

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Everyday hero rows towards being the first to achieve solo non-stop crossing from Australia to Africa**

Prior to signing himself up for an enormous 8,358km row from Australia to Africa, Rob Barton had no experience rowing a boat.

But that hasn't stopped him from wanting to take on the non-stop solo row across the Indian Ocean that will keep his feet from touching land for up to 6 months.

Set to hit the water on **April 24<sup>th</sup> 2023** in Carnarvon and finish in Tanzania, 'Rob's Row' will see him rowing 12 – 15 hours a day, taking on waves over 10 metres high and burning more calories than he can consume, with only a satellite phone to connect him to another human.

Seven people have rowed solo across the Indian Ocean previously, stopping at Islands along the way. However, if successful, Rob says he'll be proud to call himself the first solo rower to achieve the journey without disembarking his boat.

"To put this challenge into perspective, approximately 10 times the number of people have been into space compared to those who have rowed across the Indian Ocean, so it's a huge challenge!" he says.

"I'm excited, apprehensive, and a little bit scared, but also really looking forward to spending time on the ocean away from work and the pressures of everyday life."

Rob has several thousands of sea miles under his belt as an avid sailor and active patrolling member of his local surf club in Mullaloo, but rowing is something he hadn't dabbled in until training for this huge row began.

Rob has 4 daughters and is also a grandfather. And although his adventure is an exciting one, its purpose is much more significant to him.

Rob's Row will raise funds for youth mental health charity zero2hero, an organisation with a vision that is very close to his heart: improving young people's mental health and wellbeing, and preventing suicide in Australia.

In March 2021, Rob's daughter Jess attempted to take her own life.

"Since then, I have often asked myself 'how had I not picked up on signs that she was struggling?' and I've realised how important it is to learn how to have conversations with loved ones about mental health, which is what zero2hero helps young people do," he said.

"My experience of mental health two years ago was very limited and I am ashamed to say I was very dismissive of mental health issues. Jess has helped open my eyes and has made huge progress and is in a much better place now."

"I hope there are some who may be struggling who can take inspiration from Jess to seek help, and I hope this row raises awareness of suicide and prompts others to ask their loved ones if they're okay."

Rob's preparation and training for his row has included up to 7 training sessions a week, from weights, to rowing, to paddling, to surf skiing, and some extended rowing trips, including a 30 hour row from Point Peron to Ocean Reef to test things like his sleeping arrangements.

Rowers can lose an average of 15-25kgs of body mass on a row as big as this, which is 25 – 30% of Rob's body weight.

"Over the last 6 months I have increased my food intake to around 4,500 calories and put on about 23Kg. I am hoping to make it to 100Kg before I leave so will have a good surplus to get me through the next 6 months," he said.

"I am taking around 165kg of dried food for my meals, plus another 60kgs of nuts, dried fruit, snacks and chocolate to give me a total of around 5,500 calories per day. I will also have 100 Mars Bars, 70 Boost Bars, 20 Twix, 40 Crunchies and 50 KitKats."

Of course, help will be a long way off while Rob is sailing across the Indian Ocean, so plans are in place for him to be as self-reliant as possible in case not everything is smooth sailing.

"I have spare oars and repair kits on board in case they break, as well as a spare rudder and backup systems for most things on the boat. If the worst were to happen I even have a life raft and an emergency radio beacon, but hopefully I won't be needing either," he said.

"Sleep deprivation, salt sores and the mental challenge of solitary 'confinement' will be by biggest challenges, but also part of the fun! I am planning for the worst and hoping for the best!"

And if you're wondering what Rob will be missing the most while sailing the seas, a warm shower and a Sunday roast will be top of his to-do list for when he safely arrives home!

To donate to his cause, visit

[https://www.mycause.com.au/p/292935/australia2africa?fbclid=IwAR1lxjz3ZcOFApVy7vfU6gS15o3JQQZ\\_FdccfPSRWkvUf2W86Wf5DjWVIFk](https://www.mycause.com.au/p/292935/australia2africa?fbclid=IwAR1lxjz3ZcOFApVy7vfU6gS15o3JQQZ_FdccfPSRWkvUf2W86Wf5DjWVIFk).

**\*Rob will be embarking on his row from Carnarvon on April 24<sup>th</sup>. For interviews prior to his take-off or photo opportunities, please contact:**

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### **About zero2hero**

Founded in 2009, zero2hero is a Perth-based not-for-profit organisation committed to youth mental health and the prevention of suicide. Our vision is that every child and young person is educated and empowered to effectively deal with mental health issues. We provide school-based programs for children and young people that develops their understanding of mental health issues and awareness of mental health services.

Our CEO Ashlee Harrison was awarded the Western Australian of the Year – Youth Award in 2014.

For more information, please visit our website: [zero2hero.com.au](http://zero2hero.com.au)