

**MEDIA RELEASE
DECEMBER 2014**

Wounded Mates to face the Strait for the epic Sydney to Hobart challenge

A new group of serving and former Australian soldiers will take on one of the most gruelling long ocean yacht races in the world as part of their rehabilitation and to raise awareness of the challenges facing young service men and women and money for Mates4Mates.

It's only the second time in the 70 year history of the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race a serious challenger – the Volvo Ocean 60 *Spirit of Mateship* - will be crewed by wounded, injured and ill Australian current and ex-Defence members.

The *Spirit of Mateship* and its unique crew captured the imagination of Australia last year when it first entered the blue water classic after the yacht was launched by Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

Skipped by nine-time Rolex Sydney Hobart veteran, Brisbane's Russell McCart and with the help of several experienced yachtsmen the pocket maxi went on to win in its division.

2014 will be the first time this group of Mates from Mates4Mates will compete in the prestigious race as part of the not-for-profit's broader sailing rehabilitation program.

One of the Mates in the crew includes 35 year old former infantry soldier James Prascevic from Lorne in Victoria, who struggled with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after his 10 year service with the Australian Army including deployments to Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I wanted to be involved in the 628 nautical mile course last year but wasn't mentally ready for the challenge then," Mr Prascevic said.

"I've since pushed myself and taken on other sailing programs with Mates4Mates and I'm definitely ready now.

"Before Mate4Mates I could barely leave the house. Now I'm flying around the country challenging myself again.

"Eventually I want to sail non-stop around the world single handily to raise awareness for PTSD and depression."

Joining James is Craig Hansen from Two Wells in South Australia who suffered horrific injuries when his vehicle ran over a roadside bomb while he was on deployment in Afghanistan in 2008.

The 39 year old father of three who has endured fourteen surgeries since being injured and said he's only just starting to get his life back on track.

"Being involved on the *Spirit of Mateship* has been hard work and rewarding," Mr Hansen said.

"It has mentally and physically taken me out of my comfort zone where I haven't been in the past few years since I was wounded.

“It’s hard to explain but it’s rewarding to know I can do an arduous activity in a different kind of environment than that I was once used to.”

Ross ‘Mac’ McIntosh from Kingaroy in Queensland who also suffers from PTSD from his fifteen year service with the Australian Army said he knew for the sake of his family he had to challenge himself again.

“I’m not thrilled about the situation I have found myself in, it is a stark contrast to the soldier I was and accepting that is an ongoing process,” Mr McIntosh said.

“I haven’t been the easiest person to live with for a very long time but that’s changed since I became involved with Mates4Mates.

“For example, the sailing challenge has shown me an outlet for my aggression that is a positive thing; the harder you pull the halyard the faster the sail goes up.

“I am absolutely stoked but terrified to be included in this year’s Sydney to Hobart challenge; the *Spirit of Mateship* crew are solid blokes and I’d happily follow them anywhere.”

Mates4Mates Chairman Peter Davies said the charity’s sailing program is designed to introduce people to sailing at one end of the spectrum, right up to stretching participants to their limits in a positive environment by providing motivation, hardship, uncertainty and by building trust with fellow mates. Wherever it is on the spectrum for each individual, it is designed to support their recovery.

“While activities like this are priceless for those taking part, they do come at a significant cost to the organisation,” Mr Davies said.

“Mates4Mates receives no government funding and relies heavily on the generosity and support of individuals, communities and businesses to provide unshakeable support for these remarkable men and women.

“We want to challenge Australia’s corporate community to get behind our Brave Mates and be a sponsor for the *Spirit of Mateship* and our sailing challenges.

“The community can also get involved by donating via to the Brave Mates via the Everyday Hero fundraising site.”

www.everydayhero.com.au/event/mates4matessydneytohobartyachtraceadventurechallenge2014

About Mates4Mates

- Mates4Mates is a not for profit charity initiated by RSL (Queensland Branch) which provides support to wounded, injured or ill current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and their families.
- Mates4Mates is designed to complement and enhance the capability of the ADF to support their current and ex-serving personnel and their families.
- Mates4Mates is an independent, apolitical and non-religious organisation offering services like physical rehabilitation, psychological services, counselling, career coaching and adventure challenges.
- Mates4Mates harnesses the strength of an iconic Australian trait – mateship - to help them rebuild their life skills and emotional resilience.



Unbreakable bonds.
Unshakeable support.

Website

www.mates4mates.org

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Mates4Mates>

Twitter

[@Mates4Mates](https://twitter.com/Mates4Mates)

FAST FACTS - Spirit of Mateship

Make - Volvo Ocean 60

Designer – Laurie Davidson

Builder – Cooksons, NZ

Construction – Kevlar composite

LOA - 19.46 mt. (65 ft.)

Beam - 5.25

Draft - 3.96



- Built using SP unidirectional reinforcements and a wet-preg process, where resins are at an unprecedented level of accuracy in the construction i.e. almost no fairing compound needs to be used.
- Competed in the 2001-02 Volvo Ocean Race under the Norwegian flag.
- Bought in 2012 by yachtsman Andrew Wenham, relocated to Australia and renamed Southern Excellence.
- Extensively refurbished and had significant success in a number of blue water classics including the 2012 Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race.
- Bought by RSL (Queensland Branch) in 2013 and renamed *Spirit of Mateship*.
- 22nd in line honours and first in PHS Division 1 in 2013 Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race.
- The *Spirit of Mateship* has also competed in:
 - Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race 2014
 - Brisbane to Keppel Yacht Race 2014
 - Hamilton Island Race Week 2014
 - Magnetic Island Race Week 2014

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