot express how I felt hearing the terrible news. I should not say this, but I will: Out of all amazing skydivers I know you should have been the last to leave us. It was such an honor to know you, have fun with you, drink wine with you, some straight from your closest winery, overcome small challenges and do the IPC work with you. Why ever did I only once jump with you?

The nicest of people I ever met, always lending a hand or offering a place to stay. If I ever would need to define the term beautiful person: That would be you Fiona!

Our community is hit hard and you leave us such a legacy to follow! You will never be forgotten, fly free and in peace.

Dr John, please accept my deepest apologies. I cannot fathom how you feel, but

try to stay strong. Feel our love from all over the planet. In these moments of grave sorrow - try to remember all the perfect moments with your true soulmate!

If you have a chance, please give Dr John a long and warm hug from me.

Thomas Tuominen

IPC delegate Finland

Chair of the IPC Canopy Piloting Committee

I had the great pleasure of working with Fiona at a number of IPC competitions and also at IPC meetings over some years. I found her to be a wonderful lady, knowledgeable, calm, incisive and at the same time so willing to be helpful and advise, and all in a quiet unassuming way. I made two jumps with Fiona when I visited her dropzone, Sydney Skydivers, and I remember those two jumps with fondness. The shock of her untimely death leaves a void; one which will take a very long time to get over. Last weekend I made some jumps and in my mind I dedicated them to my departed colleague and friend. This Saturday, Irish weather permitting, I will jump, with a pink rose, and my pink rig, and bid a farewell to Fiona. It will not be a final farewell however, as she shall always be in my thoughts, whenever I jump and when I attend future IPC competitions and meetings. Good people are never forgotten. **Liam McNulty**

I can't believe it! Very, very bad news. My condolences to John, family and friends....

Ronald Overdijk, Chair, Artistic Events Committee, IPC

I am very sorry to hear that sad and totally unexpected news. I remember Fiona since 2004 during preparation for WPC in Rijeka, Croatia, we had a very good communication and cooperation.

Goran Habschied, Croatian Delegate to IPC.

Deepest sympathy to her family and friends.

I am beyond words while tears are running down my face. My thoughts are going to John, her family and the APF. I extend my deepest sympathy also in the name of the Swiss Federation. My heart is bleeding

Doris Merz-Hunziker, Swiss Delegate to IPC

Oh... I'm very sorry to hear this news. She will be greatly missed.

Elisabet Pettersson,

Judges and Technical & Safety Committees, IPC

Es muy triste recibir esta noticia. Fiona fue una gran deportista y mejor dirigente. Es una gran pérdida, acompañamos en este profundo dolor a sus familiares, camaradas y a la APF, que pierde una muy valiosa representante. Con gran dolor.

Gustavo Eduardo Reyes
Federación Argentina de Paracaidismo

I can not believe the words that I have just read! I can not express what my heart is feeling! The world has lost a wonderful woman!

Marylou Laughlin, IPC Vice-President and USA Delegate

This is beyond senseless, I'm totally heartbroken.

My thoughts goes to John, friends, family and Aussie Skydiving community. Words can not express the tremendous loss!

Pia Berggren, Chair, Judges Committee, IPC

I have been informed by Mr. Desprez about the tragic accident of Fiona. I am very sad. I would like to ask you to pass all my condolences to her family. **Cosette Mast, FAI Office**

Gill has forwarded your e-mail to me. I am devastated - you make a lot of acquaintances in this sport and a few friends, and Fiona was one I was proud to consider a friend. It is a very sad day.

I can not believe the words that I have just read! I can not express what my heart is feeling! The world has lost a wonderful woman!

On behalf of Russian Federation of Parachuting we express our deepest condolences to the family of Fiona and everyone who knew her. She was a very nice person, and this is a very big loss to our Parachuting.

Vladimir Gazetov, Russian Delegate to IPC

The tragic death of Fiona has hit hard, but I have some wonderful memories of her. Both Lena and I are thinking of John at this difficult awful time and send our sincere condolences.

There is a candle burning in SALZBURG -
for Fiona and for all mourning for her,

silent regards, **Michael Egger, Chair, Para-Ski Committee, IPC**

On behalf of all members of the Australian Parachute Federation, past and present, I extend my heartfelt regret at the loss of Fiona, the void she leaves behind is enormous.

