

# My Torch Experience

*Marina Johnston*

Every morning in the daily notices at school it was announced that you could be an escort runner for the Olympics. I decided to get a form and see how I went. I filled out the form and handed it in, but to my surprise I was too young as you had to be 14 by July but I was 14 in July. I was very disappointed that I was too young and only by a month. The next day a teacher at our school named Mr Cousins came up to me and asked if I would like to be a torchbearer for the paralympics. I took the sheet home and filled it out, this time there was no age barrier this was my chance. I was ecstatic I might have a chance to be a torch runner. I had to get my roll call teacher to write what kind of person I was so that happened.

Weeks passed and I hadn't heard anything, the Olympic fever was in action everyone was so happy it was our turn to hold the Olympics. Then a letter came in the post. Yes I had been selected to be a torchbearer, I didn't think they would let me do it but they did. Then a few weeks before I was invited to a meeting (more like a welcoming) for the Paralympics it was in Blacktown. There were a few Paralympians themselves and the torch and also the mayor and other guests. That's when it hit me, yes, I was going to run with the torch.

Then I got a parcel, it was my uniform. I tried it on and it was a bit big but it still looked important. Also in the parcel were all the times of when I would run, do's and don'ts, and if I would like to buy the torch. My mind was set Yes I would! (Well mum and dad would.) When the Olympics were on, my family and I went to see the torch run at Castle Hill it was exciting and there were so many people. I was excited because in a few weeks it would be my turn. There were green and gold balloons along the street, and the Australian Flags as it was all spruced up.

My day was October 13<sup>th</sup> at about 5:30pm on the main street in Windsor. It had rained the day before so I was hoping for some good weather. I had told all my friends and family when to be there and other stuff. I arrived at the meeting point at Richmond Park and there were plenty of people dressed like I was in their uniform. I got my number: 116.

My mum and dad left me and then we all got in the bus and we were all off. We got our talk on what to do and what you should do when you got out of the bus. I was nervously excited because you don't know what you have got in store for you. I talked to some of the people who were doing the same as me and we were all very excited to be doing this.

My leg was in Windsor but my meeting place was in Richmond. Everyone was dropped off at different spots. When someone got off we would all give them a cheer and they would be excited. Soon there were not as many people on the bus because they had all gone to their parts. Soon it was my turn to get off the bus. I was so excited and couldn't wait till it was my turn to carry this special flame.

Soon I got off the bus and I got cheered off, then when I got out people came up to me and asked me questions about me and about the torch. Since I was in the main street there were plenty of people and lots of little kids who wanted to have a picture with me and them holding the torch. At this point I felt important and the centre of attention. It was weird I guess that's what popstars get too. Some people even wanted autographs.

Then I saw the man running with the torch and the motorbikes came up to where I was, I turned on the gas and then from there I knew I had only minutes till it was my turn to run. Finally the man came up to me and we hugged and then we exchanged the flame. It was alight and I started running I could hear the roar of the crowd and everyone was happy and I was smiling and waving. The car in front of me had a camera and that was a bit scary at first but I got used to it. My family and friends were watching me and cheering for me. I ran and sometimes walked and carried the flame I waved to the crowd as I passed them.

After my run I talked to my family and friends and also other people came up to me wanting to hold the torch and have their photos taken with me. I felt like a superstar!

When we made it to the celebration with heaps of people it was over but there were still plenty of people. When I got out of the car, everyone came up to me and asked questions and they wanted to hold the torch and have some photos taken with me. I had so many people come up to me I felt funny inside and hungry too. It took me ages to finish talking to everyone. Then I was on my way home. It's something that I will never forget – it's truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

### **Feel Inspired**

Paralympics, Sydney October 1<sup>st</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> 2000

By Marina Johnston

Age-14