

MATES

STRONGER TOGETHER

Vol 2 2021 Edition



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24/7 Helpline **1300 642 111** mates.org.au

This issue...

It's fair to say that 2021 has been a tough year for many. Now more than ever, the importance of the MATES Program and what it means to be Stronger Together, couldn't ring more true.

However, this year's Fly the Flag Day was one of the biggest ever. A big thanks to the 159,145 workers on 836 Construction, Mining and Energy

Sites across Australia who made a point to check in on their mates and celebrate the work that our industries, Connector and ASIST volunteers do every day toward improving mental health and suicide prevention. A few of those volunteers also gave us feedback that inspired FtF Day's renovation – new annual flags, video resources and kicking off the MATES Merch Store which will be ramped up in 2022.

This Stronger Together edition covers worker stories and experiences and how they use MATES in their every day routines.

Remember if you or your mate is struggling, talk to a Connector or call MATES 24/7 Helpline on 1300 642 111.



FIRST RESPONDERS

■ Suzanne Desailly: General Manager, MATES in Mining & MATES in Energy

MATES in Mining attended the Northern Australia Emergency Response Competition (NAERC) earlier in the year in Darwin. Mining companies from across Northern Australia had the opportunity to test their world-leading rescue skills under the pressures of real-life emergency situations.

Held at Charles Darwin University, NAERC promoted safety and emergency response training and the importance of emergency response

preparedness within the larger community. With simulated firefighting, first aid, rescue from heights, breathing apparatus skills, underground search and rescue, hazardous materials and road accident rescue scenarios taking place, MATES in Mining got a chance to see some of Australia's best mine rescue teams in action.

The competition motto is 'The minute saved through practice, could be the minute needed to save a life'. This was the 10th year the competition, which plays an integral part in emergency response training to benefit the whole community, was hosted by

the Minerals Council of Australia's Northern Territory Division.

MATES in Mining was thrilled to actively participate in the event this year, recognising that mental health and wellbeing is just as important as people's physical health. This year we presented our "Stronger Together" Award – awarded to the team who throughout the competition proactively demonstrated their commitment to looking out for the mental health & wellbeing of their fellow team members and their fellow competitors. The award was presented to the team from Newmont Tanami.

DYFA DIGGING DEEP FOR MATES

It was no walk to the letter box! In late May, six of the intrepid team at Sunshine Coast's DYFA Plumbing commenced pounding the pavement for the DYFA Goggins' Run Challenge, a grueling test of both physical and mental endurance devised by its namesake - ultramarathon runner and retired Navy SEAL, David Goggins. It was the American who first coined the challenge which entails running 4 miles every 4 hours for 48 hours. For the more metrically inclined, that's 6.5km, 12 times across a 48-hour period, and totaling 78kms!

It was all about testing their limits, coming together, and raising funds for MATES in Construction, says DYFA Director, Dylan Fahey.

"As a team, we always like to find new ways to challenge ourselves. At the start of the year, one of the team said "I'm gonna do this Goggin's run challenge this year." From there, we

all just got behind it and went, "Well, if you're going to do it, I'm going to do it. Next thing, we're all gonna do it. That's how it started," Dylan said.

With a new dream hatched, the DYFA team set about preparations for the enormous challenge at their feet. The boys ran both individually and together near daily for five months. Even smoko breaks became opportunity to stretch the legs and bank a few more miles; preparations that would come to the fore when the real action commenced.

"Preparations were just all about helping us to get used to our bodies being super tired, but still being able to wake up in the middle of the night ready to go," Dylan said.

"It definitely taxed our bodies big time. Especially the knees and feet covered in blisters, and the lack of sleep," he said.

Logistics for the run also required considerable planning. A house leased at Twin Waters served as DYFA HQ for the weekend, replete with ice bath, and fridge stocked to the brim with food to help power the team according to a robust nutrition plan. The team were ready for the enormous task ahead.

The team ran through each 4-mile set in approximately 45 mins, allowing little time for sleep.