David Smith
President
Australian Parachute Federation

Words cannot describe our shock at the loss of such an amazing individual. Fiona has been a tireless ambassador for our sport for so long, her passion and commitment unparalleled. Today the Australian Parachute Federation and the sport of skydiving and indeed all of us have personally lost a true friend and mentor. May her legacy prevail. Goodbye Fi.

Brad Turner
CEO APF

"I felt so lucky and privileged to have met Fiona, and I realised immediately just how much she meant to skydivers. I share your shock and sadness."

Jean Burns - Australia's first female skydiver.

So, so sad to hear about Fiona. What a terrific girl and a huge part of the skydiving community in Australia and across the globe. We will all miss her. Our hearts and love goes out to all our Aussie friends. Been thinking of all of you everyday and wishing you the best. **Dan BC**

All of us on the Golden Knights are shocked and saddened. Some of us knew you for years, and some just met you in Russia. We will all miss you and your smile.

Eric Heinsheimer

The shockwaves are being felt around the world at the loss of a great and wonderful woman.

Fi, you mean the world to me, you are my big sister and my best friend and you have been there for me through so very much. I cannot



begin to imagine never seeing your smiling face again in this life.

You gave people the strength and the belief to achieve greatness and you were right alongside them being great yourself.

Your big heart was open to everyone and you were always there to help people in any way that they needed it, be it coaching skydivers, organizing boogie jumps and big ways, or there as the best party buddy. You could easily convince others to party, and it wasn't really that hard to get Narelle out to party with us. I do remember many, many amazing party nights with you.

Thank you for being my best friend and my big sister Fi, thank you for always remembering my birthday and Christmas with a present and lovely words, thank you for being my awesome team mate, thank you for always being there whenever I needed someone, thank you for all your words of encouragement and wisdom, thank you for your hugs and love. Thank you for being you Fi.

I will cry for you a lot, I will ache for your loss, it will take time, but I promise I will get over it as I remember all the great times, the laughs and the fun. The ache will get easier to bear and the tears will lessen, but you will always be in my heart. Say hi to PJ for me, I know you are with him now.

Fly high, fly hard and crank those 360's. I will love you and miss you forever.

xxxxooxxxx

Jo Boniface

Fi, you are sadly missed. You have been my mentor and my friend for over 8 years. Every time I wear the jumpsuit you organised for my birthday and fly your old Crossfire now I will think of you.... and that once more you will be flying free. You will never be forgotten x **Kate Rogers**





That cute little smile, so genuine and kinda cheeky, the way your eyes would light up... All those boogies and competitions, all that mentoring, coaxing, coaching, critiquing and believing in people, all those meetings and all that volunteering, for all those years! All those people's lives you've touched, all those memories you've given us, all that fun we've had.... Remarkable, truly remarkable. One of life's beautiful people.

Legend. **Susie McEvoy**

What a loss! Countless new jumpers learnt to fly safe with others under your protective wings - the smiles you put on the faces of the newly crested are as priceless as the loss we feel at your early departure. May your spirit fly free and continue to bring joy wherever it roams. For what its worth,

my thoughts are with you Dr John - I can hardly imagine your loss :(

Hendrik Dik

One of the most inspirational people I have ever met. For one (tiny little) woman to have made such a big impact in all of our lives shows just how great she was. She gave so much to everyone - she especially had heaps of energy for new and novice skydivers. Such a loss to the world.

Sam Munn

Fi, there are so many of us that are in total shock and disbelief, your support, instruction and even more importantly the honour of calling you a friend will be sadly missed. The skydiving community's heart is broken RIP Fi.

Philip Jones-Hope

RIP Fiona. All your Danish POPS friends will miss you. You were a role model for all of us. Our thoughts goes to your relatives. Fly high forever in your new world. What a tragic loss for all of us. **Jørgen Jensen**

Skov



Such a tragic loss for a person who gave so much to so many people in a sport that she truly loved. RIP Fiona fly free forever!! Our thoughts are with you Dr John and the family. **Tony Maurer**

This has indeed been a shocking month for ANZ skydiving. Met Fiona on several occasions over the past 5 years traveling about, and every time was a pleasure. A lovely lady, clearly a very motherly figure to the Aussie Competitors, and one who you could see had the respect of every one she met for the person she was....such a shame...I will always remember Cointreau tim tam straws at Picton!! RIP Fiona.

