MEDIA RELEASE

12 August 2015

Toowoomba nurse set to hit the open road to raise awareness about depression

Mental health nurse Rob McGrigor is set to swap working on the ward with the riding on the open highway – all in the name of a good cause.

Mr McGrigor, who works at Toowoomba’s Baillie Henderson Hospital, will combine two of his passions when he joins hundreds of other motorbike riders on a week-long journey to the Red Centre as part of the Black Dog Ride to raise awareness of depression and suicide prevention.

As a Harley-Davidson motorcycle enthusiast and keen mental health support advocate, Mr McGrigor said he was looking forward to joining the collective effort to raise awareness.

“I really enjoy motorbike riding – it’s how I got my nickname ‘Highway Man’,” he said.

“My team mates are also mental health nurses and are from Brisbane – Rick is known as ‘Woodcutter’ because of his snoring, and Paul’s nickname is Miyagi as he’s like the character from the Karate Kid movie.

“I love to get out for a ride as much as I can, as much for my mental health as anything.

“Being on the bike resonates well and if you ride a Harley for a while you get a beat which is like a massage with the ‘pitata pitata’ of the bike’s movement.

“It’s very therapeutic and there’s lots of time to allow answers to questions to slowly evolve.”

Mr McGrigor has also provided mental health first aid training in the past and is a trained music therapist who works with clients from various groups including special education units, disability services, and mental health organisations.

He started the local Rainbow Choir eight years ago, and smiles as he says the choir “caters for children from seven to 90”.

“It’s a choir for all abilities and aims to reduce the invisibility of disability,” he said.

Riders from the southern part of Queensland will depart from Brisbane on Saturday 15 August, travelling to Uluru via Roma, Longreach, Winton, Mt Isa, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs.

To contribute to the fundraising campaign, go to: https://www.everydayhero.com.au/event/ridetotheredcentre2015

ends
Ride supports suicide prevention

Black Dog Ride began in 2009 as one man's ride to raise awareness of depression, developing into national suicide prevention charity involving thousands of Australian motorcycle riders who've raised over $1.8 million for mental health services, fostering mental health awareness around the country.

For seven days, hundreds of Black Dog Riders from all corners of the country hit the highways of Australia and head to the Red Centre, starting conversations around depression and suicide prevention everywhere they ride.

In 2015, proceeds from funds raised during the Black Dog Ride to the Red Centre will support Lifeline Australia's Online Crisis Support chat service and Mental Health First Aid’s Youth MHFA program in Australian secondary schools.

The statistics are frightening:

- Every year in Australia, 1,000,000 adults and 100,000 young people live with depression, 50 per cent won't seek treatment, and nearly 3,000 will take their own lives every single year.
- Australia’s suicide rate equates to one death every four hours, or nearly seven a day.
- Almost twice as many people die from suicide than in road-related deaths.
- Seventy-five per cent of all people who die from suicide are men.


Ends

Caption: Toowoomba mental health nurse Rob McGrigor is set to join 500 other motorcycle riders on his 350 kg Harley-Davidson Softail to raise awareness of depression and suicide prevention.

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