



Title: Mountainous Challenge

Category: Mental & Social Wellbeing

Club Name: Club Taree

Entrant: Paul Allan

- 1. Provide an outline of the program, project or cause that addresses each of the following aspects:**
 - a. The program/project/cause objectives**
 - b. The support the club provided, i.e. was it financial, in-kind, staff volunteers or use of club facilities?**
 - c. A timeline of activities/events**
 - d. Any developments made since implementation (for example: if the support spans multiple years, how has the program grown? Will the club provide support again? Will the program be enhanced in the future?)**

The Club Taree Mental Health Scholarship Challenge is an industry leading initiative which invests in the mental wellbeing of our Team. In 2022 the six challenges faced, were tested by and conquered the fierceness of the Tasmanian wilderness in an experience which has been described as both life changing and life affirming.

In 2022 the team headed to the Walls of Jerusalem, which is described as being home to some of Tasmania's wildest and most inspiring landscape. While as the team would discover it was certainly home to the most inspiring landscape, it was also home to the most incredulous weather conditions. The guides described the conditions our team faced as the 'worst they had ever seen'. The base trek was 48km in length, however coupled with the challenges of a steep ascent and descent of 1448m.

The objective of the program is to

- Improve mental wellbeing of individuals and of the team.
- Create a supportive culture within our team.
- Encourage conversations about mental health and mental wellbeing,
- Improve focus and alignment.
- Engage our team
- Encourage the greatest sense of team
- Raise funds to support mental health and mental well being programs

The 2022 scholarship was open to all Club Taree employees and was funded by the Club.

The Directors were immediately supporting of the initiative because of its aligned to our club values, particularly "People are our business", "We are proud of who we are" and "Our community is our focus".

The Directors funded the registration, travel and equipment for the participants which totalled \$15,000. The Board also made a \$10,000 donation to the fundraising for Beyond Blue.



Recipients were acknowledged in February 2022, from which the team started bonding. This included social activities, workshops, and physical training. The workshops focussed on mental wellbeing and strategies which may be used in the moment on the trek and included third party consultation for building a stronger mental wellbeing.

The program was a way unique way to raise funds for mental health and well being support programs while offering our team an opportunity to improve their mental well being, to build their support network and to encourage conversations about both mental wellbeing and mental health.

Over time the physical training increased in preparation for the challenge itself.

The Challenge allowed for 8 months of connection between the participants to ensure that there was already a strong bond in place, ensuring support for the physical and mental challenges they would face as individuals and as a team.

Practically we spent months collecting, preparing, packing, and repacking. At times our major focus became the 20kg we would be carrying on our backs, perhaps as a reflection of the burden of life, perhaps a collection of useless items we never actually used, but thought we needed.

The only things we needed was to be mentally strong and the support of each other.

The team set off to Tasmania on the 22nd October and set off into the wilderness on the 24th for their actual trek.

Despite the preparation nothing could have prepared the team for the challenges they would face during the four day trek which isolated them from the world but elevated them to the paradise of nature – the perfect place to work on mental wellbeing.

The trek itself was the perfect storm of cold, wind and rain, at times the inability to walk, or sit, or get changed, to move or even sleep because of the first of the weather is a challenge the challengers will forever attest to. It was almost as if every sense of positivity was trying to be removed by the viciousness of mother nature.

What rose from the test was the dedication of team spirit. Just like a scripted and rehearsed episode each team member took their roles without allocation. It was a unique recipe of the most unfathomable collation of human spirit that we had ever witnessed. The joyousness of unashamed banter, the belongingness of team, the belongingness of a job well done hug, the genuine acknowledgement of cut you deep brokenment and the cheer of a vocally rejoiced job well done. In reflection Paul Allan, our CEO at the end of the challenge wrote; “... I wont mix words. It was hard. It was cruel. It was relentless. It was joyous. It was beautiful. It was inspiring, and delightful. It was both heartbreaking and heart-warming”. He also reflected, “Each participant showed strength beyond imagination and a determination usually held for the mighty. Would I do it again? In a heartbeat. Would I encourage others to participate? Without question.



