

# Media brief

## Happy Days team for Gran Fondo- 24<sup>th</sup> July 2022

### Key messages

- The team concept began as a sticker designed by Gareth Roberts in 2015, which encapsulate the words “Happy Days”, of a late and dear friend, Kyle who died by suicide. Seven years later the ‘Happy Days Stickers’, mental health and suicide awareness movement continues through stickers, t-shirts and conversation and the annual Top End Gran Fondo.
- The Happy Days team for the Top End Gran Fondo is about bringing a group of people together for a fun cycling experience, while creating awareness for suicide and mental health in the broader community and combatting the stigmas associated with suicide. The team also raise funds for two local suicide prevention and postvention charities, MATES in Construction Qld & NT and Sabrina’s Reach 4Life.
- Eight local businesses; Darwin Sheet Metal & Laser Cutting, Kitchen’s Wardrobes and Vanities, Darwin City Tattoos, Earl James & Associates Land Surveyors, Territory Memorials, Northern Stone Solution, BMD Group and Laing O’Rourke have rallied behind the cause and sponsored the cost of the jerseys in 2022.
- The jerseys were designed by local Darwin artist, B4mble. And were locally produced in Darwin by Curby’s NT.

### Media release dot points

- **Who** –Gareth Roberts and wife, Michelle O’Loughlan rallied an all abilities cycling team to ride in the Top End Gran Fondo wearing Happy Days jerseys. This is the fourth year running. Local MP and mental health advocate, Luke Gosling is also a team member participating in the 67km.
- **What** – The team is about bringing a group of people together for a fun cycling experience to raise awareness on the topic of mental health and suicide prevention, and to raise money for two local community charities, MATES in Construction and Sabrina’s Reach 4Life.

The team has 78 registered riders across all six of the Top End Gran Fondo events:

- 3km- 7 riders
- 9km- 30 riders

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- 25km- 17 riders
  - 67km- 20 riders
  - 109km- 1 riders
  - 145km- 3 riders
  - **Where** – The Precinct, Darwin Waterfront
  - **When** – Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2022, from 6.00am
  - **Why** – Suicide remains the leading cause of death for Australians aged between 15 and 44 (AIHW, 2022a).
    - 8.6 Australians die every day by suicide. That’s more than double the road toll (ABS, 2021).
    - 75% of those who take their own life are male (ABS, 2021).
    - An unknown number of Australians attempt suicide every year, with some estimates suggesting this figure may be over 65,000 (Slade et al, 2009).
    - The suicide rate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is twice that of their non-Indigenous counterparts (ABS, 2021).
    - People in rural populations are 2 times more likely to die by suicide (AIHW, 2022b).
    - LGBTIQ+ community members report having attempted suicide in the past 12 months at a rate 10 times higher than the general Australian population (Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2021; Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2020).
    - Beyond the tragic loss of the person, the impact of suicide deaths are felt by up to 135 people, including family members, work colleagues, friends, first responders at the time of death (Cerel et al, 2019).
    - Males aged 85 and older experience the highest age-specific rate of suicide (AIHW, 2022).
    - An estimated 1 in 3 of Australians reported feeling lonely (AIHW, 2021).

## **Background of Happy Days Stickers**

Happy Days Stickers were founded in Darwin, Australia in honour of a great mate Kyle, who like many others died by suicide. The stickers are created by Gareth/@edward.art, and were first made available at Gareth’s second solo art exhibition, ‘Happy Days’ in November 2015.

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The art exhibition was a tribute to Kyle who's saying to life was 'Happy Days'. The exhibition also raised money for mental health charity LIVIN.

Approximately about 19,000 stickers have been circulating since! The stickers are a conversation starter and have been handed out at pubs, music festivals and on travels. Often people pause and share their story. Sadly most people have a story, that relates to suicide. The stickers have been shared all around the world, Europe, Asia and America.

## **About Mates in Construction**

MATES in Construction is a research-based industry backed, suicide prevention program established in 2008.

MATES in Construction, provides suicide prevention through community development programs on sites, that encourage workers to offer help to a mate if they see them doing it tough or see changes in them. MATES also offers case management and a 24/7 help line.

The MATES program is based on the idea that suicide is everyone's business, and the entire construction industry can play a part.

This charity organisation has been supporting Territorians for many years but since February 2019 has had a dedicated local Field Officer and Case Manager. MATES in Construction delivers a number of training programs on site. These programs are aimed at:

- Raising awareness about suicide in the workplace
- Making it easy to access help
- Ensuring that the help offered is practical, professional and appropriate

## **About Sabrina's Reach 4Life**

Sabrina's Reach 4Life are a Darwin charity committed and passionate about systemic change in suicide prevention. They are committed to advocate for those bereaved by suicide and have forged strong collaborative partnerships to advance suicide prevention to help reduce loss of life and trauma in our community.

In 2019, SR4L established the first suicide bereavement support group in Darwin, the Bereaved by Suicide Support Group NT (BSSGNT). The experience of grief due to suicide is unique and can, at times, be difficult for others without personal experience to understand.

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The peer led support group provides an invaluable network of support, friendship and information.

Relying on volunteers SR4L organise many community events and campaigns to increase awareness of suicide. This includes the annual World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) event which fosters cross sector collaboration. SR4L is also a Darwin Suicide Prevention Network within Wesley Lifeforce and are involved in an advisory capacity in local and national forums such as Suicide Prevention Australia, Postvention Australia, StandBy Support after Suicide and Roses in the Ocean.

SR4L's fundraising and partnerships also fund a psychology scholarship at Charles Darwin University. The scholarship supports local talent to increase the pool of professionals who can provide support to those in need in our community who experience distress, suffer from anxiety, depression or trauma.