MATES HELPING MATES
A HISTORY OF MATES IN CONSTRUCTION QUEENSLAND

“Suicides in the Australian building and construction industry are far too high … on average, over forty workers each year take their own lives.”

MATES in Construction Queensland (MATES) is an organisation dedicated to reducing the rate of suicide in the construction industry.

This book chronicles MATES’ first decade, demonstrating the positive change that can arise when members of the industry and organisations come together to support their mates, showing that MATES can save lives.

A word of thanks from Wallace Trohear,
Trade Unionist and former Chairman of MATES in Construction Queensland.

I am humbled to have had the privilege of being the original MATES in Construction Chair, an organisation that has made a difference to Queensland construction workers and their families. I am grateful for the foresight of BERT, their initial funding and continued support.

MATES in Construction has grown from the back-of-a-beer-coaster concept that sought to build capacity within the industry using the well built communication structure of the industry. From that basic idea, I have to acknowledge the commitment of Jorgen Gullestrup as CEO and John Brady as Operations Manager in developing and delivering the MATES in Construction program.

The continued success of MATES in Construction will only bear fruit if we continue to deliver on our basic values of building capacity and linking workers to professional services. MATES in Construction has been able to show workers there is a toolbox for our heads. It is very hard to get workers help if they do not believe there are tools for the job.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Queensland Board and Greg Shannon OAM for the foresight in documenting the early history, successes and failures of MATES in Construction Queensland.

Happy 10th Birthday MATES.

Wally Trohear
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks go to the people who contributed to this work and who gave me advice. In particular, my thanks go to Wally Trohear who, once again, had the confidence in me to do the research and record the history of an organisation about which I had only a passing knowledge. In three earlier works I had been part of the journey, but this time I had to start from scratch. As a result, the research has been quite a challenge, but it has kept my brain cells moving around. Along the way, I became vitally interested in MATES in Construction (MATES), an organisation that is really making a difference. Attending three MATES in Construction training intervention programs early in the piece also assisted me greatly in putting many aspects of the story into perspective.

People make up the history of any successful organisation, and MATES in Construction is no exception. I have attempted to include and mention as many people as possible who played a role in making the organisation what it is today. But it would be impossible to include everyone, and I hope that if there are any unintended and notable omissions, those individuals will forgive me and the history has not suffered as a result.

In writing and researching the history of MATES in Construction Queensland, I consulted widely with as many key players as possible. I would like to thank (in no particular order) Hugh Hamilton, AM; Wally Trohear; Jorgen Gullestrup; John Brady; Professor Emeritus Graham Martin, OAM; and Jacinta Hawgood—who was the main author of the seminal document produced by the Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP). Jacinta also kindly assisted me by vetting much of the research and technical data. Other contributors include John Crittall from (at the time) the Master Builders Association and Bill Wallace, a non-executive director of MATES and then General Manager of the Building Employees Redundancy Trust (BERT).
I must also record my appreciation and thanks to the executive and office staff at MATES who were ever ready to do miscellaneous chores to assist me, including hunting through the MATES in Construction records. In particular, Theresa Grealy, Tanu Bose and Claudia Rivera were very gracious with their assistance.

As with the three previous histories, I must also thank my brother, Emeritus Professor Tony Shannon, AM, who read the various drafts, corrected my grammar, made valuable structural suggestions and offered advice. Also, Jane Gilpin—a good friend—who similarly assisted with grammatical and editorial corrections.

Finally, special thanks to my wife Kay, again a proofreader 'emeritus' who also gave me encouragement when I became bogged down.

Brisbane, October 2017
Suicides in the Australian building and construction industry are far too high: they exceed the community average by a factor of two. In Queensland’s commercial building and construction industry, on average, over forty workers each year take their own lives.

Work-related factors, interpersonal/family factors and individual factors all appear to interrelate to explain suicide rates in the commercial building and construction industry. Workers commonly work six days a week—up to 80 hours each week—to meet the demands made by their employers. Long working hours impact upon the time spent with family at home and the quality of this family time as well as reducing workers’ participation in recreational activities.

The industry is a high-risk industry where the consequences of poor safety management can often be fatal. As a result, most workplaces in the industry have similar workplace health and safety structures where roles, duties and rights are enforced to induct workers to work safely on site. Workers’ safety representatives and first aid resources on site are mandated in legislation. Yet industry suicides exceed fatal accidents by a factor as high as 6:1. No legislation can mandate against this phenomenon.

The facts surrounding industry suicides were first formally raised and acknowledged during the Cole Royal Commission that was conducted in 2002 and 2003. While acknowledging the significant number of lapses in workplace safety in the industry, industry leaders Wallace Trohear and Jorgen Gullestrup asserted that the larger concern was the number of suicides by construction industry workers. Royal Commissioner Cole expressed surprise and challenged the industry to do something about this statistic although he made no useful recommendations on the matter. However, it took the efforts of
Hugh Hamilton, AM to create and coordinate the momentum for support of the project.

- The initial journey was facilitated through both financial support from and industry leverage provided by The Building Employees Redundancy Trust (BERT) Queensland. Without the initiative shown by BERT and its funding, it is unlikely that MATES would be as effective as it is today.

- A report commissioned by the industry—the Australian Institute for Suicide Research Prevention (AISRAP) Report—concluded that suicide is a significant problem in Queensland’s Commercial Building Construction Industry (CBCI), with almost 10 members of the respective superannuation and redundancy funds taking their own life each year. When compared to Australian male and Queensland male suicide rates across the same periods, the CBCI rates were 46% and 25% greater respectively.

- Research by Dr Allison Milner from the University of Melbourne showed that in the Queensland CBCI as a whole in the period 2001 to 2013, just over 46 workers suicided each year.

- MATES in Construction—created initially as OzHelp Queensland—was incorporated on 12 March 2008. Its principal role was to develop appropriate intervention strategies using existing industry structures and a best-practice approach to suicide prevention.

- The MATES Board determined that any MATES intervention programs were to be developed (i) to be entirely consistent with the Living Is For Everyone (LIFE) Framework—Australia’s national framework for suicide prevention—and (ii) to be strictly focused on implementing the recommendations contained in the AISRAP report.

- MATES’ programs were evaluated in 2011. The evaluation concluded that there is evidence to support the social validity and effectiveness of MATES for improving suicide and mental health awareness, help-seeking behaviour, and treatment engagement, thereby reducing the suicide risk for construction workers in Queensland.
It was revealed at the 2nd Annual Mental Health Conference held in Sydney on 5 March 2015, that evidence taken from 2008 to 2012 showed that because of MATES' interventions, 15 workers are still alive. A later report raised questions about the statistical significance of these conclusions due to the modest reach of MATES at that time. However, given the take-up rates of MATES programs by the industry in Queensland, the degree of acceptance of MATES by industry players, and the sheer numbers involved over the 10-year period, it can be equally asserted that the suicide prevention programs applied by MATES contributed to this decrease.

Hugh Hamilton, AM.
A report commissioned in October 2014 examined the economic cost of suicide; its findings were nothing short of staggering. The report found that the economic cost for each self-harm attempt resulting in full incapacity is estimated at $2.78 million and each suicide attempt resulting in a fatality estimated at $2.14 million. The key cost driver for full incapacity and a fatality is lost income, equivalent to 27.3 years productive years. Across all categories, the burden of cost associated with self-harm and suicide is borne largely by the government: 97% or $4.80 million of the total combined cost of $4.92 million. The report found that approximately $5 for every dollar invested by government is returned to government: equivalent to more than $3.5 million saved each year.

In November 2013, the national MATES in Construction organisation was created through the collaboration of four state-based organisations—(New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. Representatives from each State organisation made up the Board of Directors and were tasked with providing strategic guidance and support services to the state-based organisations.

MATES is unique: no other solely industry-oriented suicide prevention organisation exists in Australia. The analyses in this book conclusively demonstrate that MATES can save lives at the same time as saving resources. MATES is a positive economic investment into workplace safety in the Queensland construction industry and throughout Australia.
INTRODUCTION
A HISTORY OF MATES IN CONSTRUCTION

A SENATE REFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT ENTITLED THE HIDDEN TOLL: SUICIDE IN AUSTRALIA CONCLUDES THAT ‘AT LEAST SIX AUSTRALIAN LIVES ARE TAKEN BY SUICIDE EVERY DAY, HOWEVER THERE CONTINUES TO BE A LACK OF PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF SUICIDE ON THE COMMUNITY.’

SUICIDES IN THE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Suicides in the Australian building and construction industry are too high: they exceed the community average by a factor of two.

In Queensland’s Commercial Building and Construction Industry (CBCI), on average over forty workers take their own lives each year. Suicides in the industry represented 2.4% of all suicides by working-age males (15 to 64 years old) in Queensland from 1995 to 2001. The crude suicide mortality rate of males from within the CBCI ranged from 30.4 per 100,000 persons for the period 1995 to 1997 to 54.9 deaths per 100,000 persons in 1998. When compared with Australian male and Queensland male suicide rates across the same periods, the CBCI rates were respectively 39% and 19% greater. The periods of high suicide (e.g. 1998) usually coincide with low construction activity (i.e. value of work done) and elevated numbers of working days lost due to industrial disputes.

