



## **MELANOMA SURVIVORS CONQUOR THEIR CHALLENGE TO WALK FROM SYDNEY TO MELBOURNE, RAISING OVER \$115,000 FOR VITAL MELANOMA RESEARCH**

Melanoma survivors and long-time friends Jay Allen and Andrew Rust will conclude their 900km walk from Sydney to Melbourne with a visit to the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, before completing their walk at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Saturday 26th July.

Mr Rust and Mr Allen have both been affected by melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, and are undertaking this challenge to raise awareness of melanoma and to raise vital funds for melanoma research for Melanoma Institute Australia.

Melanoma is the most common cancer in Australians aged 15 to 39 years and every year 12,500 new cases are diagnosed, with a person dying every six hours. Mr Rust was diagnosed with stage four melanoma 12 years ago, while Mr Allen was diagnosed with stage three melanoma 6 years ago.

Despite freezing conditions and many blisters, the pair, together with a full support crew, have been making great headway with their 16-day journey and are in fine spirits.

“When it gets tough, I think of the friends I've lost. They would have done anything to be able to have done this walk with me,” Mr Allen says. Mr Allen has lost 16 friends to melanoma in the past 6 years.

They have already raised over \$115,000 and hope to raise \$150,000 by the time they reach Melbourne after their 16-day trek. This money will contribute to a clinical trial for patients with metastatic melanoma to the brain - about 50% of all metastatic melanoma patients. Patients with brain metastases are often ineligible for clinical trials and so few therapeutic options are available to them.

This ground-breaking trial, led by world-renowned medical oncologist Associate Professor Georgina Long from Melanoma Institute Australia, will mean improved life outcomes for these patients. The goal is to get people back on their feet, spending time with their family and loved ones, and enjoying a full life, goals both Mr Allen and Mr Rust know are priceless.

“Melanoma brain metastases remain a major problem in melanoma and an unmet clinical need,” says A/Prof Long. “This is a world-first trial of new drugs that fight melanoma using the immune system in patients with growing melanoma brain metastases. It is inspiring that Jay and Andrew, melanoma survivors themselves, can raise awareness and funding for a cancer that affects so many Australians.”

This vital research will be conducted at Melanoma Institute Australia in Sydney, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne and Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane, ensuring that desperately-ill patients in these capital cities have access to the trial.

"I am inspired by the efforts of Jay and Andrew to raise awareness and vital funding for Melanoma, 'Australia's cancer'," says Professor Grant McArthur, Chair of the Melanoma and Skin Service at Peter Mac.

“We are excited about the opportunity the funding provides for us to collaborate on a world-leading clinical trial, to tackle, head-on, the biggest clinical problem in melanoma: brain metastases.”

The duo began their journey at the Melanoma Institute Australia's Poche Centre in North Sydney on July 11 and will finishing at the Melbourne Cricket Ground during the quarter-time break of the Sydney versus Hawthorn AFL match on July 26.

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#### **ABOUT MELANOMA INSTITUTE AUSTRALIA**

- Melanoma Institute Australia (MIA) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to preventing and curing melanoma through innovative research, treatment and education programs.
- Headquartered at the Poche Centre in North Sydney, it is now the world's largest melanoma research and treatment centre.
- The Poche Centre is affiliated with The University of Sydney, St Vincents and Mater Health Sydney, The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and Australian & New Zealand Melanoma Trials Group (ANZMTG).

- Melanoma Institute Australia relies on the generosity of individuals, organisations and government funding to continue its ground-breaking work into this potentially devastating cancer.
- You can follow Melanoma Institute Australia on Facebook at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Melanoma-Institute-Australia/157469390965761>
- Or Twitter at @MelanomaAus or using hashtags #MIACure or #900KMFORACURE.
- For more information on the event visit:  
<http://www.everydayhero.com.au/event/900KMFORACURE2014>
- For information on Melanoma Institute Australia visit [www.melanoma.org.au](http://www.melanoma.org.au)

#### **ABOUT THE PETER MACCALLUM CANCER CENTRE**

- The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre is Australia's only public hospital solely dedicated to cancer and home to Australia's largest cancer research group.
- Peter Mac treats more cancer patients each year than any other hospital in Australia: seeing around 29,000 patients, providing over 260,000 episodes of care, and caring for inpatients requiring around 48,000 bed days.
- With laboratory research facilities fully embedded in a specialist cancer hospital, Peter Mac operates more than 200 clinical trials of new approaches to treat cancer, every year.
- For more information about cancer research, education, treatment and care at Peter Mac, visit [petermac.org](http://petermac.org)
- Follow Peter Mac on Twitter: @PeterMac\_News

#### **ABOUT MELANOMA**

- Melanoma is Australia's national cancer and the third most common form of cancer in Australian men and women (10% of all cancers).
- Australia has the highest incidence of melanoma in the world.
- Melanoma is the most common cancer in young Australians aged 15–39 years old, making up 20% of all cancer cases and responsible for 8% of all cancer deaths.
- In 20–34 year-olds, melanoma kills more young Australians than any other single cancer.
- 30 people are diagnosed with melanoma in Australia each day and 1 person dies every 6 hours, so chances are you or one of your family or friends will experience melanoma in their lifetime.
- Each year more than 1,500 Australians die from melanoma and over 12,500 new cases are diagnosed.
- Early detection and treatment saves lives. Over 90% of melanomas can be cured with simple treatment, if detected early enough.

#### **ABOUT JAY ALLEN**

- In 2008 at age 32, Jay Allen was diagnosed with stage 3 melanoma.
- The melanoma began as a mole on his ankle that became itchy and bled. It turned out to be a 1.95mm-deep melanoma.
- After two major operations, Mr Allen found out that the melanoma had metastasized to the lymph node in his groin.

- Further surgery left Mr Allen with a 30cm scar from his stomach to thigh, and he underwent treatment with chemotherapy.
- Mr Allen has now been cancer-free for 6 years and is a passionate advocate for melanoma awareness.
- As a frequent user of indoor tanning beds in his youth, Mr Allen was horrified to learn that this was a likely contributing factor to him developing melanoma.
- Mr Allen was pivotal in lobbying various state governments to ban solarium tanning units that has now resulted in solarium being banned in NSW, QLD, VIC, SA, TAS and ACT.
- Mr Allen now works as Community Coordinator for Melanoma Institute Australia.

#### **ABOUT ANDREW RUST**

- In 2002 at age 28, Andrew Rust was diagnosed with advanced melanoma.
- While visiting his doctor for what he thought was a simple hernia of the groin, it turned out to be metastatic melanoma. The primary melanoma was never found.
- Initial surgery removed a secondary tumour in the groin lymph nodes, but it recurred in the groin and pelvis.
- Several gruelling operations followed in a short space of time, as well as radiotherapy.
- Mr Rust was free from melanoma for four years, and then in 2006 it showed up again in lymph nodes deep in the abdomen, requiring more surgery and an experimental drug trial.
- Further surgical removal of tumours in his throat and lungs has made Mr Rust have a total of 10 major surgeries since he was first diagnosed 12 years ago.
- Mr Rust is a passionate melanoma advocate and fundraiser.