Each runner gained only six or so hours sleep over the 48-hour duration of the challenge. Pain and fatigue continued to mount, but Dylan says it was the team itself that pulled each other towards achieving their goal.

"Even though everyone was experiencing their own personal pain and struggles, running with the group of guys made for a really supportive environment. There was no whining. We all kept it super positive and were all there to pump each other up and provide encouragement the whole way," he said.

"For me, that was the most appealing and important part of this challenge and has a lot to do with why we chose MATES in Construction as our charity for fundraising. The MATES program is all about mates looking after mates. The idea that we're stronger when we stick together. Running with the boys gave this same sense of strength. If anyone felt a bit down in the dumps, or physically sore or whatever, we knew that we were all in the challenge together and would find a way to help push each other along," Dylan said.

"I've seen firsthand the effects that suicide has on people in our industry, and how prevalent mental health issues are in our industry."

"At the end of the day, we were able to raise around \$24K for MATES. I'm so proud of the whole team for getting through the challenge, and big thanks to everyone who supported us on this journey!"





CONNECTORS OUT WEST

■ Interviews by Damien McVeigh, MATES WA Field Officer

Dean Brooker – HSR – Probuild

“I first got involved with MATES in 2017 and did my first GAT in 2018, but I was always aware of the work MATES do as a union member and seeing the CFMEU’s support for them. When I first met one of the MATES Field Officers on site, working as a HSR for Probuild on the NV Apartments project in Perth’s CBD, we talked about construction, footy, boxing, fishing, helping our MATES and I realised I really wanted to help the people around me out.

I realised after my very first GAT that we all have our part to play in reducing the suicide rate within our industry. That’s why I was relentless in organizing GAT’s and Connectors on site to help those who may be struggling with any issues. Sometimes this upset a few subbies but I have always had

the workers best interests at heart, so I was happy to go to war with the odd subbie.

I have been through both the Connector and ASIST training and the experience has been really rewarding in trying to help reduce the suicide rate in our industry. It is even more satisfying when someone thanks you for helping them and you had a part in doing that.”

It’s satisfying when someone thanks you for helping them.

“I have a few big claims I can make by working with MATES – I was the first ever winner of the MATES WA Individual Leadership award in 2018 and I also was able to get close to 400 on the road to grab a snap for the Fly The Flag!”

Luke Slymes – Leading Hand scaffolder – Scorpion Scaffolding

“I have been extremely fortunate, and some would say really lucky, but MATES has been part of my life since they first kicked off in WA. My very first GAT session was on the Multiplex Fiona Stanley Hospital project in 2012. After sitting through that session it really moved me and had a positive impact on me as a person and as a construction worker.”

I never want a brother or sister to struggle.

“I am such a typical blokey bloke who has been in the industry for such a long time, I thought I had to put on the macho man bravado to impress people; people used to think I was a hard nut due to my tattoos and my MMA experience. But after sitting in numerous GAT’s, I started to let my guard down and let the real me shine through. I started to show people that I have a huge heart and I never want a brother or sister to struggle and they always have me to talk to.

After becoming a Connector, I wear the green sticker with pride and I am always representing MATES anywhere I go. The whole experience of becoming a Connector for MATES has been truly enlightening and I would advise anyone who cares enough about people, like me, to get amongst it and become a Connector. And if anyone is struggling out there, never feel like you are alone – you always have people to talk to.”

Andrew and Louise Kearns – Perway Construction Services

“With over 25 combined years experience on the tools and on the ground in the construction space, we know first-hand that there are a lot of mental health and wellbeing issues with construction workers. As owners of our own construction business now and as leaders, we needed to better understand and acquire the skills to be able to effectively help with any mental health issues that we may encounter. We wanted to learn about the warning signs for complex mental health issues and to be in a position to support any potential or developing mental health problems in our team, our subcontractors and suppliers, which has also extended to our family members, friends and ourselves. Having spent years working in the commercial, residential and FIFO industry we know the hardships that construction workers come across on a daily basis.