At the time of the initial research, younger workers (15 to 24 year olds) in the industry were at an even higher risk of suicide,
whereas older workers had very similar suicide rates to those of average Australian and Queensland males. In contrast, previous studies demonstrated that suicide rates in similar occupations increase with age—however these studies were conducted in countries where suicide rates increase with age, a trend that had not been recorded in Australia at the time. The investigation period coincided with the highest suicide rates ever recorded among young Australian and Queensland males. The fact that the CBCI suicide rates exceeded these elevated rates highlights the seriousness of the problem of suicide in the Australian building and construction industry.

Work-related factors, interpersonal/family factors and individual factors all appear to interrelate to explain suicide rates in the CBCI. While similar multi-factorial findings have been reported among farmers and doctors, further research would be necessary to ascertain causality, or to isolate the direct and indirect contributions of the above factors to suicide—for example, whether work pressure leads to alcohol abuse and marital separation.

CBCI workers commonly work six days a week—up to 80 hours each week—to meet the demands made by their employers. Long working hours impact upon the time spent with family at home and the quality of this family time as well as reducing workers’ participation in recreational activities. It has been consistently reported in industry focus groups conducted by researchers from the Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP) that long working hours were an indirect influence on increasing suicide risk. Long hours can impact on mental health and can contribute to marital/de facto dissatisfaction and problems at home: the spillover effect of work-related stress on moods at home was revealed to have a greater effect than home-related stress on moods at work.

Separation/divorce is a recognised risk factor for suicide—particularly among males—and is relevant in blue-collar industries. Standard psychological autopsy investigations revealed that young CBCI suicides were more likely to be separated/divorced and have serious relationship problems preceding their death.iii Further, the strain of long working hours impacted on personal relationships,
with a high rate of separation reported in the industry. Research showed that the loss of a spouse through separation exacerbated an already stressful work life, diminished social support networks, and intensified financial strain due to child support and maintenance payments.

Additionally, the AISRAP researchers found that high rates of suicide among younger workers could be related to the pressures associated with joining a ‘masculine’ industry that (as reported from focus groups) has a bullying culture particularly directed towards apprentices and those new to the industry. Although work-related problems were not reported in psychological autopsy data from the AISRAP, this may have been due to non-disclosure of bullying to next of kin: males are less likely than females to seek help for workplace bullying, and approximately one-third of people who are bullied report ‘doing nothing’ about it. As well as verbal and physical abuse—including intimidation and isolation—workplace bullying can take the form of unrealistic deadlines, excessive work hours and non-existent lunch breaks. Bullying in the workplace is prevalent in blue-collar working environments and has been shown to cause depression and is linked to suicide rates in the United Kingdom and Norway.

Heavy drinking and past and current drug use were also rife among construction industry workers. This was correlated with low job security and poor work conditions. In the AISRAP study, alcohol and substance misuse were described in the focus groups as a form of coping with the pressure of the industry and symptomatic of the industry culture. Alcohol use preceding suicide and alcohol-related problems were identified in psychological autopsy data reported by AISRAP.

**THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN CONTEXT**

The CBCI, indeed the industry across Australia, is heavily male dominated. Construction Skills Queensland (CSQ) has reported that as many as 97% of the manual workers in the industry are male. Demographics in the industry are also varied, from labourers
to tertiary qualified engineers, and with high numbers of workers having English as a second language.

Industry workers are reported to have higher than average consumption of alcohol and usage of illicit drugs. A significant sector of the industry travels extensively to and from work or works on Fly In, Fly Out (FIFO) arrangements.

Employers in the CBCI are typically small—employing fewer than 100 employees—and many lack sophisticated human resources capability. These employers almost exclusively subcontract to larger project management companies; however, engineering and civil construction projects typically have higher numbers of directly employed workers.

The industry is highly competitive with most work contracted via open and competitive tendering. Due to the high capital investments, the industry is highly time and budget sensitive, with great emphasis placed on risk management to ensure projects are delivered on time and on budget.

One aspect of the industry’s risk management protocols is a strong safety culture. The industry is a high-risk industry where the consequences of poor safety management can often be fatal. As a result, while implemented within various ‘internal-to-company’ systems and policies, most workplaces in the industry have similar workplace health and safety structures where roles, duties and rights are enforced to induct workers to work safely on site. Workers’ safety representatives and first aid resources on site are mandated in legislation.

Yet industry suicides exceed fatal accidents by a factor as high as 6:1.¹ No legislation can mandate against this phenomenon.
BACKGROUND

FOR MOST WORKERS IN THE QUEENSLAND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, SUICIDE SEEMED TO BE ACCEPTED AS PART OF THE REALITY OF WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY. WORK WAS 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. ACCORDING TO THE BUILDING EMPLOYEE REDUNDANCY TRUST (SIMPLY REFERRED TO AS ‘BERT’) THE AVERAGE REDUNDANCY PAYOUT FOR WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRY WAS LESS THAN ONE YEAR’S CONTRIBUTIONS. vi

BERT records also revealed that of 399 death payments made to workers between 1999 and 2007, over 88 (or 22%) appeared to be suicides. vii Similar reports came from the Building Unions Superannuation Scheme (BUSSQ) where the life insurance underwriter reported that the risk profile for the fund was significantly higher than that of other industry funds; BUSSQ records of the time indicate that suicide claims were nearly double the number of other industry funds. viii The information on suicide rates was alarming.

These facts relating to industry suicides were first formally raised and acknowledged during the Cole Royal Commission, which was conducted in 2002 and 2003. ix The Commissioner had a very wide brief: the Commission was tasked to investigate and report on unlawful and improper practice by the building unions and mismanagement across the industry and other matters that may or may not have revealed unlawful conduct.
During the Queensland sittings of the Commission, the matter of workplace safety was a key remit for the Commission and was addressed in union submissions. And further, during oral evidence, the respective union Secretaries at the time—Wallace Trohear, Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and Jorgen Gullestrup, Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union of Australia (CEPU)—while acknowledging the significant number of lapses in workplace safety that occurred in the industry, stated that a bigger problem facing the industry was the number of suicides by construction industry workers. As indicated above, the suicide rate was almost six times higher than the rate of workplace fatalities. The Royal Commissioner, The Honourable Justice Terence Cole, expressed surprise and challenged the union officials to do something about the suicide rate.

However, it took the efforts of Hugh Hamilton, AM to create the momentum for the support of the project. Hamilton had worked in the construction industry for most of his working life, culminating in his primary, full-time position as State Secretary of the (then) Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU)—now the CFMEU. Hamilton continued his contribution to the industry via involvement in the Stanwell Skills Development Programme (SSDP), the Construction Training Centre at Salisbury in southeast Queensland, and Construction Training Queensland (as a workplace reform adviser and training consultant for the latter organisation). It is doubtful anyone can match his knowledge and experience in the industry.

The statistics and assertions around industry suicides amazed Hamilton, and he wrote to Gullestrup seeking approval to set up a steering committee to formally examine the issue and also to write to various industry bodies and government soliciting funding support. He proposed that the committee should be tasked to engage experts in the area to examine and validate the problem and recommend how the problem should be addressed.

As a result of Hamilton’s efforts, in late 2003, $76,000 was raised via contributions from industry funds, unions, employer associations, state government and a number of larger companies. The steering committee was established under the auspices of the Construction Training Centre (CTC) in Salisbury, Queensland.
Steering Committee Membership at inception:

- Leigh Ashman, Chairman / General Manager (at the time) BERT
- Hugh Hamilton *AM*, Member
- Martin Carey, Member
- Paul Richards, Member / BUSSQ
- Michael Ravbar, Member / CFMEU
- Jorgen Gullestrup, Member / CEPU
- Mark Corcoran, Member / Queensland Master Builders Association (QMBA)
- Terry McIntyre, Member / Australian Building and Construction Employees/Builders Labourers Federation (ABCE/BLF), and
- Rick Elliot, Project Coordinator (ex officio).

After a number of false starts, the committee commissioned the AISRAP to undertake a major study of suicide in the industry using industry records and coronial data to calculate the incidents of suicides in the CBCI. The study involved an examination and analysis of 167,103 workers in the industry between 1995 and 2001 (an average of 22,000 workers per year), focusing on construction workers who were members of Queensland CBCI superannuation and redundancy funds. The study concluded:

> ‘Suicide is a significant problem in Queensland’s Commercial Building Construction industry, with almost 10 members (of the respective funds) each year taking their own life. When compared to Australian male and Queensland male suicide rates across the same periods the CBCI rates were 46% and 25% greater respectively.’ *xiv*

Focus groups conducted into attitudes and beliefs around suicide suggested that workers found it difficult to discuss feelings and emotions with colleagues at work and that the nature of the work often made good social support more difficult. *xv* Much later in 2012, similar results were found in a study by Edith Cowan University conducted on the Fiona Stanley Hospital site in Perth:
'The most common response was that men prefer to deal with issues on their own. Pride was discussed within a number of focus groups: “can’t say they have a problem coz it’s not manly”, and participants discussed the stigma and embarrassment that surrounded seeking help. A lack of awareness about mental health issues and what supports are available was a further barrier to seeking help.

Overwhelmingly, participants indicated that there were no signs that an individual was going to attempt to take his/her own life. There was a common perception that suicide was impulsive and that if someone intended to take his/her life successfully they would exhibit no signs and would not discuss it.'

