



KEY MESSAGES

- A group of former and current serving first responders, and their families, are walking from the geographical centre of Australia to Parliament House in Canberra to raise funds for research and services that support Australia's everyday heroes.
- The Heart 2 Heart Walk is a 2,600km charity walk linking Lambert Centre of Australia in the Northern Territory (Heart of Country) to Australia's Parliament House in Canberra (Heart of Nation) aiming to draw attention to challenges around First Responder mental health and wellbeing.
- First responders are twice as likely to report suicidal thoughts, three times more likely to have a plan for completion, and six times more likely to experience symptoms of PTSD.
- Despite these shocking figures, there has been little or no progress to any of the recommendations from the 2019 Australian Senate Inquiry into first responder suicide, PTSD, and premature mortality.
- Urgent action needed on 2019 Senate Inquiry into First Responder mental health.
- The Walk is a call for action on these recommendations, including a national action plan on First Responder mental health, a national register of health professionals who specialise in First Responder mental health, and mental health support services for retired First Responders.
- Walkers undertaking the long-distance journey will depart from the Northern Territory on 1 July 2023 and arrive at Parliament House on 28 September 2023.

SUPPORTING POINTS

- Compared to everyday Australians, First Responders are:
 - Twice as likely to report suicidal thoughts and three times more likely to have a plan for completion,
 - Six times more likely to experience symptoms of PTSD (for those who had worked more than 10 years in role).

Source: Beyond Blue's [Answering the call](#) report
- To date, there has been little or no progress to any of the recommendations from the 2019 Australian Senate Inquiry Report into First Responder suicide, PTSD, and premature mortality – [“The people behind 000: mental health of our first responders”](#).

USABLE SLOGANS / QUOTES

- **PROTECT THOSE WHO PROTECT US** [signifying police and law enforcement officers]
- **SAVE THOSE WHO SAVE US** [signifying fire and rescue personnel and volunteer firefighters]
- **CARE FOR THOSE WHO CARE FOR US** [signifying paramedic and frontline healthcare workers]
- **RESCUE THOSE WHO RESCUE US** [signifying state emergency service volunteers]
- Chair of the Heart 2 Heart Foundation, Vince Pannell APM, said: “The Heart 2 Heart journey is more than just a walk; it’s our commitment to fighting for better mental health services for all Australian first responders and their families. We need to ensure these ordinary people, who do extraordinary things protecting, saving, caring and rescuing the community, day in day out, receive the support they need.”



- The Heart 2 Heart Walk's first Platinum Sponsor is Police Bank, who have been part of getting this walk to reality from the start, providing the original seed funding last year. Another recent Platinum Sponsor is The Australian Federal Police Association, who continue to provide strong support to the walk planning group. Gold Sponsors include Diverse Training Concepts, Raytheon Australia, Chelsea Wealth, Holan Group, ACT Emergency Services Authority. Silver Sponsors include the NT Police Association, Australian Paramedics Association.
- CEO of Police Bank, Greg McKenna, said: "As a member-owned bank, part of Police Bank's purpose is to give back to our community and there really isn't a more important cause than supporting the mental health of our first responders. We're proud to be the major sponsor of the Heart 2 Heart Walk, working to achieve better outcomes for our police, paramedics, firies, and frontline emergency services."

BACKGROUND

The Heart 2 Heart Walk is a long-distance pursuit linking Lambert Centre of Australia in the Northern Territory (Heart of Country) to Australia's Parliament House in Canberra (Heart of Nation), aiming to draw attention to challenges around first responder mental health and wellbeing.

Initially conceived by AFP Detective Sergeant Vince Pannell, who visited the Lambert site while deployed to AFP Operation PROTECT, in the Northern Territory. The planning group and walkers are made up of various current serving and former First Responders who have served, in New South Wales, Victoria, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, as well as across the country and overseas.

The Heart 2 Heart Foundation is the registered charity behind the Walk, and was subsequently formed to also allow the raising of vital funds throughout the journey, in order to:

- undertake academic research to obtain empirical evidence into the impacts upon serving and retired first responder mental health and wellbeing to devise strategies to deal with same; and,
- explore and provide meaningful and positive education opportunities for first responders, past and present, and their families, to better support them all.

The Foundation charity was officially launched on 14 February 2023 at a special event hosted by Senator David Pockock, at Parliament House. In a bi-partisan approach, this was supported by Senators; Anne Urquart and Jacqui Lambie, and received official letters of support from Federal Members; Angie Bell and Andrew Willcox. Keynote speakers at the launch event, included Senator Anne Urquart, Attorney General The Hon. Mark Dreyfuss KC MP, Admiral (Ret'd) Chris Barrie AC, Allan Sparkes CV OAM, and Professor Nicole Sadler AM CSC.

For further information or to register interest as a walker or sponsor, please visit www.heart2heartwalk.org

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