We completed the MATES Connector training as we wanted to have effective skills to be able to talk to a person contemplating suicide, and to provide our team members with the support and help that they may need to stay safe in a crisis and connect them to a professional for help. The training did exactly this and more. It was amazing and at the same time emotional, to listen to other people’s

experiences, but the training provided by the MATES team has put us in a position that we feel confident and equipped to ask someone about suicide. We want to be able to support our family, staff or clients if they need it because unfortunately, suicide and mental ill health, impacts us all.”

Rory Buckley – Workplace Service Manager – ABN Group

“I first came in contact with MATES when I was a Site Manager for Broad in early 2013. I started doing it really tough. I wasn’t myself and had a bit of a breakdown because of what I was going through. I was very fortunate that I was surrounded by people who genuinely cared about me and were good mates. So, the guys at Broad put me in touch with MATES in Construction, and a really nice bloke who was a Field Officer for them named Shannon Barnes, came and caught up with me. We met a few more times and he put a bit of perspective to me, we sat and drank coffee and chatted about everything which was going on around me. At that time I found those conversations really helped me to unpack what I was feeling and going through and helped me a lot.

Suicide impacts us all and we all can do something about it.

From there I decided to commit my energy in any way I could, to ensure anyone doing it tough would get the same support I did. The continued training has always assured me I made the right call and spoke up. Since my initial positive interactions with MATES, I have become a massive advocate for construction workers’ mental health. I have sat through the GAT so many times I am nearly ready to deliver them myself (ha-ha!) but my first ever session was when I was a Site Manager for Broad on their Kings Square project in Perth in 2013 then I became a Connector on that project and only recently in 2020, became ASIST trained.

The construction industry is a highly transient industry; people move around and any companies I have been working with, I have continued supporting MATES and those around me. In my last few roles at Pact Construction, GN Construction and BPI (Westin Hotel Project) and now ABN Group, I practice what I preach to those who come on site. I do what I can to have the amenities clean and set up for the workers and I try my best to create an environment where if someone is doing it tough they can either speak to me or to those around them. I organize BBQ’s, toolboxes, Fly the Flag and regular MATES visits, because if I can help one person out, I have done my job. As MATES say, suicide impacts us all and we all can do something about it.”



Thinking of becoming a Connector or ASIST volunteer? Scan this code to check out upcoming MATES training events.



Reaching out to someone you think is struggling can make all the difference, so knowing how to go about it and what to expect will go a long way. It can also help break down the barriers that may stop you from acting.

Throughout October, MATES SA shared practical information about how to look out for others and offer help when needed.

Check out the full series of fact sheets and videos: <https://mates.org.au/how-to-help-a-mate>

■ Karyn Dale: Business Development Manager, MATES in Construction SA

01 BE AWARE OF OTHERS

People don't always ask for help when they are going through a tough time and often try to hide it. Fortunately, there are usually signs you can pick up on if you are aware.

Here are some ways you can be more aware of others.

- Take an interest and build a relationship with those around you.
- If someone appears sad or lonely, ask how they're going.
- Keep a special watch on anyone you think is struggling.
- Be mindful of key dates that might be difficult for someone.
- If you haven't spoken with someone for a while, reach out and check in with them.

02 BE PREPARED

Once you've noticed someone might not be travelling so well, you need to start a conversation and ask if they are OK. Here are some ways you can prepare.

- Do some mental health training.
- Think about your approach and what you're going to say.
- Consider where the best place to talk is.
- Do the research and gain knowledge on how you can support your mate in their situation

If you're unsure what to do or how best to support your mate, ask a Connector or ASIST worker for advice, or phone the MATES free 24/7 helpline 1300 642 111.

03 BE BRAVE

Starting a conversation with someone about their mental health can take a lot of courage. Self-doubt and fear of the unknown are normal reactions, but you need to find a way forward.

Here are some ways to help you be brave.

- Acknowledge and accept your feelings.
- Decide to put your mate first.
- Be prepared for rejection but don't anticipate it.
- Ask direct questions – be very clear about what you are asking.

It can be difficult for someone to admit they aren't OK, but don't be put off. Stay calm, be kind, and trust your gut on how best to respond.