Later research by Dr Allison Milner from the University of Melbourne revealed that in the Queensland CBCI between 2001 and 2013 on average just over 46 workers suicided each year.

The AISRAP report—its principal author Jacinta Hawgood from Griffith University and now a board member of MATES Queensland—recommended a campaign raising awareness about mental health and wellbeing, good ‘gatekeeper’ training, and an industry-specific intervention program for workers with suicidal thoughts should be implemented. Further specific recommendations contained in the report include to:

- establish a coordinated working group or advisory committee for overseeing suicide prevention activities for the Queensland CBCI
- promote awareness that suicide is a preventable problem within the industry
- reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking, mental illness and suicide
- promote well-being, resilience and coping
- enhance positive environment in the workplace
- increase workplace safety by reducing access to means
• provide career and financial advice to young males (aged 15–24 years)
• improve work conditions for vulnerable workers
• implement suicide prevention training programs for ‘identified gate-keepers’ (workers in the industry)
• provide mentoring services for new employees to the industry
• provide support services for men experiencing specific difficulties
• provide services for families and partners of workers
• provide programs for at-risk individuals
• develop appropriate protocols and procedures for responding to workers who are identified as suicidal, and
• provide ongoing care for workers who attempt suicide.
Launch of MATES in Construction at Tennis Centre.

MATES in Construction training.

Site accreditation.
CREATION OF MATES IN CONSTRUCTION

FOR SOME TIME, THE AISRAP FINAL REPORTLAY ON THE TABLE DUE TO SOME LOSS OF MOMENTUM AND POSSIBLY ALSO INITIAL ENTHUSIASM AMONG THE INDUSTRY PLAYERS; HOWEVER, THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE REPORT HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE. ADDITIONALLY, A SECOND PHASE OF THE REPORT—TO CONDUCTEXTENSIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY RESEARCH AMONG RELATIVES OF SUICIDE VICTIMS—WASN'T ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL DUE TO SENSITIVITIES AROUND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION FROM INDUSTRY SOURCES AND RELUCTANCE BY NEXT OF KIN TO DISCUSS A SUICIDE INCIDENT. THIS IS A COMMON OCCURRENCE DURING THE CONDUCT OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY.xix

EARLY DAYS

It is important at this juncture, both to ensure the accuracy of this history and place the future in some context, to acknowledge that the phenomenon of industry suicides prior to the Cole Royal Commission was already being monitored and supported by BERT. Way back in 1992, BERT had employed Bill Perrett—an organiser with the CFMEU—as the BERT Coordinator and Construction Manager.xx A close relative of Perrett, who worked in the industry as a sprinkler pipe fitter, suicided with no prior warning or apparent reason. Perrett was significantly affected by this incident and subsequently kept an ear to the ground as he moved around the CBCI.
In early 2000, Perrett was called to an incident on a building site in north Brisbane where he encountered a very distressed worker whose son had suicided. The worker was inconsolable and, after some questioning by Perrett, revealed that his son had been his ‘best mate’ and he did not think he could go on living without him. This presented Perrett with the dilemma of what to do. Perrett knew that there was no organisation yet set up in Queensland to provide the required support, so on his own initiative he went further afield and made contact with beyondblue in Victoria. Through this well-known organisation and a Queensland Government Health Department representative, Perrett was put in touch with a suicide counselling service at an organisation called Interchurch Trade and Industry Mission (ITIM), later to become Converge International. This organisation was to become a key partner with MATES. On Perrett’s recommendation, BERT provided funding to support the worker mentioned above with counselling and further, up until the creation of MATES, provided sessional funding to help similarly troubled industry workers. Wallace Trohear, as the then State Secretary of the CFMEU, was well aware of Perrett’s efforts on work sites watching for and briefing workers on the need to be vigilant in looking for warning signs in workmates who were encountering difficulties.

In early 2007, the BERT Board held its annual strategic planning workshop at Caloundra, Queensland, and the AISRAP Report was included on the agenda. Trohear was keen to see the recommendations contained in the report implemented, but unanimous support was lacking. Gary Bickerdike—an employer representative on the BERT Board—was not convinced that the project could succeed. He thought the way ahead was too vague. After further discussion, the board agreed that if readily identifiable goals could be set, it might be possible for a suicide prevention initiative to work. Trohear undertook to develop key performance indicators (KPIs) for consideration at the next BERT board meeting. KPIs were subsequently agreed as being the number of workers who were inducted into suicide awareness programs.

Thus, the way ahead began to unfold, and BERT spent the remainder of 2007 undertaking detailed planning, including preparation of an initial budget, the search for a manager, and the identification of a model to take the project forward. In this regard,
Michael Ravbar—then Assistant State Secretary of the Queensland CFMEU—suggested that the model already existed in the form of the OzHelp Foundation in the Australian Capital Territory.\textsuperscript{xxvii} This organisation, with support from the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) division of the CFMEU and the ACT branch of the Master Builders, had evolved following the tragic suicides of three industry apprentices in a short period.

The industry in the ACT recognised the need to take action to protect workers against the risk of suicide. While OzHelp ACT was primarily focused on young people, adopting their preventative model in Queensland would save reinventing the wheel. The ACT program further developed by the OzHelp Foundation—including their Lifeskills Tool Box—was readily adaptable in Queensland, and it remains today as one of MATES’ training and awareness programs focusing specifically on young apprentices. Ravbar successfully negotiated for Queensland to duplicate the ACT program at no cost.\textsuperscript{xxviii}

Coincidentally, after running a national search, Gullestrup—who had by this time left the CEPU—was employed to take up the role as Manager.\textsuperscript{xxix} His principal role was to develop appropriate intervention strategies as far as practicable using existing industry structures and a best-practice approach to suicide prevention.

For Gullestrup, the way ahead was not going to be plain sailing. A major difficulty arose in that several employers in the industry resisted the initiative: many saw suicide as being labelled as yet another ‘on-site risk’ to be contended with. As mentioned earlier, managing risk had become a key construction driver on most construction sites. The last thing these employers wanted was yet another risk to be managed.

In response, BERT decided to run a major industry workshop, which was convened in January 2008 at the Bardon Conference Centre in Brisbane’s west.\textsuperscript{xxx} Around 80 people attended: representatives of employers, unions and industry associations. Four counsellors from ITIM (Converge International) also attended. John Brady—at the time an educator and currently MATES Operations Manager—facilitated the workshop. A number of guest speakers gave presentations, including the eminent psychiatrist, Professor Graham Martin OAM, who had been the chairman of Suicide Prevention Australia and who had been dedicated to suicide
prevention since 1987. Others included Dr Kirsten Way—at the time, Coordinator of Psychosocial Research at the Queensland Department of Industrial Relations and currently Lecturer at the School of Psychology, The University of Queensland and Manager at the Workplace and Electrical Safety Policy, Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland, Treasury Department—and also Simone Caynes of the Drug and Alcohol Unit, Queensland Health.

This workshop proved to be the catalyst for acknowledgement and formal acceptance of the fact that suicides in the industry were a real issue and, more importantly, that something had to be done about it. The initiative by BERT needed to be supported. The dynamics at the workshop and the interaction among participants saw considerable enthusiasm for the catchcry of ‘mates helping mates.’ So much so that the word ‘mates’ was cleverly appropriated as an acronym ‘Men Actively Talking to Each other on Site.’ Further, when discussing a methodology, the term ‘connector’ was also agreed. The more common terms at that time of ‘gate-keeper’ and ‘mentor’ were thought too trite and hackneyed to apply in the unique circumstances of the serious issue of suicide.

John Crittall—at the time the Director of Construction Policy at Master Builders Queensland—recalls that other key principles were agreed, including that:

- any training had to be on site and conducted by industry identities
- there had to be bipartisan support
- participation had to be voluntary
- attitudes must be respectful
- training had to be easy to embrace
- there was to be no intimidation
- everyone on site, including any subcontractors, had to be involved
- there was to be no stigma attached to anyone designated ‘at risk’, and
- workers were to be the conduits to any proposed help.
A short time later, on 12 March 2008, MATES was established as ‘OzHelp Queensland’ and was incorporated under that name. BERT Queensland wholly owned OzHelp Queensland and continues as the sole member of the company that is now MATES in Construction Queensland.

The inaugural board of directors comprised:

- Chairman, Wallace Trohear
- Director, William (Bill) Wallace
- Director, Gary Bickerdike, and
- Company Secretary and Manager, Jorgen Gullestrup.

**PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND PHILOSOPHY: A STRATEGIC APPROACH**

As indicated above, Gullestrup’s initial and principal role was to develop appropriate intervention strategies. The focus of the strategies—considering the recommendations in the AISRAP report—was to ensure that any intervention should exist within the cultural, demographic and economic realities of the industry. It had proven difficult to engage the industry around mental health and wellbeing issues generally, so if a proposed program did not look like what people already knew and wasn’t rested on good and tested practice, then the industry was likely to reject it.

It was also important that any program was developed in the industry so that industry players could have faith in its independence. This concern was of great importance to both unions and employers. The industrial scene in the building and construction industry is highly contested with frequent industrial and safety disputes, low attachment to particular employers but strong identification with the industry. The industry had a culture of frequent breaches of agreements, awards and agreed wages and conditions.
To achieve the required changes, it was necessary for OzHelp Queensland to take a highly consultative approach throughout the development of intervention strategies. It was also important that they constructed any delivery methodology so that it appeared to be, and in actuality was, independent of both management and union structures.