Liam Dunne

My mentor in skydiving and wise counsel on the ground. You were beautiful from head to toe - no matter what YOU thought about your toes!!! Gracious. Compassionate. Giving. (Perhaps a little too generous when I didn't NEED more red wine!) I will treasure the quiet late night chats with my friend Fiona as much as the row...dy ones with Narelle. I will miss your quick-fire emails and sparkling smile. Thank you for everything. Xxx **Kelly Brennan**

You were here 12 years ago, but still you are remembered, from all the people that were lucky to meet and learn with you. All The Portuguese skydivers are you with you at this moment, and hope the place you are now will be even better than this one you made even better. Blue skies Fiona.

Jorge Manuel Gonçalves Grade

There is no one word to describe the beauty and greatness you are. You taught me so much now only how to fly but to be a better person. You encouraged me to be a judge when injured for this and so





many other things I thank you. You are forever apart of me, my you fly free with us forever. Sadly missed but will never be forgotten. I love you Fi soar free.

Deborah Hobbs

Fiona, you were a fantastic mentor to our group of Victorian skydiving girls in the 90's - you were our idol and it's only with your support and encouragement that I achieved what I did in the sport.

You've obviously continued to be such an inspiration to so many. And such a lovely cool chick! RIP. xx **Fiona Cameron**

Good-bye Fiona. Thank you for organising my starcrest jumps in 1997. Thanks for coaching us on how to approach a formation. Thanks for the jumps at Lower Light in 1998, and the great formatted caravan loads at Equinox 2000. Thank you for teaching the level 2 coaching section at Nagambie in 2006. Thank you for setting the goal so high, and then helping us to achieve it. Thank you for making me a better skydiver,



and instructor. Good-bye Fiona. I will miss, and remember you, always.

Curtis Morton

The first time I landed in the experienced area at Picton (as an AFF student) I had this little woman come out to the beer line and tear me a new asshole.....I thought she was fantastic. I am a better skydiver from knowing you. Thanks Fiona.

Will Fredericks

Fi must have held more skydivers hands in freefall than anyone else in Australian skydiving, but this was only one of the ways in which she touched all



of our lives. You will be missed! **Michael McGrath**

Fi taught me everything worthwhile that I know about skydiving. And I only learnt a fraction of what I could have. She remembered everyone's birthday. She never missed an opportunity to enrich

someone. She had the energy of 20 people. It is impossible that she won't be with us anymore. **Elise Hill**

To the APF. Our deepest condolences.

Fiona will be missed for her dedicated support for the sport and all jumpers, her unforgettable smile and encouragement she gave to everyone she met. Our condolences go from the New Zealand Parachute Industry to her family to the APF, and to all the skydivers in the APF. We have lost a true champion of our sport. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance at all.

Keith Gallaher CEO.
New Zealand Parachute Industry Association

Fiona organized my first jump at the Skysisters boogie in 2007. I told her that I had not jumped in over three months but she put me on a starcrest jump. I was not sure that I could handle an 8 way but she was confident that I could and I believed her. I was the fourth person in the base, opposite her. I approached so slowly to





avoid going low. I will forever remember her sweet smile as I approached, beckoning me to take my slot. When I finally did, she beamed and I felt a sense of accomplishment like never before or after. Fiona embodies everything that is good in skydiving. She loved the sport, shared her knowledge freely and just made every jump really fun. My deepest sympathies go to her husband and the

Australian skydiving community. Fly free and I hope to meet you in the base again one day.

I met Fiona in Menzelinsk this year at the WPC. I was attending the FAI judge training course and she had the stressful role of FAI Controller. I was so impressed by her quiet, unassuming, yet no-nonsense manner and the efficient way in which she handled each challenge. World skydiving is definitely poorer for having lost someone so dedicated to the sport. We'll miss you, Fiona.

Chantelle (South Africa)

Dear Fiona . You approached me at Equinox Boogie in 2000 and said I looked scared as hell. You grabbed my hand, hustled me into the door of the Skyvan. It was my 15th jump and i had an absolute blast! That day I met DR John and got fitted for a new rig and suit. For the next 2 weeks I watched you execute some of the best airtime I had ever seen. I feel so privileged for having shared the air up there with you. My heart goes out to you Dr John and all the Aus jumpers who knew you. Blue skies and white fluffy clouds. **Gills**



I don't know what else to say apart from the fact the skydiving community up here (Cairns) are all deeply saddened by this.