04 BE PATIENT

Offering help and support to someone is not always a straightforward process and they might reject you or dismiss your offer.

One way for you to continue showing support through this process is to demonstrate patience.

This isn't always easy though, so here are a few suggestions to help you remain patient:

- Be prepared to invest some time to help.
- Don't take rejection personally – it isn't about you.
- Don't be put off – keep trying if you feel there is a problem.
- Don't be too pushy – this can cause more stress.
- Allow some space if you think it will help.

05 BE A GOOD LISTENER

When someone is going through a tough time, one of the most important things we can do to help is to listen.

Active listening is the process of listening attentively while someone else speaks, paraphrasing and reflecting on what is said, and withholding judgment and advice.

Our ability to listen effectively takes practice – here are a few suggestions:

- Listen to hear, not to respond.
- Be present in the moment and avoid distractions.
- Don't try to have all the answers or fix the situation.
- Allow the person space to talk freely.

- Avoid relating their situation to your own experiences.
- Silence isn't always a bad thing.

07 BE HELPFUL

A key to offering someone help and support is to accept who they are and how they are feeling. Being accepting means understanding others are entitled to be themselves and that they have a right to their own unique thoughts, feelings, and opinions.

This isn't always easy though especially when another person's feelings and reactions are so different to your own. Here are a few suggestions to help be more accepting:

- Try to see the situation from their perspective – put yourself in their shoes.
- Don't pass judgement.
- Avoid comparing their situation to yours or others you know.
- Accept their emotions – it's not your role to change how they feel.
- Be present in the moment and avoid distractions.
- Let them lead the discussion at their own pace.

- Avoid controlling the situation.
- Encourage and support them to find their own solutions.
- Provide options, not solutions.
- Offer to help them find the right support – they don't need to do it alone.
- Accept their decisions, even if they differ from your own.

If you're unsure what to do or how best to support your mate, ask a Connector or ASIST worker for advice, or phone the MATES free 24/7 helpline on 1300 642 111. And, as always, if you think it is an emergency, call 000.

06 BE ACCEPTING

Being a support person for someone who's going through a rough time can be draining at times, so it's essential to be kind to ourselves and focus on ways to be at our best. One way to do this is to incorporate self-care into our daily routine.

Some ideas for self-care include:

- Going for a daily walk.
- Taking regular breaks.
- Spending quality time with family and friends.
- Playing sport or doing regular exercise.
- Reading a book or listening to music.

When self-care is part of our everyday routine, we give our body and mind time to rest, rejuvenate, and become more productive and resilient.

08 BE KIND TO YOURSELF

It's not always clear how to support another person, and some approaches we think are helpful may not be. Being helpful means focusing on the person you are supporting and allowing them to tell their story and make their own decisions.

Here are some ways you can be helpful to someone in need:

- Make time for them.

If you're unsure what to do or how best to support your mate, talk to a Connector or ASIST worker, or phone the MATES 24/7 helpline 1300 642 111.

Take an interest and build a relationship with those around you.

Keep a special watch on anyone you think is struggling.

Be mindful of key dates that might be difficult for someone.

If someone appears sad or lonely, ask how they're going.

If you haven't spoken with someone for a while, reach out and check in with them.

Do some mental health training.

Think about your approach and what you're going to say.

Consider where the best place to talk is.

Do the research and gain knowledge on how you can support your mate in their situation

Acknowledge your fears and concerns and accept they are normal.

Decide to put your mate first – they're the ones who might need your help.

Be prepared for rejection (but don't anticipate it).

Stick to the plan you prepared but be willing to adapt if the situation changes.

Ask direct questions – be very clear about what you are asking.

Stay calm no matter how they react.

Trust your gut.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE: Find 11 items



Happy Christmas from all the crew at **MATES in Construction.**

This time of year can be a tough time for some, so it's also the reason to remember to **check in on your mates.**

Not sure **how to help a mate** who's doing it tough or who you can talk to if you are struggling?



MATES are available 24/7 over the Christmas period to help – call 1300 642 111