Finally, the approach had to be in sync with the highly competitive nature of the industry, where jobs are often won on very small margins and all expenses are closely monitored. Any new initiative was likely to be seen not only as another risk management factor but also as a financial impost where construction companies could see themselves at a disadvantage if they were to support and implement a program.

It should be noted that for the construction industry, the costs associated with a suicide are generally carried as much by the industry collectively as they are by the individual employer due to the highly itinerant nature of the industry. Recent research by a major industry employer following a suicide on site concluded that the overall cost for the consequent disruption to the job was around $2.5M. This estimate is supported by research results in a recently published evaluation of the economic costs of suicide in the construction industry.

As the MATES programs were to be largely funded by industry, it was also important that any intervention strategy be strongly outcome focused, aiming for immediate and significant impact. This approach would make it more difficult to do baseline studies and ongoing research, although it was clearly imperative to check that the program had its desired effect. It would not be possible to run extensive surveys on sites because available time would always be limited. Literacy issues in the industry would require any survey to be conducted via interview and demand extensive resources, which would take resources away from the primary focus. To overcome these obstacles, OzHelp Queensland decided to use existing and tested products and simply embed them into an industry-specific program, embedding simple evaluation tools into the program itself rather than as a separate activity. This strategic approach has not changed over the ten years that MATES has been in existence.
MATES ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

To undertake these initiatives, an organisational structure was required. Initially, in addition to Gullestrup, OzHelp Queensland had only two other employees, John Brady who was responsible for operations and training development and Michael Stubley, who had been seconded from Converge International.

The organisational structure has evolved as follows:

No wiring diagram means much without detailing the actual lifeblood of the organisation—the employees, including past employees—and acknowledging their respective roles. These details are contained in Annex D.
2017 Leading the Way

2016 Launch of Industry Partners Program.

Industry Partnership plaques.
THE MATES IN CONSTRUCTION INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

AT THE OUTSET, THE MATES BOARD DETERMINED THAT ANY MATES INTERVENTION PROGRAMS WERE TO BE ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH THE LIFE FRAMEWORK, WHICH IS AUSTRALIA’S NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION.

MATES IN THEORY: THE LIVING IS FOR EVERYONE (LIFE) FRAMEWORK

The LIFE Framework aims to:

• improve understanding of suicide

• raise awareness of appropriate ways of responding to people considering taking their own life, and

• raise awareness of the role people can play in reducing loss of life to suicide.

The LIFE Framework also provides a summary of current understandings of suicide such as risk and protective factors, vulnerability and risk, tipping points, and warning signs.

Programs were to be strictly focused on implementing the recommendations contained in the AISRAP report, which had been developed based on the best available academic knowledge and were consistent with the LIFE framework and industry specific research (including focus groups).
Programs were also to be entirely consistent with the Livingworks model that was developed in Canada by LivingWorks, a world leader in suicide prevention, and has been implemented in a wide range of cultures and countries globally.xliv

**MATES IN PRACTICE: ACCREDITATION**

Since its inception, successful delivery and acceptance of the MATES concept is considered to have occurred when a worksite is designated a ‘MATES in construction site’ (MIC site). This premise is essential and achievable as the requirements to become an MIC site are not overly demanding or onerous for an employer:

- all workers on site must initially undertake General Awareness Training (GAT)
- one in twenty workers must be trained as Connectors
- as the job progresses, follow up GAT must be undertaken to ensure that at any time at least 80% of the workers on site are GAT trained, and
- the site must have access to appropriate and available suicide first aid resources through Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).

MIC accredited sites receive a number of promotional materials as well as access to other MIC programs and field officer support.

The benefits of site accreditation are obvious. Firstly, it provides a clear standard for sites to strive to achieve. In a highly competitive industry such as the construction industry, sites will often try to do the minimum required to achieve a desired outcome, and the accreditation process makes this minimum clear.

Secondly, employers have a duty of care to do what is reasonable and practicable to prevent foreseeable accidents and injury for employees. As the MATES programs have become more widely known within the industry, few employers can now deny (i) that injury caused by poor mental health and wellbeing is not foreseeable and (ii) that implementing the MATES program to the defined standard is both reasonable and practicable. The industry
nature of the MATES program and the system of accreditation apply
gentle pressure to employers in the to act on poor mental health
and wellbeing in their industry.

The implementation of the program is supported by a number of
field officers employed by MATES. Field officers are responsible for
preparing and conducting training onsite, but this is only part of
their role.

As early as possible in the construction process, when the first sod
of dirt is turned, a field officer will seek to visit the site to make
contacts. At this stage, the site receives posters and a variety of
other promotional materials. While it will be up to each site to
decide whether it will engage with the program or not, these early
visits serve to remind the industry that mental health and wellbeing
is an industry problem that each site has a duty of care to address.
Each site receives regular visits over the life of the project,
regardless of whether the site decides to engage or not.

Through these site visits, a field officer will also make contact with
workers on site who previously have worked on other MATES sites.
This is of great importance as these workers will usually have had
favourable experiences with the program and will encourage site
management to come on board. As the program uses a strict charity
model, implementing the program on site comes at no out-of-
pocket expense to the employer and is therefore a local decision
not requiring any allocation of funding from a head office.

Once a site has decided to engage with the MATES program, the
field officer will seek to make an agreement with site management
for the implementation of the program. Dates and times for GAT
and Connector training are agreed and organised. All training
occurs in ordinary work time, and the site project manager
organises appropriate facilities for the training.

Then, when the appropriate levels of training have been completed,
the field officer will support Connectors and ASIST workers on site.
The site-based volunteers are encouraged to use the program in
ways that are appropriate to the local conditions. Connectors will
often organise Connectors meetings where they come together
to support each other and discuss how they can best support the implementation of the MATES program in their workplace.

None of the foregoing is unfamiliar to workers: all workers in the building and construction industry are used to and accept that they cannot work on a site until they have undertaken a site-specific safety induction. Most of these inductions are very similar in nature, but working in an industry where too many workers die from workplace accidents means that workers expect and need to be constantly reminded about the need to work safely.

It is worth restating that a comparison of the mortality rates from the AISRAP report with mortality rates from workplace accidents reveals that more than six workers die from suicide for every worker who dies from a workplace accident. Since the need for safety inductions is well recognised, adding one hour for a suicide prevention message on each site is logical.

**MATES IN PRACTICE: WORKPLACE TRAINING**

An important principle in the development of the MATES training programs is having community development as its aim rather than the training itself. The objective is to build long-term resilience and cultural change into the building and construction industry, rather than simply training workers to recognise the signs of poor mental health and wellbeing. While the various programs utilise discrete training sessions in their application, these sessions are merely tools in achieving the real objectives of cultural change. The ultimate aim of the MATES in Construction programs is to make MATES redundant!

The various components of the programs, described below, are at one level each delivering key skills, but—according to the MATES ethos—they only reach their full potential within the complete program.

Preliminary engagement with the industry at a macro level and the industry’s collective ownership of the programs are also key features of the overall MATES intervention. An overriding principle of MATES is that all work is done on behalf of the industry collectively, whereas most health and wellbeing programs are
services or support provided by an employer for their employees. MATES is a service provided by the industry for both employer and employees and hence achieves social validity and acceptance by both sides of the industry dynamic.

Thus by focusing on existing, well-researched and evaluated approaches, three distinct training programs have evolved:

- General Awareness Training (GAT)
- Connector Training, and
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).

Additionally, the program for young people (apprentices), the Lifeskills Tool Box mentioned earlier, remains a cornerstone of the MATES programs. In emphasising the continuing relevance of the MATES program, John Brady opined, ‘imagine a young guy who has just broken up with his girlfriend, turns to alcohol for support, loses his job because he is late due to the resultant hangover, fights with his parents, gets evicted from home and all of a sudden his world collapses. He doesn’t want to die but there just doesn’t seem to be any reason to live!’ The Lifeskills Tool Box is aimed specifically at young people and apprentices transitioning into the workforce, providing practical skills, tools and support to deal with life issues, and addressing topics such as values and beliefs, communication, financial literacy and budgeting, managing emotions, goal and pathway planning and building personal resilience.

Since the inception of OzHelp Queensland/MATES in Construction, 800 young people have completed the Lifeskills Tool Box program over the ten-year period.

**GENERAL AWARENESS TRAINING**

General Awareness Training (GAT) is a one-hour presentation on mental health that focuses on suicide prevention. Participants discuss suicide as a preventable issue faced by individuals working in the industry before discussing concepts such as ‘tip over points’ and ‘invitations’ from a person at risk to acknowledge that all is not well. Finally, they learn about the way the model works within the industry and on site.
GAT is loosely based on Livingworks SuicideTALK and aspects of SafeTALK. GAT is never delivered in isolation but is always part of the MATES program. While it is not possible to guarantee that all sites that run GAT will also have Connectors on site (the next role up in the MATES program with greater awareness and training), project management on each site is clearly informed in the pamphlet Becoming a MATES in Construction Site about the importance of implementing the entire program.

GAT is delivered by a minimum of two ASIST workers and is generally delivered to groups as few as 15 and up to 300 workers at a time. Upon completion of the training, workers are provided with a white hardhat sticker (similar to what they receive following a site safety induction) showing that they have been inducted into the MATES program.

