



Defying the odds

Terry Mitropoulos (centre) with Walk and Shine supports Romina and Justin Meehan. Photo – Meg Kennedy

By Meg Kennedy

It's almost unfathomable he can even take one step, but Terry Mitropoulos has defied odds to walk across two states for an important cause.

In 2010, Mr Mitropoulos developed a brain tumour, creating five percent chance of survival.

After 13 operations over two years, including contracting a superbug, Mr Mitropoulos suffered a major stroke; losing his ability to speak, see and hear, and was told by doctors he would never walk again.

After nearly four-years in hospital and rehabilitation, regaining his sight (he has peripheral damage and double vision), hearing (he remains deaf in one ear) and speech, Mr Mitropoulos decided to embark on a 43-day walk from Adelaide to Melbourne to raise awareness for mental health, creating 'Walk and Shine'.

While passing through Moorabool and nearing the

end of his journey, Mr Mitropoulos sat down with the Moorabool News about his journey so far, and why his message is more important than ever.

Since beginning his journey and at the time of the interview, Mr Mitropoulos said his biggest lesson has been "just to understand people greater, and just to feel what they are going through."

"I've come to realise that we're all going through something, but what I've learnt through this is that knowing that we're there for one another, that's all we need," he said.

His journey has not only taken him to capital cities, but has seen him spend days passing through small country towns, including Gordon and Ballan.

Mr Mitropoulos said he found these pockets of communities to be "more genuine, more down-to-earth".

"Just the way they reach out and the way they allow you to connect with them, whereas in the heart of

Melbourne, there's none of that – I wouldn't say none of it, there's very little of it," he said.

His journey has meant he has crossed paths with a myriad of people who have their own stories to share.

Although Mr Mitropoulos believes there hasn't been a singular story that has "connected to him greater than others", he emphasises on being able to empathise with these experiences.

"I've had a taste of just about everything...has one connected me greater than others? Probably not," he said.

"[But] I can relate to what they are sharing or what they are encountering in their lives, just through their experiences...not more so because I sympathise with them, but I can empathise.

"I am able to empathise through my experiences; and that is what's allowed me to connect greater," he said.

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