

# Media Release

Embargo, Saturday 10 September 2011



6 September 2011

## **MATES in Construction's suicide prevention model scoops the pool third year running**

What started four years ago as a good idea among Queensland construction workers to tackle very high rates of suicide in the industry, is now becoming a model for suicide prevention across Australia.

Construction workers are up to six times more likely to die from suicide than accidents at work with suicide rates close to twice the national average for men.

"Considering that three out of four suicides in Australia are completed by men, the suicide rates within the Queensland construction industry are truly frightening," MATES in Construction CEO Jorgen Gullestrup said.

The MATES in Construction programs started running in 2008 and are this year's winner of Suicide Prevention Australia's annual LIFE Award for the third consecutive time.

"We thought it was a mistake when we won the LIFE Award in 2009 as the suicide-prevention and intervention model had only been operating for 9 months, but when we won the award again in 2010 we realised this time there was no mistake," Gullestrup said.

"To be honest, we never thought we had a chance compared to the more established organisations such as Beyondblue who received an honourable mention.

"Of course we are really proud to take the trifecta by also winning this year," he said.

MATES' Third LIFE Award will be presented at The Dome in Melbourne on International Suicide Prevention Day this Saturday (September 10).

MATES in Construction has been taking off across Queensland and over the past two and a half years the programs have grown from training 2,000 workers on 10 sites to 15,000 workers on 160 sites across the state.

"It is growing into a massive network of 'mates looking after mates'," Gullestrup said.

Other states are showing interest in the successful model as well with the Western Australian building and construction industry launching a MATES in Construction program in September (Friday 9 September).

The Fiona Stanley Hospital project will run a pilot with the Western Australia Construction Industry Redundancy Fund (WACIRF), CFMEU and Master Builders Association jointly committing funding for the project.

"We are very proud of the programs and the success we have achieved," Gullestrup said.

"It's great that other states are now recognising the value of the MATES in Construction model and are deciding to implement it in their industries."

“However this all fades to insignificance compared to providing practical and useful help to another person,” he said.

MATES in Construction connects two to three workers to help every day and intervenes in a workers suicide plans on average once per week.

“If anything, this is the achievement that really makes us proud,” Mr Gullestrup said.

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For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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