

MEDIA RELEASE
7 May 2014

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST DEFENCE FAMILY RECOVERY CENTRE OPENS IN TOWNSVILLE

Victoria Cross recipient Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith has joined current and ex-service personnel to officially open Townsville's first off-base Family Recovery Centre for wounded, injured and ill Defence personnel and their families.

Set up by RSL (Queensland Branch), the Mates4Mates Family Recovery Centre is only the second in the nation to provide a range of services including physical rehabilitation, counselling, mentoring, employment support, and adventure challenges.

Cpl Roberts-Smith, a former Australian combat soldier who received the Victoria Cross for his service in Afghanistan, said the centre had opened at the right time.

"Now that our Defence men and women are home from Afghanistan, many need our support more than ever," he said.

"We don't want them suffering in silence with problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder, which can be treated and overcome.

"Mates4Mates Townsville offers a safe place to heal and grow, learn and reconnect with families and friends."

Mates4Mates Chairman Peter Davies said Townsville was a logical choice for the organisation's second Family Recovery Centre.

"About 7,500 ADF personnel are based here and most are under 30," Mr Davies said.

"If you include veterans and families, there are a lot of people in the Defence community who call Townsville home."

Mr Davies said the number of people seeking Mates4Mates' help had grown 600 per cent since the first Family Recovery Centre opened in Brisbane a year ago.

"We now have 176 veterans and serving personnel involved as Brave Mates," he said.

"We expect that demand to be just as strong, if not more so, in northern Queensland.

"There is an urgent need nationwide for the services we provide.

"We want to be able to help everyone who comes through our doors but we need business and community donors to make that happen.

"It is not acceptable for us to turn away anyone seeking to rebuild their life after serving our country."

Former soldier Paul Warren who was injured when a bomb exploded killing his colleague Private Ben Ranaudo in Afghanistan in 2009 said the Townsville Family Recovery Centre would help a lot of people in the ADF community.



“I had a lot of dark days after Afghanistan,” he said.

“After surgery on my leg I was addicted to pain killers and I went into a deep depression. I couldn’t deal with what was going on.

“It was family and mates that got me through those tough times. As a former muay thai boxing champion they got me back into the gym, which is one of the things Mates4Mates encourages.”

The Mates4Mates Townsville Recovery Centre is on the site of the former sport and trampolining warehouse at Anne Street, Aitkenvale.

ABOUT MATES4MATES

Mates4Mates (M4M) is a charitable organisation launched by RSL (Queensland Branch) in March 2013.

Based at the Family Recovery Centre in Brisbane, M4M provides services and programs to support the physical and psychological rehabilitation of wounded, injured and ill Australian Defence personnel, and their families.

M4M services include holistic welfare and treatment programs, accommodation support, career counseling and financial support by way of travelling and living allowances.

M4M services are provided in a warm, welcoming environment amongst ‘mates’ who have shared experiences that only other military personnel would understand.

M4M programs also assist family and friends to understand and address the challenges facing many Defence personnel in transitioning out of a combat situation and into a fulfilling civilian life.

Website - www.mates4mates.org

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

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

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