



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**April 28, 2016:**

**Federation Square, Melbourne .**

### **No walk in the park for Save Our Sons team**

The Save Our Sons team of travel-weary walkers arrived at Melbourne's Federation Square this week (27 April) to a tumultuous welcome from supporters and onlookers after 13 days on the road. The team completed the 351 kilometre trek from Albury on the NSW/Victorian border, travelling mostly on country back-roads.

The Save Our Sons charity marathon walk raised 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.

This year's walk raised in excess of \$300,000 online and the charity's target of \$500,000 is close to being achieved, with a gala fundraiser dinner at the end of the week expected to boost donations.

Leading the team was Save Our Sons founder, Elie Eid, who pushed his son, Emilio, a DMD sufferer, in a wheelchair all the way to Melbourne.

The journey started in the early hours of 15 April as the team of volunteers prepared for the official start of the walk. Within hours, a group of walkers, support team and operations crew headed out on the gruelling journey to Melbourne, waved off by well-wishers and Save Our Sons ambassadors, rock singer, Angry Anderson, former NRL referee, Bill Harrigan and author, Prue McSween.

PAYCE project manager, Michael Malak, a long-time supporter of Save Our Sons, 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 currently incurable disease can have a better and longer life," he said.

"We were thinking of Michael and the team on their travels and pleased that they completed their journey safely and met their fundraising target."

PAYCE General Manager, Dominic Sullivan said the walk was an amazing test of strength and endurance.

“It was that much harder as most of the journey was on narrow country roads with rough and uneven surfaces,” he said.

“PAYCE was proud to be associated with this year’s walk and we have enjoyed following the team’s regular reports and videos of their wonderful experiences.

“Our congratulations to Elie and Emilio on completing the journey and for the wonderful work they do on behalf of families in similar circumstances.”

The team were overwhelmed by the support shown along the route, with lots of donations from passers-by and locals.

While the trip wasn’t without setbacks, they were fortunately short-lived.

“The rough surface punctured a tyre on the Emilio’s wheelchair not long into the walk, but fortunately we quickly had the problem sorted, with the local cycle shop 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 Federation Way we were stopped 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.

“The weather was very hot and dry, except for one morning of light rain and there are certainly some blisters among us, but you never heard any complaints. Once we were into our stride, we felt no pain.

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

“The community of Violet Town were amazing. We were met by the students and teachers from the Peranbin Primary College on the outskirts of town.

“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. This year’s fundraiser is also aimed at putting a clinical nurse in every main children’s hospital in the country.

To donate to Save Our Sons go to [www.saveoursons.org.au/donate-now](http://www.saveoursons.org.au/donate-now).

Ends

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