



BLACK DOG INSTITUTE



News Release

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League legend Andrew Johns to 'walk the walk' for bipolar disorder ***Six-day Newcastle to Sydney walk, 19-24 October 2008***

Rugby league legend Andrew Johns today announced he will walk and play sport from Newcastle to Sydney over six days from 19 to 24 October to raise funds for and awareness of bipolar disorder, from which he suffers.

Johns will be joined for parts of the **nib Andrew Johns Walk** by the Prime Minister, Mr Kevin Rudd, other sporting personalities and the general public, who can get involved by visiting www.nibandrewjohnswalk.com.au to donate, register to walk with Johns, or bid for the boots he wore in his final match.

During the event, Johns will also kayak, play golf, beach volleyball and cricket, and swim and surf with leading sportspeople to raise funds for The Black Dog Institute, which has supported Johns during his treatment for bipolar disorder.

The executive director of The Black Dog Institute, Professor Gordon Parker, praised Johns for his leadership and determination to help others with the serious mood disorder, which affects approximately 600,000 Australians.

"Australia leads the world in de-stigmatizing depressive and bipolar disorders by many high profile people talking about their condition," Prof Parker said.

"But, just as it is important for people to talk the talk, there are others who are prepared to walk the walk to further advance de-stigmatization of mood disorders.

"The Black Dog Institute is highly appreciative of Andrew Johns' inspirational walk and we hope that others will support him – physically and in spirit."

The Black Dog Institute is an educational, research, clinical and community-oriented facility offering specialist expertise in mood disorders - a range of disorders that include depression and bipolar disorder, formerly called 'manic depression'.

Andrew Johns said he wanted to do something to help the Black Dog Institute as Professor Gordon Parker and his team had been very supportive of him.

"Doing the walk from Newcastle to Sydney is one way of drawing attention to bipolar disorder and depression," he said.

"I hope that, as a result, lots of suffering Australians will discover a pathway to get help.

"I have kept fairly fit since retiring last year so I'm pretty confident I'll be able to handle the walk.

"I'm delighted that a company like nib, with its strong Newcastle links, has come on board as naming rights sponsor," Johns said.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd congratulated Andrew Johns for taking a leading role in supporting other Australians with bipolar disorder.

"This event is a real credit to Andrew and I hope to see many Australians out there on the road getting involved in this important walk," Mr Rudd said.

"I am really happy to be participating in the walk and I urge all Australians to get involved so we can help the Black Dog Institute continue their valuable work."

nib's managing director Mark Fitzgibbon said nib was delighted to be part of the walk, which is symbolic of the long journey Johns and many like him face when dealing with mood disorders.

"Joey always led the way on the footy field, so him undertaking such a significant cause will definitely encourage the community to sit up and take notice."

"There is no doubt the nib Andrew Johns Walk will foster a greater understanding of the prevalence of mood disorders and most importantly promote the support that's available for those suffering," Fitzgibbon said.

There are various options throughout the nib Andrew Johns Walk for the public and organisations to get actively involved.

For the same price as attending a rugby league game, people can walk 5.5km with Johns on Sunday 19 October from the Newcastle City Hall to Empire Park, where the Newcastle Knights will stage a family gala day.

Other options include walking the entire journey for a \$10,000 donation, playing in a golf day hosted by Johns, or sponsoring a corporate cricket team to play against him and his team.

A limited number of participants can also walk the final stage of the journey to the foot of the Sydney Harbour Bridge on Friday 24 October.

For full details and sponsorship options, visit www.nibandrewjohnswalk.com.au.

Other key supporters of the **nib Andrew Johns Walk** include the Channel 9/NBN Network, The Daily Telegraph, Hyundai Motors Australia and Sony BMG.

Fact sheets on bipolar disorder are available at www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

For further information and interviews with Andrew Johns or Prof Gordon Parker, please contact:

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