She was a fantastic person.

Glenn Bolton

You are a special person to the
parents that brought you into this
world,

You are a special person to those who
worked with you,

You are a special person who looked
forward to tomorrow and the next
day,

You are a special person to those who
know you in their own special way,

You are a special person to the many friends you made & enjoy,

You are a special person as you are who you are,

You are a special person as you made others feel special,

You are a special person and no-one else can be as special as YOU,

YOU Fi, are all of the above.



Gary (Flipper)

The meaning of your name “FIONA – a person of great strength and substance”.
You touched the lives of all who met you. You had time for everyone no matter
who they were. Your friendship and support was always unconditional. You will
always be in our hearts - **Lindy and John Williams.**

Fiona was the most amazing aunt. She taught us everything from make up to
perfecting jelly shots.



I think it will take a
very long time to get
used to the fact that
she is gone.

Alice Reynolds

I am so sorry to hear
about Fiona (from Paul
AKA ‘Pommy Git’) It
always seems that the
best ones get taken
ahead of time.



Please pass on my deepest feelings to John for me; I know he must be devastated.

Colin Newland (Hamburg, Germany)

My name is Barton Edwards and i live and skydive at Tully. Myself and two other young skydivers, Kelly Cameron and Holly were the 3 jumpers who had the privilege to share Fiona's final skydive during

the second round of NQ Champs 4-way inter flat comp. Her final skydive was a typical example of Fiona's selfless dedication to training, educating and inspiring skydivers on every level, especially the young and up coming skydivers like myself and Kelly.

I was so proud of Southern Aurora. They totally kicked ass in that comp. They deserved their world cup silver medal. We trained with them that year up at Toogoolawah, so I travelled up there with the other Sydney based team members and we all hung out together, and it was the same in Portugal. It was like an Aussie family.

The comp got dragged out due to some bad weather days. In the 8 way comp, Don Cross had to leave for Army duties a day early because of the delay. Fiona competed with XLR8 on round 10 for us. I think she was pretty happy with that. I was.

I don't think there would be anyone from Picton and even most people from the whole country that didn't get to learn something from her. She taught me and helped me a lot. Right from the start of my involvement with the sport, she has been there, like my mum, someone to look up to and be proud of and learn from. She never stopped teaching me either, pulling me up on the way I put my pilot chute in it's pouch just recently. She was always more





than happy to help and jump with novice and intermediate people as well, not like a lot of elite skydivers who only want to jump with other elite skydivers. She was never like that. She never got caught up in the glory of it all. People say I kept my feet on the ground. Well, I learnt from the master about that.

She did some of my B rels.

Then I got to compete against

her later on. Then I got to train and compete alongside her. This year I got to jump with her again and win a silver biscuit in her 10 way speed star team and a gold medal in her 16 way team. I thought the nationals had lost some of it's significance with me and I just did it for old time sake this year, but now those medals will mean a whole lot more to me.

The most ironic thing is that she was relentless in passing on knowledge about traffic awareness under canopy, canopy skills, tracking from formations, exit groups and spacing on exits. I suppose she has taught us the greatest lesson of all now. Even two highly experienced people who now how to do everything right can still have an accident. I suppose we will learn more when we get more details of the accident.

Skydiving will be different now. I will miss her so much. I feel so sad for Dr John and also for Mossy. I'm happy he is still here. I'm very sad that Fiona is not. I hope Dr John and Mossy get through it.

Down at Corowa the year Roz had her accident; Fiona and Dr John were in our motorhome having a chat when the announcement went over the PA system that Roz had died. That was a real emotional experience we got to share with her. That would be part of the story, as well as noticing a hot young female 4 way team called Vixen when I was an aspiring young B rel student getting excited about doing





some B rels with some of them.

Also, the next morning after Fiona's 40th party at her place, Juby and I went for a walk and found a box near the lake with about 4 dumped cattle dog pups that we took back to Fiona's house and she checked them out and then we took them to Picton

and found homes for them all except one. It took a few days to find a home for the last one. Only Juby would take on a chore like that and pul it off without getting stuck with them all. I remember Zipper in his damaged state playing with the pups in Fiona's backyard. They put a smile on his face. **Richy Brooks**

Fiona was soooo full of life like a small girl, always smiling always ready for one more jump, and at the same time always a voice of reason, in the 8 way we called her the Sheriff and bought her a badge (Sheriff Star) that she proudly wore...

