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NEWS

After a 10-year battle, Terry Mitropoulos celebrates beating super bug with amazing challenge

Aaron Langmaid Herald Sun

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 Terry Mitropoulos (third from right) with former Carlton great Ang Christou and sons Jonah, 15, and Christos, 12. Picture: News Corp Australia, Jay Town

IT'S been a long hard road back to health for miracle man Terry Mitropoulos.

After being diagnosed with a brain tumour a decade ago, he was floored by a super bug, and then a stroke, and lost vision and hearing, and movement.

Doctors feared the father of two would never walk again.

But now, nearly a decade after his ordeal began, he is planning to walk from Adelaide to Melbourne to raise money for mental health.

And ex-Carlton player Ang Christou is among former AFL players who are ready to offer him their support.

“The mental capacity of this man is astounding,” Christou said. “I’m keen to help him raise as much money as he can.”

But Mr Mitropoulos is hoping his charity walk will do more than just highlight his own capacity to overcome the medical odds.

He wants his “Walk & Shine” journey to raise awareness of the mental strain of illness not just on the sufferers themselves but also on those who support them.



 Terry Mitropoulos (third from right) with former Carlton great Ang Christou and sons Jonah, 15, and Christos, 12. Picture: News Corp Australia, Jay Town

Mr Mitropoulos said it took facing his mortality to give him a deeper understanding of the importance of family connections.

“Without the constant support of my wife, Belinda, and my boys, Jonah and Christos, I don’t think I would have made it,” he said.

“There needs to be more awareness about those people who offer that kind of unconditional help.



system.

Doctors told Mr Mitropoulos he would never regain full use of his legs. Though he lacks feeling in his lower body, he can now walk. But he is still deaf in one ear, and has suffered damage to his peripheral vision.

He credits his faith as well as his family for helping him to pull through when the medical odds appeared to be stacked against him.

 Terry Mitropoulos with wife Belinda and sons Jonah, 15, and Christos, 12. Picture: News Corp Australia, Mark Stewart

The busy small-business operator believes his health crisis happened for a reason.

“When we are healthy, we take life for granted,” he said. “It’s not until you lose your independence that you realise what really matters and who is going to be there for you.

“I have turned my life around, having lived through that experience.”

“I have learnt that regardless of what you believe in, if you put your mind and spirit and soul into that belief, you will achieve it.”

Mrs Mitropoulos said the experience was not something she liked looking back on.

“I try not to think about it,” she said.

“At the time, there just wasn’t time to think. I would spend the commute from the hospital in tears trying to make sure I would be OK by the time I arrived home to the boys.

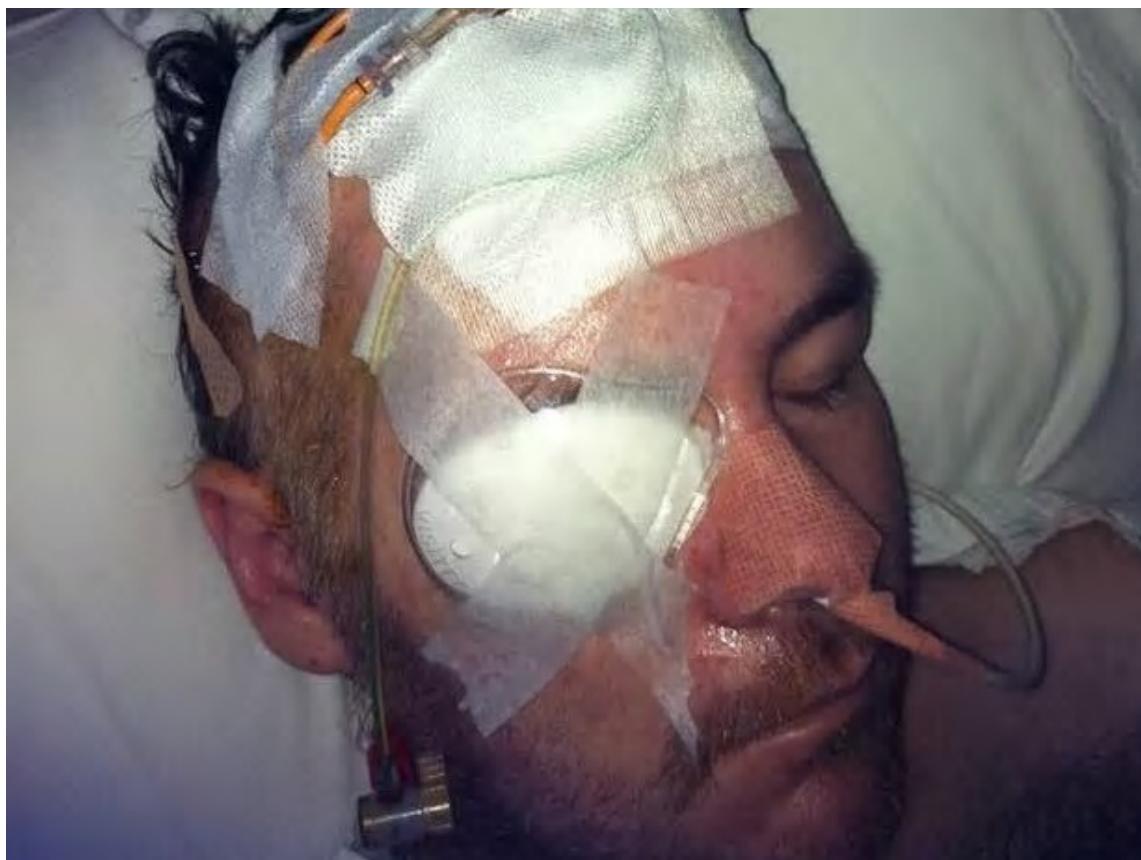
“There were a lot of times when I felt really overwhelmed but I certainly wouldn’t have been able to do it without the support of people around me.”

But she said, with sons Jonah, 15, and Christos, 12, by their sides, they had drawn closer as a family.

She said the boys' school, Parade College in Bundoora, had been particularly supportive as had other sponsors of the walk, including Australian Strength Performance at Brunswick and the Eltham Leisure Centre.

In the Walk and Shine journey, Mr Mitropoulos will walk from Adelaide to Melbourne over 43 days, beginning on August 17.

He hopes to walk about 20km a day.



 Terry Mitropoulos was diagnosed with a brain tumour a decade ago, before contracting a super bug and suffering a stroke. Picture: Supplied

Along the route, he will be supported by former AFL players as well as schoolchildren.

Christou said he had been inspired by the way in which Mr Mitropoulos had bounced back into life after his long ordeal.

“I met Terry at a party, and didn’t leave his side,” he said.

Mr Mitropoulos hopes to arrive in Melbourne on Grand Final Day, September 28.

All money raised from the Walk and Shine will go to The Black Dog Institute.

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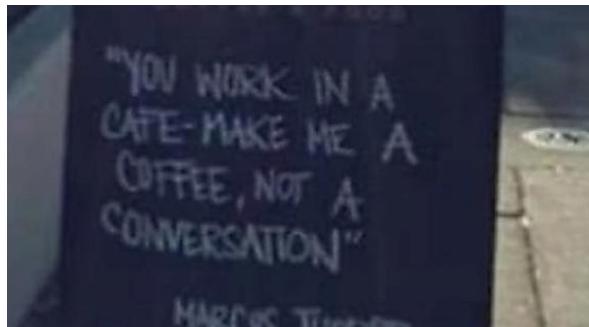
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