On return we were able to share the experience with the wider team along with our Members and wider community. The conversations that this initiative have created around mental health, while also increasing mental wellbeing of the team make the costs associated insignificant.

The participants raised \$23,435 for mental health charities as part of the challenge. The funds of which will be used to implement mental health support for our community.

The challenge was so successful in its first year at meeting the objectives that the Board have immediately moved to make the challenge available annually.

2. Provide a brief insight into why this program, project or cause was supported by the club.

In your answer, summarise:

- a. How the project, program or cause was first presented to the club. For example, did a member present it to the Board or Executive team, was it part of a ClubGRANTS submission, did it come from a local business or the community based on a need, was a survey conducted to identify areas of community need, etc.**

- b. Why it was important to the club to support this community need.**

The CEO, Paul Allan presented the concept to the Board of Directors as a way of engaging the team in a team experience which aimed to build stronger, healthier individuals while also building a stronger healthier team and bringing forward conversations about mental health and the importance of mental wellbeing to the team, our Members and the wider community. The concept was that while the team was participating in the physical and mental challenge that the wider team would be raising funds for mental health providers to further benefit our community and encourage conversation.

At Club Taree our community is our focus, and as a result we undertake a large range of initiatives. The team had wanted to implement a program or initiative which highlighted mental well being and mental wellbeing. The Club Taree Mental Health Scholarship Challenge was Paul's suggestion to attest to this request.

The funds raised for Beyond Blue as part of the challenge were raised across several initiatives thanks to our team, our members and community.

Club Taree has been encouraging conversation and highlighting mental health as part of mental health month for the last 3 years, however we were wanting to implement an initiative that was meaningful, experiential and which worked to improve mental wellbeing.

The initiative was important because Club Taree is very aware that our ability to communicate with such a large sector of our wider community that our voice should be used for conversations that matter.

It was also important to have an initiative which focused on our team, the development of their mental wellbeing and created a further connection with the team and community.



We have worked hard to reduce the stigma of mental health and to encourage greater focus on mental well being over the last few years, which has been confronting and challenging, but also rewarding.

3. Provide an outline of the positive impact the club's contribution had on the community.

The Club Taree Mental Health Challenge presented many benefits to the team and community,

- The team raised \$23,435 for mental health support providers across several different initiatives as well as mental wellbeing programs.
- The challenge increased access to mental health support information through advertising, information stands throughout the club, social media posts and magazine articles.
- The challenge created conversation about mental health and well being for the team as a whole and especially for the participants.
- The challenge encouraged open conversation about mental health and mental wellbeing for our members and wider community.
- The challenge created a greater sense of community by allowing interested parties (team, members, and community) to work together the encourage conversation and raise funds.
- The challenge Increased the mental wellbeing of participants by providing firsthand experience in resilience.
- The challenge provided the team with information on the ways to improve their mental wellbeing.
- The challenge has created a greater sense of team, we know that connection improves mental wellbeing.
- The challenge has reenergised our team, who are proud of the outcomes. We are currently accepting applications for the 2023 challenge, which is creating a lot of team engagement and again conversations about mental wellbeing.
- The challenge created what is described as a 'lifelong' connection for the challengers. A group of 'safe' people in which you can be vulnerable in about all aspects of life, including your mental health and wellbeing.
- The challenge has created better connection between the entire team due to the support role nonparticipants played.
- The challenge has initiated positive steps to improving mental wellbeing across the whole club.



- The challenge has inspired the team to take the concept further and in 2024 we are hoping to partner with other Clubs across NSW to create an ultimate Clubs Mental Health Challenge so that the benefits can be shared with other participating Clubs while encouraging conversations in other regions about mental health and wellbeing.

4. Add any credits here (optional).

The program would not have been possible without the support of our Directors, our Management Team, but most importantly the participants and our community.

5. Supporting material:

- *Magazine*
- *MHC*
- *YouTube link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHTcB4JHORO>*