

Raiders' Partnership with BDI Boosts Team's

Community Engagement, Social Responsibility Efforts



Black Dog
Institute



Partner Overview

The **Canberra Raiders** are an Australian professional rugby league club based in the Australian Capital Territory.

The Raiders' goal for partnering with **Black Dog Institute (BDI)** is to tackle mental health challenges and foster a positive mental wellbeing culture for its players, supporters, and community.

“Black Dog Institute is a top organisation with the resources partners need to achieve their goals and objectives. On a practical level, our partnership manager at BDI is a skilled professional who ensures seamless communication between our two organisations. Having a dedicated point of contact has made a huge difference for us.”

Sarah Williams, Canberra Raiders



Background

“Our partnership with Black Dog Institute began in 2019 thanks to telecom giant Huawei, a then major sponsor of the Canberra Raiders, and a supporter of BDI,” said Sarah Williams, Community Program Manager, Canberra Raiders. “As part of the charity initiative, Huawei replaced its logo on the team jersey with Black Dog Institute.”

When Huawei’s sponsorship with the Raiders ended, the Club continued working with BDI.

“First, we were doing excellent work together, and we wanted to continue that,” Sarah said. “Second, the National Rugby League already had a relationship with BDI, so there was already a good fit between the rugby league community and Black Dog Institute.”

BDI and the Raiders formalised their partnership in December 2019.



Strategic Approach

The Canberra Raiders and Black Dog Institute have formed a collaborative partnership to address mental health issues.

"First, our players participate annually in Mullets for Mental Health," Sarah said. "The campaign encourages people to cut their hair into a mullet and embrace this unique hairstyle to raise funds and awareness for mental health research."

A second initiative is Mental Fitness, when Raiders players teach high school-aged kids about the importance of mental fitness alongside physical fitness. Players share their own personal mental health stories during the presentation. Afterward, students are encouraged to complete the Bite Back Mental Fitness Challenge.

"Our players are active in this challenge and are committed to promoting positive mental health among young people," Sarah said.

Finally, the partnership includes several game-day activities.

"We raise money for Black Dog through a 50/50 charity raffle and promote the partnership and mental health awareness on the big screen and with physical signage in the stadium," Sarah said.

Results

To date, the Canberra Raiders have raised nearly **\$60,000** for the Black Dog Institute.

Unlike a rugby league match, there is no loser, only winners in this partnership.

“The fact that players are so engaged in the partnership has really raised the bar on how we show our support,” Sarah said. “It’s one thing to say you support a cause, but when players are wearing BDI-branded socks on gameday and sporting mullets to raise money, it’s a much more visible and tangible way to show our support.”

According to Sarah, Black Dog has a distinct advantage over other charities because of its recognisable logo and connection to mental health.

“The Black Dog Institute logo is just so identifiable to our fans,” Sarah said. “They respect the brand and know what they do. When fans see the logo, they know we are supporting a good cause.”

The Raiders are particularly proud of the team’s efforts with the Mental Fitness presentations.

“It’s an opportunity for the team to put forward players that kids will respond and resonate well with, which is the most meaningful thing the team’s done with BDI,” Sarah said.

Partner Insights

The Canberra Raiders' advice to companies considering a nonprofit partnership is to focus on quality over quantity.

- 1. Focus on picking quality partners.** "If you try to work with too many nonprofits, you'll stretch yourself too thin," Sarah said. "Pick a couple of great organisations and build a meaningful partnership that's a win for everyone."
- 2. Don't bite off more than you can chew.** "You have to be realistic about how much you can do with even one partner," Sarah said. "That happened to us last year with the Black Dog Institute. We were just trying to do too much. This year, we're laser-focused on three or four things. We'll accomplish more by doing less, and you will too."
- 3. Enthusiasm is contagious.** "It started with getting our players engaged with the Black Dog Institute. We knew if we could get them excited and involved, it would spread to our community," Sarah said. "Your company may not have players, but you still have a team - your employees. A successful partnership starts with them."



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Want to learn more about how to partner with us? Contact us today on corporatepartners@blackdog.org.au

To find out more about Black Dog Institute or any of our programs, please visit blackdoginstitute.org.au

To find out more about Canberra Raiders, please visit dualaustralia.com.au, please visit raiders.com.au

