

MEDIA RELEASE



20 April 2016

No walk in the park for Save Our Sons team

The streets of Albury are usually deserted at 5.00am, but last Friday Olive Street was a hive of activity as a team of volunteers prepared for the official start of this year's Save Our Sons charity marathon walk to raise funds and awareness for Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), the most common form of muscular dystrophy in children.

The disease causes aggressive muscle degeneration almost exclusively in young boys and leads to the inability to walk and has a 100 per cent fatality rate.

Within hours, a group of walkers, support team and operations crew would head out on a gruelling 350 kilometre journey to Melbourne, to be covered over the next 13 days.

The team took time out for some warm-up exercises before they were waved off at 9.00am by well-wishers and Save Our Sons ambassadors, rock singer, Angry Anderson, former NRL referee, Bill Harrigan and author, Prue McSween.

The group is being led by of the charity's founder, Elie Eid, who is pushing his son, Emilio, a DMD sufferer, in a wheelchair all the way to Melbourne, where they will arrive in Federation Square on Wednesday, 27 April.

PAYCE project manager, Michael Malak has joined the fundraiser again this year after participating in last year's Sydney to Canberra walk.

Michael said he was proud to be part of this year's walk and to be representing PAYCE, who has added its corporate support to the charity fundraiser with a \$20,000 donation.

PAYCE Managing Director, Brian Boyd said it was important to raise awareness for the debilitating disease and PAYCE welcomed the opportunity to support the Save Our Sons' initiative.

'Hopefully, by raising awareness, there will be increased funds available for researching a cure so that children with this terrible disease can have a better and longer life,' he said.

"We will be thinking of Michael and the team on their travels and wish them a safe and successful journey."

The team has now been walking for six eventful days and have been overwhelmed by the support shown along the route.

Day one saw the team complete the 21 kilometre walk to Rutherglen with lots of encouragement and donations from locals and passers-by.

Next day was harder going, with much of the journey off the hard bitumen surface and on the gravel verge.

"The rough surface punctured a tyre on the Emilio's wheelchair, but fortunately we quickly had the problem sorted, with Cycle Station in Albury getting us mobile again free of charge," Michael said.

“We have been blown away with the generosity of people and their interest in learning more about the disease and generally giving us a lift with their encouragement.

“On Monday for example, we were stopped on Federation Way by the grandparents of a little boy who also suffers from DMD. They were on their way to Melbourne and were looking out for us as they wanted to say hello and pass on their best wishes for the journey.”

Michael said the team was pleased to be past the 150 kilometre mark and everyone travelling in good spirits.

“The weather has been very hot and dry and there are certainly some blisters among us, but you don’t hear any complaints. We are now into a routine and feeling no pain.

“We were pleased to have the opportunity to share Elie’s birthday with him. He is a wonderful inspiration to us all and we marvel at the effort he puts into making sure more people know about DMD.

“We are now at the end of day six and in Benalla. Yesterday’s walk had a special end to it. As we entered Violet Town, we were met by the students and teachers from the Peranbin Primary College.

“They clapped us in and presented Emilio with a cheque for \$150 and one of the girls even gave him her pocket money for the week. What a welcome!”

Save Our Sons has joined a global alliance, called the Duchenne Alliance, to take the fight against DMD worldwide.

Funding of scientific trials is coordinated and allocated by Save the Sons, based on the advice of a team of expert scientific advisors around the world to ensure which trials will produce the maximum benefit.

To donate to Save Our Sons go to www.saveoursons.org.au/donate-now.

Ends

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