Hobbes



Fi told me to let loose seeing as I was at my first interstate boogie, only to rescue me the next morning from the shower floor, dress me and carry me out of the showers at the dz, for Ali to take to the medical centre when I ended up with a kidney infection. **Ashleigh Gorman**

I have just come back from the After Life Boogie. I did a couple of loads with Fi. You can surely pick here out in these shots! You can clearly see her riding the funnel on the second image. It was always great to be around Fi in the air and on the ground. Can't believe she has gone.

Cheers **Brett Newman**

It is with heavy heart i send you these thoughts and photos my family is deeply shocked for doctor john and heather cheryl kim and yourself elise ... i know how special fiona was to you all this is an unspeakable tragedy for my skydives with fiona she always kept me close and we laughed from my family to yours pru debby travis karen mcevoy angels witches love peace ... gods speed on her way home to the stars **Travis Aslett**

Dearest Fi. For over two decades, opponent, peer, confidant, fellow traveler, coaching partner, team-mate - you have been one of my heroes. You have helped pick me up, let me know all was OK and even got me back in the air at times by reminding me just what we do! You're the only one who could have got me back after a 10 year break from Nats comp - and made it seem like the passing of time was just a blip. I have watched you bring care and inspiration to so many - at all levels of our beloved sport. You are the epitome of a true sports person. No one else comes close. Thank you for everything you are and everything you gave. I will treasure our gumboot win now more than ever - our last comp. Save a slot for me on yr leg! xoxox **Kim Hardwick**



I know what you mean about tears.
I can't believe my eyeballs can keep replenishing the supply...

As far as anecdotes go "I could refer to her amazing skydiving skills all round with the exception of mastering the humble back somersault" always a source of amusement on the evening day tape ! We would always end Rel Week in the NT with a scrambles round that included 360 – barrel roll – back loop **Kim Hedley**



A very special woman and a great friend. May your spirit fly free now Fiona, you'll never be forgotten. -

Sara Sacchet - IPC Italy

"Forever flying. Forever loved."

Gail Bradley

Fi, You were an inspirational woman. Thank you for your guidance, mentoring, companionship in Russia and all the good jumps we had with friends. You will be missed but never

far from our minds - **Peta Holmes**

I am so sad at this tragic loss Fiona, how could this happen to you. Fly free young lady you will be forever in our hearts and souls. You were a legend in your own time and so genuine in all that you did. We will...I miss you. Jim, Roz, Pauline and so many of our skydiving mates will be waiting for you. Dr John once again my heart goes out to you in this especially sad, unbelievable time. I can appreciate how you must be feeling but you are strong as was Fiona, and you will get on with your life as Fiona would have you do. Love and hugs,

Faye Cox

Thanks for being such a big part of my life! I am so privileged to have known and loved you. Some of the memories I'll cherish forever:

*You don't know how? I'll teach you.

*Fi laughing in freefall
- often at me when I overamped an approach (several times over the years).

*My sister's face when Fi and Ellen and I opened the 4th bottle of wine. (Turns out Deb was astounded we could still speak without slurring. Practice makes perfect!).



*Shopping for those horrible pink dresses
*Fi asking for a bucket for John
*Looking at my photos, even the bad ones.

*I was happy it was you who took my slot on the POPS record when my allergies got out of control.

*Fi's ability to encourage everyone. Her belief in me bolstered my belief in myself.

*She liked the saying about gaffa tape/WD40 too.

*The way her eyes light up when telling stories about her and John.

*One line email messages

*The Coven. Rats. Hugs. Narelle. Bubbles. Stray eyebrow hairs. Smiles. Love. Laughs. **Cheryl Robertson**



Like so many, I was fortunate enough to be exposed to Fiona's smiling advice from an early age. Over time, I continued to be amazed at not just her skydiving, but her ability to articulate complex thoughts at practically any level. I cherish the times we were able to connect and share.

If I had to pick one outstanding characteristic, it would be diligence: how she ever managed to strike a balance between her work life and her skydiving - and indeed the fun we have after skydiving! - remains a source of mystery and fascination to me.

Like so many others, Lea and myself are devastated; shattered; inconsolable.

Our sport has lost not just a leading light, but a beacon: a constant, a touchstone of integrity, a moral compass.

The rest of us will just have to step up. **Luke Oliver**

He gave one last look across the sky, across that magnificent silver land where he had learned so much.

