

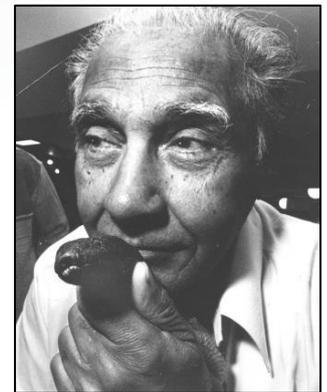
Honouring the Past – Securing the Future

The Blue River Lions Club made a donation to Mackay Community Foundation to build a secure future for the community in honour of

RAM CHANDRA (EDWARD ROYCE RAMSAMY)

Edward Royce Ramsamy was born in Lawrence, near Grafton, New South Wales, on May 24, 1921, the son of Albert Ramsamy and Josephine Suprain. After leaving Grafton High School, Ram joined the show circuit in Sydney in the early 1940s. As part of The Carnival of Eastern Wonders, he handled venomous and non-venomous snakes, gaining vast knowledge which would later prove invaluable. He purchased 20 tiger snakes which he used to perform various tricks in his act, The Pit of Death.

Ram married Nolear Barba in Mackay on November 29, 1944 and together they raised eight children as well as three adopted children. In 1946 he adopted the name Ram Chandra to continue in the show circuit all the while gathering more information and making observations about snakes. It was here the taipan, one of the world's most feared snakes, inspired Ram's natural fascination.



It was his work with Australia's most venomous snake which earned him the title of The Taipan Man. He set out to milk their venom and eventually won the recognition of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratory (CSL). The milked venom was processed using the facilities at the Mackay Sugar Research Station where it was vacuum dried and packed for CSL. In mid-1955, just three weeks after distribution of the serum, it saved the life of a Cairns schoolboy bitten by a taipan. Since then, more than 73 lives have been saved by the Laboratory including Ram's own after he was bitten repeatedly by a taipan while demonstrating to a conference of ambulance officers in 1956.

For more than 50 years, Ram was widely regarded and respected as an authority on snakes. He gave many lectures about venomous and non-venomous snakes and the life-saving treatments available for snakebite victims to the medical profession as well as interested school children and adults. Throughout his life he also raised more than \$80,000 for the Queensland Ambulance Service, about \$9000 for the Queensland Cancer Fund and many thousands of dollars for various local Lions clubs, Rotary clubs, Apex and local charities and their special projects. He was a much-loved and respected patriarch, his family recalling his incredible self-discipline and intelligence. These qualities, combined with his passion for snakes, helped him play a crucial role in the development of antivenene for snakebites and to educate the community.

In 1975 Ram was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours, was made Pioneer Shire Citizen of the Year in 1982 and was awarded the Order of the Outback in 1985. He also received the Order of Australia Medal in 1995 and was a Paul Harris fellow recipient.

Ram Chandra was a flamboyant showman who was never afraid to handle some of the most feared snake species in Australia. He devoted his life to research and education and helped play a crucial role in the development of antivenene for snakebites. Ram died in Mackay on July 31, 1998.