The outcome of this process is that between 3% and 5% of workers participating in GAT training ask to be connected to help at the end of the session. The issues raised by those seeking help range from mild concerns with personal issues to acute thoughts of suicide. It is also interesting that a large proportion of participants (between 20% and 30%) volunteer to become more involved as Connectors.

**CONNECTOR TRAINING**

Connector training is also usually conducted on site and takes four hours. GAT lays the groundwork for the introduction of ‘gatekeepers’ or ‘Connectors.’ In the construction industry, the word ‘gatekeeper’ has a different meaning, so the term ‘Connector’ was chosen instead. The role of the Connector is to connect all who want to seek help with the help they need, whereas the term ‘gatekeeper’ could be understood to be the person who decides who needs help. A Connector is a mate who can keep you safe while connecting you to help. Connectors are volunteers Within the MATES program; the role is not a part of their employment. Employers on MATES sites agree as part of inviting MATES onto the site that they will allow Connectors reasonable time to be trained, to participate in Connectors meetings and to perform the role when required.
Connectors are trained using the Livingworks alertness program SafeTALK.¹ The objective of SafeTALK is to activate participants’ alertness around the risk of suicide and to encourage them to ask and talk openly about suicide. During a conversation with a worker, the Connector will obtain the person at risk’s permission to connect with a ‘KeepSafe’ connection. SafeTALK training is embedded in the Connector training, which also includes role descriptions, boundaries, self care and how to use the MATES support system. The objective is to have one trained Connector for every twenty workers. As far as is practicable, they should be distributed according to the demographics of the site, ensuring all workers—managers, tradespeople, apprentices and labourers—have a Connector with whom they identify and feel confident talking to.

Connectors are supported by field officers employed by MATES and are the real drivers of the program. Connectors are easily recognisable on site, as they will have a distinctive green sticker on their hard hat. The role performed by Connectors is also easily translatable into the site safety structure and the role of the safety committee. They are peers with a heightened alertness around safety, readily approachable by workers with safety concerns and who meet regularly to discuss safety issues as they apply to the particular site.

**ASIST WORKERS**

The final MATES program relies on Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) as the model for suicide intervention whether performed on site by workers or by MATES staff.² This Livingworks program is particularly useful for the construction industry as it is based on practical skills training and therefore is similar to the general nature of training within the industry.

For larger sites, as well as remote sites, the program requires one or more workers on site to be ASIST trained to ensure local support is available for on-site Connectors. ASIST provides a simple model that enables the person at risk of suicide to feel noticed and the risk of suicide to be discussed openly.
An ASIST training workshop is completed over two full days in training rooms on- or off-site. ASIST workers usually take on a leadership role in relation to the Connectors on site, although this is not specifically part of the MATES program design. It is often the ASIST workers who maintain contact with a MATES field officer supporting the particular site. A blue sticker on their hard hat identifies ASIST workers, and their roles, like Connectors, are easily translatable into the industry’s safety culture as they are comparable to first-aid officers on site.

ASIST workers are often employed in the caring roles on site such as site nurses, paramedics, safety representatives, supervisors or union delegates. Like the Connectors on site, ASIST workers perform the role as volunteers for MATES and not in their role as employees on site.

To date, over 100,000 Queensland building and construction workers have completed MATES training programs.

**CASE MANAGEMENT**

Case management is the mainstay of MATES today. When a potential client is identified or contacts the hotline (managed by Converge), a Case Manager is appointed. The client is rendered safe and is then referred to Converge for remedial action. The MATES case manager monitors progress to completion.

The MATES program operates a 24/7 helpline for construction workers as well as on call case managers. The role of both is to support Connectors and ASIST workers on sites. As has been previously observed, men in particular often find it difficult to call a helpline or seek out a health professional in addressing issues of poor mental health and wellbeing. In a typical scenario, a GAT inducted worker, a Connector, or an ASIST worker will often be the ‘mate’ who will make that crucial initial telephone call: ‘I am sitting with Peter, he is not doing so well, can you guys have a chat with him?’, or be there when the call is made, ‘My mate John told me to give you guys a call, I am going through a bit of stuff.’

Once the call to the helpline is made, the first priority is safety, and the ASIST model is used to reach an appropriate agreement about
safety. Part of the ASIST model is that the person at risk must be linked to resources; case management is one of the resources offered by the MATES program. MATES employs a number of qualified staff whose role is to meet with workers in distress, seeking to agree on a plan to address the particular situation the worker may find themselves in. MATES does not provide any clinical or other support services apart from case management and as such can be seen as a referral service only.

The specific role of the Case Manager is to support the worker while the worker’s plan is implemented. Often men find it difficult to engage with health services. Services are often not available where they are working or at times when they are not working. These services often rely on clients having the appropriate language to explain their emotional state, which is difficult for some men. The Case Manager can help the worker to prepare for the interaction with health and other agencies and will support the worker in accessing the services over time, minimising the risk of the client disengaging prematurely.

It should be noted that case management is only one of several resources available to workers on site. The MATES programs encourage workers to engage with whichever service is the most appropriate for their particular situation.

**POSTVENTION**

Postvention is the strategy that provides the support a site may need after a worker or a worker’s family member has suicided. As previously discussed, MATES is a suicide prevention program that encourages workers to seek help, often with the help of their mates, before an issue gets so big that they consider suicide an option. The grief that follows a suicide can be complex, often with many unanswered questions, such as ‘what if?,’ ‘would I?,’ ‘should I?’ or ‘could I?.’ Postvention is designed to help those grieving after another person’s suicide to ensure they get appropriate help and support. Postvention is a form of prevention. (As a matter of course, MATES—as part of its duty of care—ensure MATES staff are debriefed after a suicide incident, receive counselling, and have access to psychological services.)
Launch of Darius Boyd as Ambassador for MATES in Construction with Hon Grace Grace.
MATES hosts three major events each year to raise program awareness and to celebrate achievements to date:

- **Annual Charity Lunch** (introduced in 2010)
  The construction industry comes together for a lunch to celebrate the achievements of the industry through the MATES in Construction program.

- **Kokoda Trek** (introduced in 2014)
  Individuals walk the Kokoda Trek on behalf of MATES in Construction to raise awareness about suicide prevention.

- **Fly the Flag Day** (introduced in 2015).
  A MATES in Construction flag is flown from makeshift flagpoles, cranes or scaffolding to coincide with World Suicide Day and ‘RU OK Day?’ to raise awareness of the prevalence of suicide in the construction industry.
SOCIAL MEDIA

In March 2016, the MATES in Construction website was relaunched to offer live feeds and current information. The MATES Facebook account has over 10,000 likes, while the Twitter feed is building and currently sits at 1,000 followers. A social media campaign that complements the redesigned website is building program awareness. The campaign includes weekly posts on the website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

LIVED EXPERIENCE PANEL

The Lived Experience Panel, which was inaugurated in 2016, is a program for people with lived experience of either attempted suicide or bereavement from suicide who want to share their stories. The program is a two-day course delivered by Roses in the Ocean designed to train participants to share their stories in a way that does not harm them or their audience. Participants in the program present their stories at a variety of activities to spread awareness within the community. To date, MATES in Construction in Queensland has seven people trained as volunteer speakers in the program. Three one-minute videos have been made of participants in the program sharing their life stories. These stories are powerful and help lower the stigma associated with suicide. The videos will be used online as an education and awareness tool.

VOLUNTEERS

The construction workers who volunteer to attend Connector and ASIST training are part of ensuring that mates are looking out for mates on site and that workers know there is someone available should they need support. Currently, Queensland has over 5,400 Connector and ASIST workers on sites. Feedback from a survey conducted by Dr Cate Banks highlighted a need for more Connectors, as they are a great source of referral. Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources, these volunteers are under utilised. Another suggestion from the construction worker survey was to advertise through social media. SMS messaging also offers a quick and affordable way to reach these volunteers; messaging provides
volunteers with updates and encouragement, ensuring awareness of the MATES programs is maintained.

**NEWSLETTER**

*On-Site*, introduced in 2008, is an eight-page newsletter with 20,000 Queensland-only hard copies distributed across the industry four times per year. In addition, a regular e-newsletter is sent to 15,000 active email addresses. MATES also provides editorial material to a number of industry magazines, including every second issue of the *Queensland Master Builders Magazine*.

**EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS**

MATES is a member of Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) and promotes SPA as the peak organisation for suicide prevention in Australia. In conjunction with *beyondblue* held an inaugural Construction Industry Round Table for better health and suicide prevention in September 2016 and, with the assistance of SAS Consulting, secured the (then) Federal Minister for Health, the Hon Sussan Ley MP, to officially open the event. The Roundtable attracted 52 senior industry leaders who pledged their support for MATES to develop a blueprint for better mental health and suicide prevention for the industry.

**MATES AMBASSADOR**

In July 2017, in another first, the Queensland Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon Grace Grace MP, announced the appointment of Darius Boyd as the inaugural MATES Queensland Ambassador. Boyd, the current Brisbane Broncos captain and Australian Kangaroo representative, will take on the role as ambassador for drawing attention to the cause of industry suicides.
Jorgen Gullestrup, CEO Queensland and NT and John Brady, Operations Manager.
Since its inception, the Queensland Building Employees Redundancy Trust Welfare Fund (BERT Welfare) has provided seed funding to MATES and ongoing annual grants. The total to date contributed by BERT Welfare has exceeded $5.9M.

