



POLICE ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Monday, 8 August 2016

Step forward: Suicide Prevention & Awareness Walk

Senior Constable (SC) Stuart Churchill with the support of Lifeline Broken Hill is walking from Menindee to Broken Hill to raise awareness for suicide prevention.

The walk is about reaching out to those suffering in silence and to raise awareness of mental health. The Broken Hill police officer took part in a walk for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) last year walking from Newcastle to the Sydney CBD to highlight police suffering PTSD in the line of duty.

SC Churchill said, "This year the walk is for everyone that is or has suffered. Raising awareness will hopefully encourage more people who are suffering to put their hand up for help and to know they are not alone. I'm walking for myself, family and friends who are suffering and to help bring hope to those affected by suicide and mental health conditions.

"Together we can change the conversation about mental health and put a stop to this tragic loss of life. This walk is a reminder that anyone can experience a mental illness and this not only affects the sufferer, but also impacts on loved ones, family and friends.

"There's a misconception that talking about your problems is weak, when really it's the exact opposite — it takes an incredibly brave person to say, "I'm hurting."

"Fear of mental illness and societal judgement takes a heavy toll not only on those suffering but also impacts family members. It's important to keep the conversation going so we can all destigmatise a public health issue that has claimed too many lives. Perhaps then people struggling with suicidal thoughts might find it easier to speak to someone about it."

Walk details photo/filming opportunities:

9.30am, Tuesday 16 August - stepping off from Menindee Central School escorted by students & local rugby league players and supported by Country Rugby League. During the walk and in recognition of the water crisis which is expected to see Broken Hill run out of water by April 2017 as the Murray and Darling Rivers dry up, Stuart will be walking past the rivers impacted.

11:30am, Friday 19 August - Members of the community who wish to participate are invited to meet at the corner of Oxide and Crystal Streets, Broken Hill. From here Stuart along with other walkers will be escorted by Harley Davidson riders and a wreath laid at the front of the police station in memory of the fallen.

The walk concludes at Lions Park Reserve, Corner of Blende St & Bromide St Broken Hill, balloons will be released and a prayer led by a local minister. There will also be a BBQ.

Anyone is welcome to join SC Churchill during his walk, whether it be walking, or as part of the support crew. Donations can be made to Lifeline Broken Hill, on (08) 8087 7525 or at 194 Argent St, Broken Hill.

Stuart Churchill was with the Australian Federal Police for four years and has been with the NSW Police Force for 14 years. He suffered PTSD after a series of stressful events. He was involved in the Malcolm Naden manhunt as the officer that held him at gunpoint in March 2012, and then attended three fatal accidents within three weeks. He has been working in Broken Hill for over 12 months and is now doing well, but hopes to encourage PTSD sufferers to talk about their struggle and to let sufferers know they're not alone.

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PRESS RELEASE