



SIMON HUMPHRIES

On the road towards improved mental fitness and zero suicides

From Monday, 18 April to Friday 22 April, a road trip branded 'Mateship Miles' was held to reach out to communities in regional Victoria, regional NSW and the ACT. The trip started in Shepparton, moving to Wagga Wagga, then Canberra, onto Nowra, and finished up in Wollongong, south of Sydney. Mateship Miles was an initiative developed between Gus Worland, founder of Gotcha4Life, Australia's leading not-for-profit mental fitness foundation and the host of Channel 9's *Today Show*, Karl Stefanovic. The goal: promote improved mental fitness through meaningful conversations, leading towards zero suicides. Gus advised me that every day nine Australians, consisting of seven men and two women, don't wake up the next morning due to suicide, more than 3,300 each year. On top of that alarming statistic, each year there are over 65,000 attempts made. Gus Worland and his team are passionate advocates for assisting people from all walks of life with simple tools and techniques that build 'emotional muscle' and lead to strong mental fitness, through presentations, workshops and training programs in schools, sports clubs, community groups and businesses. Mental fitness is used to help avoid any stigma associated with the phrase 'mental health' and offers a more positive and proactive approach. Gotcha4Life

acknowledges that many Australians find it difficult to share their pain when going through difficult circumstances. Too many people internalise their worries and problems, leading to thoughts and actions that are damaging to self and others. Their mission is for everyone to have a Gotcha4Life Mate — a go-to person you can rely on and talk to about anything when times are tough, so no one worries alone. The Mateship Miles roadshow was all about taking action to build mental fitness and meaningful mateship, and social and emotional connections, ultimately inching closer to Gotcha4Life's goal of zero suicides, through the reach of the popular *Today*

show on Channel 9 and WIN TV regional stations, but also through direct contact with communities in each location. To support this great initiative, Isuzu trucks and key suppliers Service Bodies Australia, REDARC Electronics and Weber Barbeques supplied a customised Isuzu NNR 45-150 AMT Crew specifically for the road trip. This truck has a service body that is equipped with water tank, Lithium batteries able to support a full day's unplugged operation, twin DC refrigerators, a Nespresso professional coffee machine, a large screen television, two portable Weber barbeques and multiple shelves and drawers for promotional merchandise such as caps and beanies.



Simon Humphries with Karl Stefanovic.



Isuzu NNR 45-150 AMT Crew.

The truck driving and setting up duties were shared between Adam White and myself from Isuzu Australia, with the weeklong journey providing a valuable insight into the strong need to build mental fitness in communities. The good news is that the Mateship Miles week generated over \$100,000 in donations for Gotcha4Life, while raffle ticket sales to win the custom build Isuzu support vehicle (in a draw scheduled for October) are on target to at least double that amount. All proceeds fund Gotcha4Life's programs that engage, educate and empower Australians to end suicide. The building of the Isuzu support vehicle represents the beginning of a formal partnership between Isuzu Australia and Gotcha4Life, with an aim to take the message to where it is needed within the transport/logistics and truck driver demographics. Isuzu and Gotcha4Life are now exploring how we can extend the partnership to continue to spread the positive message of mental fitness to the communities we serve around Australia, including our diverse truck dealer network. This partnership is principally about giving back to the community and customer base we serve; it represents us getting involved meaningfully in a cause that is a perfect fit with our corporate and personal values. In September 2021, in

the midst of the long lockdown in, Gus Worland spoke online to our entire staff on 'R U OK? Day'. The message was simple but profound, and really struck a chord with many of the staff of Isuzu Australia. We needed to hear a positive message that had us thinking about our own mental fitness, but also those near and dear to us. Isuzu espouses a core value of being a 'people first' company – in fact this is number one in our company values. So, in all circumstances, we can appreciate that the mental fitness of our staff is important, and we need to take appropriate measures to work on that. Otherwise, how can we effectively support and serve our dealers and customers? The Transport and Logistics industry, and especially its population of drivers and other equipment operators, is a male-dominated industry with a need to hear and apply the simple messages and tools that Gotcha4Life provides. If our combined efforts save just one life, then it has been worth it, however I am confident that we can actively and consistently contribute to a significant reduction in the suicide rate in our industry and local communities. In conclusion, I ask the simple question: How mentally fit are you? Do you have a 'village' of a few close friends –

Gotcha4Life Mates – and relatives that have your back and you can reach out to in times of trouble? If you do, then Gotcha4Life can assist with training in their programs that will enhance this connection you already have. If you struggle to think of someone that you could share your innermost thoughts with, then Gotcha4Life has a growing team of Community Champions that can get alongside you and help. I encourage members of our transport, logistics and trucking communities to contact Gotcha4Life to arrange a workshop, presentation, training session or other potentially life-changing event in your area. Please follow the link: <https://www.gotcha4life.org/> Alternatively, you can help fund this wonderful cause by donation, or by purchasing a ticket to enter the draw to win the customised Isuzu NNR 45-150 AMT CREW truck with all of its equipment. Please follow the link here: <https://www.raffletix.com.au/gotcha4lifeisuzuraffle>. The truck, it's body and all equipment has been donated by the suppliers, and all proceeds will go to further the great work of Gotcha4Life Foundation.

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