MATES has also received recurring grants from both the Commonwealth Government’s Department of Health and Ageing and from the Queensland Government’s Queensland Health. In percentage terms, total government grants since 2008 represent around 20 to 30% of MATES’ total funding, and contributions by BERT Welfare represent just over 30%. The balance of the annual turnover in Queensland, which now exceeds $2.8M, is received from general donations, fundraising and investments. CSQ, which manages the industry-training fund in Queensland, has contributed just over $1.6M in support of specific MATES training programs.

It is fair to say that MATES’ approach to funding was eclectic and that the contact with government was not strategic and often relied on personal political relationships. This was clearly unsatisfactory. Accordingly, in August 2016, the National Board engaged SAS
Consulting to establish and maintain national relationships with government. This decision has been successful and, as a result, in April 2017, the Commonwealth Government announced approval to continue funding MATES by way of a grant of $4.2M payable over a period of 27 months. Thus the future of MATES is assured through to 2019. Funding beyond this date is yet to be determined, particularly as the Commonwealth’s Department of Health and Ageing has changed its funding model from a national to a regional approach. This model will be less suited to MATES’ current structure (a nationally consistent approach).

The Queensland Government has also generously supported MATES, and in early 2017—following consideration of the *Saving Lives in the Construction Industry* report—provided a $1.0M grant to expand the MATES programs into smaller business and rural and remote areas, and to place emphasis on engaging with younger workers. In presenting the grant, the Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon Grace Grace MP, said ‘suicide impacts across the community so it is important that we are engaged across the community as well—suicide prevention in the workplace is a really important part of that approach.’ The *Queensland Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2015–17* flags MATES in Construction as a ‘spotlight’ for ‘good practice’.

The future of MATES’ funding remains a work in progress and will be a challenge. This situation is fully appreciated by the Queensland Board, and in a recent interview with the author; Gullestrup asserted that the Board policy is ‘that no one funding source should account for more than 20% of total budgeted revenue.’
The first phase of the program was evaluated in 2011 where the results from the first 9,000 participants were considered.\textsuperscript{xi} Importantly, this evaluation found ‘strong support’ within the industry and that participants displayed ‘significantly increased suicide prevention awareness.’ The evaluation discovered that Connectors participating in the program (i) found the organisation ‘helpful and effective,’ (ii) felt ‘prepared to intervene with a suicidal person,’ and (iii) ‘knew where to seek help for a suicidal individual.’ The evaluation concluded that there is ‘evidence to support the social validity and effectiveness of MATES for improving suicide and mental health awareness, help-seeking behaviour, and treatment engagement, thereby reducing the suicide risk for construction workers in Queensland.’

Unpublished research and program evaluation conducted by Footprints Market Research in December 2012 strongly supported the findings above.\textsuperscript{xii} The research was conducted through 300 questionnaires among workers on 11 MATES accredited sites as well as a focus group of ASIST workers. At the time of this research, over 25,000 workers had been inducted into the program. The
research found very high awareness of the program on site (91%) and a clear understanding of the purpose and objectives of the program. Workers found the program useful and highly valued on site. Most workers said they found the program made it easier to get help if they needed it. 79% of the workers could identify one or more Connectors in their workplace, with 14% being able to identify more than five. When asking where they would seek help if they needed it, 92% of workers would talk to a family member, 91% to a mate, while 83% would talk to a Connector in their workplace. 72% of workers would talk to a doctor, while only around 50% would contact one of the well known telephone services (Lifeline, beyondblue or Salvocare), supporting the thesis that men in general prefer to contact someone they know and identify with for help.

In 2013, phone interviews were conducted with 69 ASIST workers. The interviews were semi structured, seeking to ascertain the level of engagement workers had with the MATES program. Interestingly, the ASIST workers generally found their role highly compatible with their work role (71%) and that their employer was supportive of the role (82%), while 96% would recommend the MATES program to future employers. Of the interviewed workers, 59% had been involved in a suicide intervention since completing their training: combined, they identified 208 suicide interventions, with 67 in the preceding three months. Most found the skills they had learned useful outside work, and over 77% of workers would be prepared to leave site to go to another site to support a MATES Connector even if it meant a loss in pay.

At the 2nd Annual Mental Health Conference held in Sydney on 5 March 2015, a presentation by Professor Graham Martin validated the foregoing information from a solely Queensland perspective. In a research project with Dr Sarah Swannell, Martin established that in comparing two five-year periods, 2003 to 2007 (pre-MATES) and 2008 to 2012 (post-MATES) in the Queensland construction industry, suicides in the industry dropped from 28.9 per 100,000 to 26.7 per 100,000 (see table below). This equates to 15 lives being saved from suicide over the five-year period of 2008 to 2012. While this may seem a modest figure, and is less than that contained in the Doran report, it nevertheless indicates
that MATES is working. Moreover, MATES is one of the few programs funded by government where outcomes are conclusively measured. In fact, only 4% of government-funded programs measure outcomes. Most importantly—because of MATES’ intervention—15 workers are still alive and with their families. Professor Martin concluded his presentation by throwing out a challenge to the Federal Government ‘to fund MATES into the future.’

### MIC OUTCOMES (QLD MALES)

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<td>Australian Males (aged 15–64) N=6.7m</td>
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<td>Australian Males Suicides 1493</td>
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<td>Aggregated Australian age-adjusted male suicide rate 21.1 per 100,000 (2003–2007)</td>
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<td>Queensland Males (aged 15–64) N=1.3m</td>
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<td>Queensland Males Suicides 329</td>
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<td>Aggregated Queensland age-adjusted male suicide rate 21.7 per 100,000 (2003–2007)</td>
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<td>QLD. Construction Industry 104,159</td>
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In order to validate Martin’s findings in 2015, a five-year review was undertaken in a more controlled manner. The report found that while suicides in the construction industry in Queensland did decrease in the period in question by 7.9%, due to the relatively modest reach of MATES in Construction over the period, the reduction did not achieve ‘statistical significance.’ It was therefore not possible to conclude unequivocally that suicide rates fell because of MATES in Construction. However, the review did establish that compared with the male suicide rate as a whole for Queensland that rose during the five years from 2008 to 2012, the suicide rate in the Queensland Construction industry did in fact decrease. Given the reach and take up by industry of MATES programs, the degree of acceptance of MATES by industry players, and the sheer numbers involved over the 10-year period, it is not unreasonable to say that the suicide prevention programs applied by MATES contributed to the decrease.

A review of results would not be complete without an examination and quantification of the financial impact that suicide imposes on the industry and an analysis as to whether the existence of MATES has reduced the financial impact. Just such a study, focussed mainly on the industry in New South Wales, was commissioned in 2014 and resulted in the production of the report in October 2014: *The economic cost of suicide and suicide behaviour in the NSW construction industry and the impact of MATES in Construction suicide prevention strategy in reducing this cost*. The conclusions contained in the report are nothing short of staggering!

The report found ‘the average cost of a self-harm attempt resulting in a short-term absence from work is estimated at $925 in 2010 dollars. Each self-harm attempt resulting in full incapacity is estimated at $2.78 million; and, each suicide attempt resulting in a fatality is estimated at $2.14 million. The key cost driver for full incapacity and a fatality is lost income, equivalent to 27.3 years productive years. Across all categories, the burden of cost associated with self-harm and suicide is borne largely by the government: 97% or $4.80 million of the total combined cost of $4.92 million.’ The report further determined that ‘more than $3.5 million is saved each year and a return to government of nearly $5 for every dollar invested.’
In analysing data, the study relied on the ‘relative risk ratio’ (RRR) method to determine the probability of events before and after the creation of MATES. The study compared the observed number of verifiable suicides pre-MATES and those post-MATES. In a five-year period prior to the existence and operations of MATES, there were 246 suicides. This compares with 222 suicides post-MATES: 24 fewer suicides. In New South Wales, the number of suicides was similarly reduced: 21 fewer. The potential economic impact is no less compelling where, in New South Wales, the cost savings to industry are estimated to be in the order of $3.6M. The cost savings to government are $3.56M. In terms of the government’s investment in support of MATES NSW, a modest $800K each year, the benefit cost ratio is equivalent to 4.6:1, representing a positive economic investment of public funds.

Doran has completed more recent and more comprehensive research into the phenomenon of suicide and ‘non-fatal suicide behaviour’ (NFSB). His conclusions validate the findings of his previous research and, in assessing the impact of suicide and NFSB across all industries and workplaces, shows that the total economic burden to the Australian economy is $6.73 billion. He concluded further that this cost is avoidable.

It is readily apparent that the MATES programs evolved following thorough research and have been rigorously evaluated. Published and unpublished evidence have documented that The MATES program:

- has high social validity in the industry
- increased the likelihood of help seeking
- increased the knowledge about suicide and suicide prevention
- saved a minimum of four lives per year in Queensland alone, and
- has revealed a cost saving to the State and Commonwealth Governments of $4.60 for every dollar invested.
Since its inception, MATES has case managed over 5,500 clients and over 250 suicide interventions have been conducted. These efforts and engagements have been widely recognised inside and outside the industry. MATES was awarded Suicide Prevention Australia’s LIFE Award in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 for Best Suicide Prevention Program. The National Safety Council of Australia recognised the program with the award for best Health and Wellbeing Program and Best Safety Initiative in 2012. This level of recognition resulted primarily from the deep commitment to improving mental health and wellbeing within the industry by the CBCI. Essentially, the MATES program is about mates helping mates: industry helping industry.

