



Mates in Construction WA

Mates in Construction MATES is a charity established in 2008 to reduce the high level of suicide among Australian construction workers.

MATES provide suicide prevention through community development programs on sites, and by supporting workers in need through case management and a 24/7 help line. We serve the construction industry in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, the Energy industry in Queensland and New South Wales, and nationally to the Mining industry.

MATES was established in response to a major report on suicide (the 'AISRAP Report') within the Queensland Commercial Building and Construction Industry. This report found that suicide rates in the industry were higher than the Australian average for men, and that youth suicide within the industry could be as much as 2.38 times more common than among other young Australian men.

Why MATES Exists: The Problem

Research has been conducted, revealing some sobering facts:

- Every year 190 Australians working in the construction industry take their own lives; this means we lose a construction worker every second day to suicide.
- Construction workers are six times more likely to die from suicide than an accident at work. For our young workers, the facts are that they are well over two times more likely to take their own lives than other young Australian men.

Why is this happening in the Australian construction, mining and energy sectors?

For workers in the construction industry, suicide seems to be a part of the reality of working in the industry. Work within the industry is highly transient with most workers employed on a project-by-project basis, for periods ranging from a few weeks to at best a few years.

Other research has shown us that workers find it difficult to discuss feelings and emotions with colleagues at work, and the nature of the work has made social support more difficult. 'Pride' is identified as an issue: male workers have a problem with not being viewed as 'manly'. Participants of the research held a strong belief that suicide was an impulsive act and that someone intending to take their own life would show no signs and not discuss it.

Research conducted in the industry recommended that a campaign designed to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing combined with good gatekeeper training, should be implemented in combination with an industry specific program for workers with suicidal thoughts.

The MATES program is based on the simple idea that suicide is everyone's business. If the building and construction industry in Australia is to improve the mental health and well-being of workers and reduce suicide, then it cannot be left to mental health professionals: everyone in the industry must play their part.

Working for the construction industry in general, MATES is independent of employers and unions and never works directly for an employer. Programs are delivered across the industry regardless of employer or union affiliation.

2020 has been an incredibly challenging year for construction workers and their families largely attributed to COVID 19 and the inevitable heightened level of isolation, dysconnectivity, anxiety, depression, family dysfunction / abuse, and the loss of employment via redundancies and companies having to pivot to stay current and relevant.



Mates WA is currently managing 100's of cases of construction workers experiencing symptomatic and acute levels of mental distress and suicide ideation. MATES WA acknowledges the impact COVID 19 has had on individuals and their families. We wanted to create a 'family centric' event which enabled "at risk" construction workers and their families to reconnect with their MATES, the broader community and be offered free fun filled activities, within a safe and supportive environment.

MATES WA tagline is MATES Helping MATES and this year due to COVID 19 we augmented the tagline to include 'during tough times'.