"I'm ready" he said at last.

And Jonathan Livingston Seagull rose with the two starbright gulls to disappear into a perfect dark sky.



I did not know Fiona closely but she was always there. Giving a friendly smile and asking how things were going. Giving helpful advice along the way to help with my jumping and other things.

Gretta Menzies

Please add my thoughts to the many and my sympathy to Dr John,

I did a 16 way camp in 2000 run by Fiona a week after getting my B'rels and remember clearly the awareness and need for procedure she installed in all those lucky enough to be coached by her.

This truly is one of the saddest losses.

Craig Wallace

To our Aussie Brothers and Sisters,

Please know that you are all in our thoughts, hearts and prayers. What a terrible loss. We are so glad to have in our heads the wonderful memory of sharing the Aussie record event with all of you and Fiona. An absolutely terrific lady that will be missed by skydivers across the globe. Truly one of a kind. There may be thousands of miles separating us but we are crying with you right now.

Wishing you all the best. Stay safe,

Dan, Tony, Kate, Jen, Mel and all of P3 and Skydive Perris

I have been a skydiver for 38 years and lost friends to the sport during those years - yet Fiona's death has devastated me - we have a world family in mourning.

Susan





I am attaching a photo of a very happy Fiona, taken at the party at the end of the WC in Menzelinsk, Russia 2010 - having completed, successfully, the job of FAI Controller with her usual quiet efficiency she finally allowed herself a drink! "Thank you for allowing me to call you a friend, life will never be quite the same without you - but thanks for all the good memories."

Susan Dixon, France.

Can't talk about this. I am too numb, shocked, disbelieving. Can't come to the service, I am so sorry I cannot. My thoughts with you and all who loved her. Proud to be numbered one of them.

Gail Bradley

Sad day and unfortunately I can't be with you on Friday but I will be thinking about you all. Hope to see you soon and under happier circumstances.

Heather.....x



“The Sinkers”

Fiona’s Final Skydive

By

Barton Edwards, Kelly Cameron and Holly Godwin.

With Kelly’s creative naming, our extremely intermediate 4-way team was born THE SINKERS. On Saturday the 25th of September 2010 we were, on the most part, honoured to be the final skydivers to bid farewell to Fiona and her phenomenal 26 year skydiving career.

Almost immediately our team bonded together with fantastic strength under Fiona’s guidance as team coach for the NQPC championship competition. Our first jump of the day saw our stack up being blown apart on exit and just managing to get all four points completed before track, what an laugh it was.

It was truly amazing to see the excitement on Fiona’s face after landing from a quite hectic skydive compared to the smooth and powerful formation skydiving that Fiona is truly capable of. And without a moment to spare Fiona was off to share her skills and enthusiasm with an open 4-way team.

The day rolled on and it was time to dirt dive our second jump. Kelly and Bart were left scratching their heads at the points displayed on the wall for the 2nd skydive but sure enough Fiona was there



to make our skydives warm and fuzzy that morning and that's exactly what she did. And off we went, taking to the skies with great funnelling grace on exit again. With each forceful and prompting shake from Fiona we managed to remember all our points and complete the entire sequence twice. It was smiles all round as we approached track off height, our skill levels were growing already and fast!



Fiona's final skydive with the sinkers was a typical example of something very special to grace so many dropzones in Australia and internationally. That special something was Fiona's selfless attitude of putting her own high performance skydiving aside to coach, educate and inspire other skydivers from all walks of life, especially young and upcoming skydivers like THE SINKERS.

How many of us did she help to get our b-licence and starcrests completed? Certainly a fair chunk of the Australian skydiving population. Our team only had a short time with Fiona but a fantastic time. She left a positive mark on us and we will never forget those awesome skydives, never.

It is now up to us to not let this be Fiona's final skydive, Fiona will continue to skydive with us right across Australia at sunset on Saturday 2nd October, Fiona will also continue to skydive with us in the skills that she gave to every skydiver in our sport and mostly she will continue to skydive in our hearts forever!