On two occasions, Gullestrup accepted invitations to address international conferences run by the International Association for Suicide Prevention: the first a Pacific regional affair, and the second a global conference in Oslo, Norway.

In 2014, Annette Beautrais—Adjunct Professor in the School of Health Sciences at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand—reviewed the operations of MATES. That October she wrote, ‘The cautious and careful development of the program has been exemplary and has followed almost all of the best practice recommendations for program development in prevention science. This means that MATES in Construction is now well positioned to be a model of best practice for workplace suicide prevention programs.’

MATES in Construction is an evidenced-based organisation. The entire program was developed from solid evidence provided in The AISRAP Report. MATES established an Academic Reference Group and a national board position of Academic Director, currently held by Dr Allison Milner, to guide and assist MATES in achieving best practice and to meet the strategic objective of thorough research and knowledge sharing (see immediately below).
In November 2013, the national MATES organisation was created by the four state-based organisations with representatives from each state organisation making up the Board of Directors. The principal task of the national organisation is to provide strategic guidance and support services to the state-based organisations. As an expedient, Gullestrup performed the dual roles of CEO Queensland and National CEO. He continues in both roles, however the recruiting process has begun to appoint a separate National CEO in September 2017.

The national MATES organisation is responsible for overseeing good governance, quality control and national funding and owns all MATES trademarks and intellectual property.

In Victoria and Tasmania, Incolink, established in 1988, provides redundancy services to the industry—suicide prevention services are included in its objectives.

With the recent exponential growth of MATES to New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia and its rapid adoption by the
industry in these states, the MATES (national) Board identified an increased need for further financial support nationally. To this end, against a background of construction companies currently gaining the benefits of the program at no cost, the Board established an Industry Partner Program. The program provides a means for organisations within the building and construction industry to give financial support to MATES in Construction and to receive industry recognition for this support. The contribution tiers range from $30,000 to $100,000 at the national level and $7,500 to $30,000 at the state level. To date, 38 companies have embraced the program, and a total of $670,958 has been raised.

On 1 July 2016, MATES in Construction Queensland assumed responsibility for construction workers in the Northern Territory and became MATES in Construction (Qld & NT Ltd).

Following on from the model of MATES in Construction and its achievements, MATES in Mining was established in December 2012. A similarly unique suicide prevention organisation is likely to be created in the construction industry in the United Kingdom using the MATES in Construction model.
CONCLUSION

MATES IS UNIQUE. THERE ARE NO OTHER SOLELY INDUSTRY-ORIENTED SUICIDE PREVENTION ORGANISATIONS IN AUSTRALIA. MATES IS A FEASIBLE, AFFORDABLE, AND—AFTER ONLY TEN YEARS—A WELL-RECOGNISED AND ACCEPTED INDUSTRY INITIATIVE THAT TACKLES SUICIDE IN THE WORKPLACE HEAD ON. MATES AIMS TO CHANGE THE CULTURE WITHIN THE INDUSTRY TO MAKE IT MORE ACCEPTABLE TO DISCUSS PERSONAL ISSUES AT WORK.

The program is predicated on the belief that most people who intend to suicide would rather live than die but find it impossible to manage the pain they are in alone. Through appropriate training, MATES helps workers identify the behavioural signals exhibited by a suicidal worker and helps provide the support structure needed to get the worker through difficult times.

The analysis contained in this history conclusively demonstrates that MATES can save lives at the same time as saving scarce resources. It represents a positive economic investment into workplace safety in both the Queensland construction industry and the industry across Australia.
MATES Helping MATES: A History of MATES in Construction Queensland

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ANNEXURES

A. MATES in Construction Strategic Plan 2014–2017
B. Oral History Record
C. Directors and Company Secretaries (since inception)
D. Current and Past MATES Employees
MATES IN CONSTRUCTION: STRATEGIC PLAN 2014–2017
(REVIEWED AUGUST 2015)

OUR VISION

Queensland’s leading industry suicide prevention organisation focusing on raising awareness, capacity building, providing help, and research.

OUR MISSION

Using industry structures and networks, we achieve our vision by focusing on:

- **Raising Awareness** – Communications, newsletters, training, MATES Events, and Tool Box Talks
- **Capacity Building** – Lifeskills Tool Box, MATES in Construction program, SafeTALK, ASIST, Staying Connected, developing our networks and links, and community building
- **Providing Help** – Case management that connects workers to help by using existing services, and ensuring help is both practical and useful.
- **Research** – Gathering data, partnering with research institutions to provide useful, insightful, and practical information back to the industry through the MATES in Construction Board.

OUR VALUES

- **Honest and Reliable** – We deliver what we say we will.
- **Proactive** – We respond creatively to needs and emerging issues.
- **Relationship based** – We build trust by being confidential, respectful, non-judgemental, positive and supportive.
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2014–2017

1. Pursue a Diversified Funding Base

Secure and maintain ongoing funding to provide and expand services to our industry. It is important to maintain key relationships and to perform well at our core business.

2. Strategic Alliances

Develop alliances/relationships with other organisations associated with the construction industry, in particular:

a. Employer Associations
b. Trade Unions
c. Government and statutory authorities
d. Industry schemes, organisations and service providers
e. Industry service providers
f. The Not-for-profit sector, and
g. Health and Safety associations and Organisations.

3. Lift the Profile of the MATES in Construction Brand

We need to take every opportunity to raise the profile of MATES in Construction in terms of the programs we have developed and their effectiveness. Our clear focus needs to stay on the construction industry. The national organisation will work to protect, promote and enhance the MATES in Construction brand nationally.

4. Good and Transparent Governance

While recognising the autonomous nature of each member organisation and franchise of MATES in Construction Australia, we will take all necessary steps to protect the integrity and trust in the brand. MATES in Construction will, in consultation with the members and franchises, develop good and transparent governance standards for MATES in Construction Australia and its members.
5. National Body for Workplace Suicide Prevention in Australia

While MATES in Construction Australia initially only include MATES in Construction branded organisations, we will remain open and flexible in our dealings with other likeminded organisations. It is our vision that workplace-based suicide prevention following community development principles will have a strong national voice. We believe national coordination is necessary to attract appropriate national funding to the sector.

6. MATES in Construction Compliance Program

Strategies for a nationally consistent implementation of the MATES in Construction program are a core business strategy. This strategy will include the material used on sites and its delivery. This strategy will also focus on increasing the number of sites nationally that have achieved the agreed MIC accreditation standard seeking to make this accreditation the minimum benchmark for good mental health and wellbeing on site in Australia.

7. Staff Training and Development

For MATES in Construction to continue to be effective in delivering quality suicide intervention and prevention initiatives, the program needs to remain focused on the training and development of its staff. This includes the development of a long-range succession plan for both the staff and the Board.

8. Research

MATES in Construction is an evidence-based organisation. Program development will be based on best practice and evidence while the existing program will be appropriately evaluated. MATES in Construction will also develop evidence to highlight the advantages for the industry, community and government at all levels to engage with the organisation and its programs.
9. Strategically Expand MATES in Construction

We will seek to pilot the MATES in Construction program in another industry to demonstrate its versatility. Where requested, we will also expand the program in the construction industry in other states. At all times, expansion of the program must be driven by the relevant industry in each area being supported by employers, and employer and employee organisations.

10. Seek Best Practice

MATES in Construction will continually monitor best practice within the field of community-based suicide prevention and adjust the program accordingly. We will seek registration on best practice registers where possible.
ORAL HISTORY RECORD

The office of MATES in Construction has an active Oral History library that records contributions and memoirs from previous and current directors and individuals who were closely involved with MATES in Construction since 2002. The audio recordings are stored in the MATES in Construction library and are accessible subject to any conditions of use requested by the interviewees.

This page shows the breadth of representation in the oral history collection. To access any of these interviews, readers should contact MATES in Construction in writing or by email.

