

DIGGING FOR A CAUSE



UNDERWRITING AGENCIES OF AUSTRALIA (UAA) HAS THROWN ITS FULL SUPPORT BEHIND THE DIG DEEP EVENT, A CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY FUNDRAISER ORGANISED BY CRE GROUP TO RAISE \$1 MILLION FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.

Mental health affects every Australian industry differently. For the construction industry, the issue requires more conversation and support. Hence the creation of the inaugural Dig Deep Event.

Arranged by CRE Group, the fundraising event aims to raise over \$1 million for Beyond Blue, a mental health organisation focused on supporting people affected by anxiety, depression, and suicide.

Every single year, 65,000 Australians attempt suicide. On average more than eight people take their own lives every day, six of whom are men.

Tragically, a construction worker is lost every second day to suicide, meaning that 190 construction workers take their own lives per year.

That's why the Dig Deep Event is hoping to 'keep digging' and 'keep talking' around mental health within the construction industry.

Currently sponsored by twelve of the industry's biggest players, the organisers are hoping to attract more sponsorship and exhibitors for the event – due to take place in Melbourne in November this year.

Exhibition spaces will grant industry participants great exposure for their brands and products, while also supporting an essential service.

Becoming an exhibitor is not the only way that potential attendees can support the event, however. People are also able to donate to the Dig Deep Event to support the \$1 million goal.

With a range of activities, including showbags, music, a petting zoo, a digger park and a food truck zone, the event is catered to support the whole family.

UAA AS PLATINUM SPONSOR

Underwriting Agencies of Australia (UAA) is a Platinum Sponsor for the Dig Deep



Some of the industry's biggest players, including UAA, have sponsored the Dig Deep Event.

Event. Stan Alexandropoulos, UAA Group Chief Operating Officer, says the UAA management jumped onboard to sponsor the event as soon as they heard about it.

"The Dig Deep Event came to our attention via the CRE Group's insurance broker, PNO Insurance – themselves an Associate Sponsor for the event. To their credit, they referred it to UAA because they felt that this was a cause that was close to both our organisations' hearts and we jumped at the chance to support it by becoming a Platinum Sponsor and participating in any way we could to raise awareness and make the day a success," says Alexandropoulos.

"Anxiety and stress levels are at an all-time high due to COVID and its effects. Financial pressures, health and well-being worries, fear of the unknown, feelings of isolation and loneliness are just some of the things that people are experiencing, both in Australia and

worldwide. The more we can raise awareness on mental health issues and promote the message that it's OK to feel that way, it's OK to talk about it and ask for help or just ask your mate if they are OK, the better chance we have to get on top of the issue and prevent people from suffering in silence."

As an underwriting agency with customers and access to a network of industry service suppliers across Australia and New Zealand, Latin America, Asia and the regions of Pacific Island and Papua New Guinea, Alexandropoulos says UAA invests heavily on mental health within its own team.

"At UAA, the mental health of our people has been a major focus and priority of ours for some time. We have invested heavily in this area, engaging health professionals and experts to conduct ongoing mental health audits and training in our workplaces to ensure that our people feel safe and are

armed with the tools to deal with these stresses," he says.

"More importantly, we want them to feel safe and confident to start a conversation with their colleagues, managers, and if required, free professional organisations that we provide access to that can help them manage any issues they might be dealing with. The civil construction industry has traditionally been male dominated, although that has changed somewhat over recent years. We know that men don't tend to talk about these sorts of problems or issues. We need to start this conversation to remove the stigma that still exists around talking about mental health issues and say it's OK and to have problems, feel down and struggle at times. The best way to deal with it is to talk about it. The power of a conversation can save lives."

INDUSTRY COMES TOGETHER

CRE Group Director Michael Harding says he is overwhelmed by the amount of enthusiasm the program has generated within the organising team, as well as with the support received from the industry.

A committee, comprising of five CRE staff members, a legal consultant from Cross The T, and a digital marketing specialist from Build Socialcon make up the committee that meets weekly in preparation for the event.

"Our initial target was to raise \$100,000, but when we saw the strength of the committee and with COVID giving us more time, also having seen the impact COVID has had on mental health within the industry, we decided to increase the challenge for ourselves and we set out to raise \$1 million," he says. "And if we can raise beyond that, even better."

As Harding adds, the money raised will help support services, programs, research, advocacy, and communication activities relating to mental health.

"The people who build our towns and cities need our support. Organisations like Beyond Blue provide vital support to people experiencing depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions and the Dig Deep Event aims to support Beyond Blue in their endeavours," says Harding.

OPERATOR CHALLENGE

One of the marquee events at the Dig Deep Event will be the Operators Challenge. Inspired by Ireland's Ploughing

Championship, the challenge is designed to test the skills of talented machinery operators throughout Victoria.

William Adams Caterpillar will run the Operators Challenge, which will test the operators on certain criteria such as accuracy, precision and work quality. Operators from some of the state's best civil contracting companies will compete for a prize, along with the bragging rights to be the inaugural Deep Event champion.

The Dig Deep Event will also be supported by former Western Bulldogs star and current mental health advocate Tom Boyd, who himself has experienced challenges with mental health.

With already significant uptake and interest from within the construction industry, there are also plans to potentially repeat the event next year.

"If we can run a great event that brings our industry together and starts something new, we certainly love to give it another go. We can only imagine the event growing and growing," Harding says.

The Dig Deep Event will take place on Sunday 14 November 2021, at 324 Perry Road, Keysborough, Victoria. Those interested in attending the event, becoming an exhibitor or making donations can visit the Dig Deep Event website: www.digdeepevent.org.

CRE Group plans to run an Operators Challenge as part of the Dig Deep Event.