To Fi, we wish you blue skies wherever you may be,

From THE SINKERS xo

Fly free forever, Fiona

Last minute gear checks and minds rehearsing, as we line up on jump run,
Jovial words and comforting nods as we launch in to the sun,
Living and laughing and experiencing the thrill of free-fall on our face,
All sorts of people from all walks of life, sharing a like-minded space,
We see the world in a different light from our playground way up high,
Marvelling at the visuals we spy as we play chasey through the sky

This amazing sport allows us to soar like we never thought we could,
Personal growth and a unique sense of self, shapes us for the good,
But if we were asked to ponder it all, and name the very best part,
We'd say it was the fabulous friends we now hold so close to our heart,
All those really special people we have met along the way,
Jumping buddies with kindred minds with whom we love to play,
The Coaches and Mentors who shared the knowledge and helped develop our skills,
Who inspired us and guided us and taught us all the drills

And a special lady springs to mind that epitomises the very soul of this sport,
A talented skydiver with exceptional skills, whose contributions were highly sought,
Fiona Elizabeth McEachern, an integral part of this organisation for over 26 years,
Her calming presence on any load allaying the wildest of fears,
She organised our jumps and held our hands and taught us how to fly,
She encouraged us and believed in us and she'd always let us try,
She gave her all to her chosen sport and was our ambassador all over the world,
Admired and respected by everyone she met, she was an inspiration to us all,

Director of Competitions for more than a decade, at volunteering she was never shy,
Playing a big part in the growth of the sport, Fi kept the standards high,
A mentor to many from every level, her advice was always heeded
An exceptional friend to so many people, always there for you when needed,
To Doctor John this lovely lady, was infinitely more than a wife,

He once said to me, his Fiona was, the 'pontoon of his life',
Our Fi loved a party when she brought out Narelle, going hard til morning,
As a Vet Surgeon she really excelled, animals her life's true calling,
At heart our Fiona was simply all soft, her dogs and her rats were her babies,
A truly nice person in every sense, a unique character was this lady,

And whilst our dear friend has left us early, her indomitable spirit will stay with us
always,
She lives at the heart of the skydiving world & will be setting the pace on our 4ways,
She'll be there with us on every climb out, giving us that subtle key,
And as we take up grips we'll glance across, and see a forever smiling Fi,
And as we launch the base and settle into the dive, her words will echo in our mind,
Relax boys and girls, take a deep breath and your fall rate you will find,
Approach your slot at a steady pace and make sure you dock like a feather,
Keep an eye on your height, look after your mates, and don't jump in shitty weather,
I'll be watching from the brightest rainbow, you'll see my shadow on the clouds all fluffy
white,
And tonight when you toast by that raging bonfire, I'll be the shooting stars in the night,

And if Fiona could talk to us now I feel sure that she would say, my friends no more
crying,
Charge that glass and drink to me, and keep those Fi jokes flying,
Keep it alive, keep sharing the love, keep turning points for me, together
I live in you all and I always will and through you I soar free forever,

Susan Bestock 29/09/2010



As much as we grieve in ourselves now, we offer thoughts to Fiona's husband, Dr John Athanasius Cusack – the man who captured Fiona's heart, as she captured ours.

A legend in his own right, he had the intellect, the wit and the strength to partner this fine woman through the prime of her life. A meeting with Fiona so often meant a meeting with Dr John, a bonus. As we idolise her, we know that she idolised him.

The pain and the heartbreak we all feel can be no match for that of Fiona's husband. Dr John, know that we love you, and your grief is our grief.

“The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion,
who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can
tolerate not knowing...

not healing, not curing... that is a friend who cares.”

— “Out of Solitude”, Henri Nouwen

Dr John: We are your friends, and we care.

All Skydivers around Australia are invited to unite together in memory of Fiona McEachern, by way of a memorial jump(s), to be conducted simultaneously around the Country as close to Sunset as possible Saturday October 2.

Memorial jumps are being conducted at Sydney Skydivers from 3pm and Doctor John will let Fiona fly one last time on the sunset load.

We hope that Clubs and Skydivers around the country will unite together to jump with Fiona one last time, wherever you are.

If at all possible wear pink (T-shirt, jumpsuit, anything) and carry a pink rose on the jump, to be released just before break-off. Please email photos to the office. Additionally, Fiona had a favourite Charity so for those of you who wish to make an alternative tribute, feel free to make a donation to: Mahboba's Promise

Mahboba Promise is an Australia Aid Organisation supporting women in Afganistan. A donation box is at Fiona's memorial service, or alternatively visit their website at: www.mahbobaspromise.org to make a donation.





Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of—wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark nor even eagle flew—
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

“High Flight”, John Gillespie Magee Jr.