

MEDIA RELEASE
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Wounded diggers set sail for Hobart on *Spirit of Mateship*

After months of training, the Mates4Mates crew are primed and ready to take on the big boys and high seas in the challenging Rolex Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race on Boxing Day.

For the first time in the blue-water classic's 69 year history a group of past and present military personnel are racing their own yacht - a Volvo Ocean 60 *Spirit of Mateship*.

The specialist racing yacht was bought by RSL (Queensland Branch) to provide sailing rehabilitation programs for wounded, injured and ill defence personnel through the charitable organisation Mates4Mates.

Mates4Mates COO Michael Quinn said the investment in the boat had already proved its worth with signs of progress in their crew.

"Giving our brave men and women a chance to train and participate in this life changing event is a way to help them on their journey to recoup their confidence, rebuild their lives and recover from physical and psychological issues unique to those who have served in the military," Mr Quinn said.

"Our people have faced some very large challenges and adversity before and they've trained hard so they're ready for Bass Straight.

"The crew are also used to a bit of stiff competition so any rival should be looking over their shoulder for a hungry 65 footer with 'Mates4Mates' emblazoned on the mainsail."

One of the 'Brave Mates' former Navy and Army veteran Craig McCarthy said crewing the 'pocket maxi rocket' was a huge change from serving on warships and jumping out of planes.

"I was a competitive sailor as a kid and this is a great opportunity to revisit something I love, and restore my spirits after the rigors of military service," Mr McCarthy said.

"Just training on the *Spirit of Mateship* has given everyone a boost and now we're raring and ready to go.

"Bring on Bass Straight."

Eight mates will join ten volunteer experienced crew under the command of eight time Sydney to Hobart skipper Russell McCart. Mr McCart has been responsible for moulding the crew into a cohesive outfit and he and the team have a strong Tassie finish firmly in their sights.

"Military people make a great crew, they're disciplined and know how to take orders and understand instructions," Mr McCart said.

"With the help of the experienced blokes, they've formed into a pretty tight unit. I'm very proud of them. All Australia should be."

The VO 60 was purchased by RSL (Queensland Branch) earlier this year, renamed *Spirit of Mateship* and given a serious makeover including new paint, refitting, livery and a new sail wardrobe.

Mates4Mates is a charitable organisation initiated by RSL (Queensland Branch) to provide support to wounded, injured and ill current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and their families.

As well as a program of adventure challenges, Mates4Mates provides health care and welfare including confidential counselling, physical rehabilitation, employment support and mentorship.

For more information visit www.mates4mates.org or www.facebook.com/Mates4Mates.

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Interviews can be scheduled prior to the start and during the race. If you're interested in crosses during the race please contact Sequel.

Talent available: *Spirit of Mateship* crew – veteran Craig McCarthy, Lance Corporal Prue Sanson and former Navy Commander Terry Slader
 Spirit of Mateship project boat manager - Peter Huybers
 Spirit of Mateship skipper – Russell McCart