This list is in alphabetical order, including the date of interview:

a. Brady, John, Operations Manager MATES, 5 December 2014
b. Crittall, John, Director Construction Policy, Master Builders Queensland, 10 February 2015
c. Gullestrup, Jorgen, CEO MATES, 26 November 2014
d. Hamilton, Hugh, AM, past Queensland State Secretary, BWIU, 18 November 2014
e. Hawgood, Jacinta, BSSc, BPsy (hons), MClinPsy, MAPS Lecturer Course Convenor, Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP) and WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Suicide Prevention, Griffith University, 20 November 2014
f. Martin, Graham, OAM, MD, MBBS, FRANZCP, DPM, Professor Emeritus, Child Psychiatry, The University of Queensland, 1 December 2014
g. Perrett, Bill, past Coordinator and Construction Manager, BERT Queensland, 21 April 2015
h. Trohear, Wallace, current Chairman MATES and past State Secretary CFMEU, 14 November 2014, and
i. Wallace, Bill, General Manager (at the time) BERT/CIPS Queensland, 3 December 2014 and current MATES Board member.
Annex C

DIRECTORS AND COMPANY SECRETARIES (since inception)

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<tr>
<th>DIRECTORS</th>
<th>DATE OF APPOINTMENT</th>
<th>DATE OF RESIGNATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bickerdike, Garry</td>
<td>21 February 2008</td>
<td>24 November 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trohear, William W</td>
<td>21 February 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wallace, William</td>
<td>21 February 2008</td>
<td>28 June 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin, Graham E D, OAM</td>
<td>4 June 2008</td>
<td>20 August 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>O’Carroll, Bradley M</td>
<td>2 March 2010</td>
<td>29 November 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moore, Adam J</td>
<td>24 September 2012</td>
<td>7 June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravbar, Michael</td>
<td>24 September 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelly, Brian J</td>
<td>3 December 2013</td>
<td>13 September 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crittall, John M</td>
<td>7 June 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hawgood, Jacinta L</td>
<td>5 December 2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Halloran, Gary</td>
<td>5 December 2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Company Secretary

| Gullestrup, Jorgen          | 3 April 2008        |                     |
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**CURRENT EMPLOYEES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYMENT AREA</th>
<th>POSITION HELD</th>
<th>DATE COMMENCED/ COMPLETED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorgen Gullestrup</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>31 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brady</td>
<td>Deputy CEO/ Operations Manager</td>
<td>28 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operational Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Abi-Fares</td>
<td>Field Officer</td>
<td>31 December 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Jackson</td>
<td>Field Officer/ Case Manager</td>
<td>4 December 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Edwards</td>
<td>Field Officer</td>
<td>19 November 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Babovic</td>
<td>Field Officer</td>
<td>7 January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Walter-Hortz</td>
<td>Field Officer</td>
<td>7 January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin Geange</td>
<td>Field Officer</td>
<td>27 March 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Bryan</td>
<td>Field Officer</td>
<td>1 July 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma-Jade Sanders</td>
<td>Field Officer</td>
<td>24 April 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence Cochrane</td>
<td>Case Manager</td>
<td>22 June 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Lacey</td>
<td>Case Manager</td>
<td>18 April 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara Threlfall</td>
<td>Communications Officer</td>
<td>23 July 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theresa Grealy</td>
<td>Senior Project Officer</td>
<td>26 October 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lars Gullestrup</td>
<td>Database Developer</td>
<td>15 April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia Rivera</td>
<td>Finance Officer</td>
<td>1 December 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Atchison</td>
<td>Finance Officer</td>
<td>2 August 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanushree Bose</td>
<td>Administration Officer</td>
<td>24 August 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### PAST EMPLOYEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date and Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Banks</td>
<td>14 August 2013–7 January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Barker</td>
<td>3 October 2014–1 January 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Brady</td>
<td>16 December 2013–7 January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Casey</td>
<td>11 December 2008–20 December 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Clifford</td>
<td>3 July 2012–18 January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peta Cooke</td>
<td>24 April 2015–5 August 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Coulthard</td>
<td>15 August 2013–14 March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Godbold</td>
<td>5 August 2012–12 January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra McCoy</td>
<td>23 June 2013–23 June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa O'Carroll</td>
<td>22 February 2010–31 December 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Parker</td>
<td>10 May 2009–5 October 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Reed</td>
<td>20 September 2012–7 January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Roberts</td>
<td>7 April 2011–30 November 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robyn Lawrence</td>
<td>21 November 2011–21 June 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasmin Ryan</td>
<td>12 March 2010–10 January 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Scholes</td>
<td>24 March 2014–2 June 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Thompson</td>
<td>7 January 2013–2 June 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


iii ‘Psychological autopsy’ is a method used by police when investigating a person’s death that involves examining information in personal documents, medical record, coroner’s records, police reports, and interviews with family members and friends of the deceased (and other relevant persons in contact with the deceased prior to their death) to reconstruct what the deceased was thinking, feeling and doing before their death.

iv Where not otherwise referenced, this section is informed by detail and reference material from the report *Suicide in Queensland’s Commercial Building and Construction Industry* (2006), prepared by the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP).


vi Interview with Wallace Trohear 14 November 2016 and interview with Jorgen Gullestrup 26 November 2014.

vii Interview with Wallace Trohear 14 November 2016 and interview with Jorgen Gullestrup 26 November 2014.
viii Interview with John Crittall on 10 February 2015.


x Interview with Wallace Trohear 14 November 2016 and interview with Jorgen Gullestrup 26 November 2014.

xi ‘MATES In Construction’ is the registered name of the organisation. As the organisation evolved it has been more commonly (and affectionately) called ‘MATES’. For ease of reading, this is the term that the author has chosen to use throughout.

xii Interview with Hugh Hamilton on 18 November 2014.

xiii Interview with Hugh Hamilton on 18 November 2014.

xiv See article: Correlates of Suicide in Building Industry Workers (2007).

xv See article: Correlates of Suicide in Building Industry Workers (2007).


xviii Interview with Jacinta Hawgood on 14 July 2017. Hawgood is the Senior Lecturer and Course Convenor in the Graduate Certificate in Suicide Prevention Studies and Master of Suicidology Program. I.

xix Interview with Jacinta Hawgood on 14 July 2017.

xx Interview with Bill Perrett on 21 April 2015.

xxi https://www.beyondblue.org.au
xxii Interchurch Trade and Industry Mission (ITIM) is an extant charity currently located in Orbost, Victoria.

xxiii Converge International is a wholly Australian owned company that specialises in psychology and mental health. They are one of the largest consulting, training and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) providers in the country. Their mission is to partner with organisations to increase the effectiveness and wellbeing of their people through designing and delivering relevant consulting and training services. The company specialises in understanding workplace behaviours and is at the forefront of instigating positive behavioural change initiatives. See: https://www.convergeinternational.com.au

xxiv Interview with Bill Perrett on 21 April 2015.

xxv Interview with Wallace Trohear on 11 June 2015.

xxvi Interview with Wallace Trohear on 11 June 2015.

xxvii Interview with Wallace Trohear 14 November 2016.

xxviii Interview with Wallace Trohear 14 November 2016.

xxix Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014.

xxx Interview with John Brady 5 December 2014.

xxxi Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014.

xxxii Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014.

xxxiii Interview with John Crittall on 10 February 2015.

xxxiv Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014.

xxv Interview with Steve Abson, Chief Operating Officer at Ostwald Bros, on 9 December 2014.

xxxvii Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014.

xxxviii Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014

xxxix Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014

xl Where not otherwise referenced, the factual detail in the following sections are informed by a comprehensive compendium of internal strategy, policy, and planning procedures documents held in the MATES Brisbane office assembled by John Brady.

xli https://www.livingworks.net/who-we-are/our-core-beliefs

xlii The LIFE Framework is Australia’s suicide prevention strategy sponsored by the Commonwealth Department of Health. The document contains the vision and purpose for the framework plus six action areas and their proposed outcomes. Available at: https://www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/docs/LIFE-framework-web.pdf


xliv https://www.livingworks.net

xlv Interview with John Brady 5 December 2014.

xlvi http://www.livingworks.net/programs/suicidetalk

xlvii http://www.livingworks.net/programs/safetalk


xlix All MATES in Construction training is delivered by a minimum of two staff who have completed Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). While one may conduct the presentation, the other ASIST trained person is made available to provide support to any worker present who might need assistance. The program is delivered in this way to ensure (i) the integrity of the program, (ii) continuous improvement in presenting, and (iii) that no one present is adversely affected by the training.

l http://www.livingworks.net/programs/safetalk

li http://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist

lii ‘Postvention’ occurs after a suicide with the purpose of supporting
the family members, friends, peers and co-workers of the person who suicided. The aim of postvention is to help these individuals cope with their loss and reduce the stress caused by being in proximity to a death by suicide to reduce their own risk of suicide.


https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org

https://www.sas.com/tr_tr/software/consulting.html

Interviews with Wallace Trohear and Jorgen Gullestrup.


Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 2 June 2017.

See article: MATES in Construction: Impact of a Multimodal Community-Based Program for Suicide Prevention in the Construction Industry (2011).


Presentation to the 2nd Annual Mental Health Conference held in Sydney on 5 March 2015 by Emeritus Professor Graham Martin.

*The economic cost of suicide and non-fatal suicidal behaviour in the Australian construction industry by state and territory.* A report conducted for MATES in Construction August 2015. Professor
Christopher Doran—Conjoint Professor, School of Medicine and Public Health, Faculty of Health and Medicine, University of Newcastle and Edith Cowan University—and Rod Ling—Research Fellow at Hunter Valley Research Foundation, University of Newcastle—undertook the study.

Relative Risk Ratio (RRR) refers to the ratio of the likelihood that an event will occur in a group that is exposed to a particular risk (e.g. people with at least one family member who has developed breast cancer) versus a group that is not exposed to this same risk (e.g. people with no family members that have developed breast cancer). RRR is used in the medical field to help identify the statistical likelihood that someone may develop a disease following exposure to the disease or to determine the statistical likelihood of a person recovering from a disease when prescribed a medication. RRR considers four factors. When determining the risk of developing a disease following exposure, the four factors would be (a) the number of people who are exposed to the risk and developed the disease, (b) the number of people who were exposed to the risk and didn’t develop the disease, (c) the number of people who were not exposed to the risk and did develop the disease, and (d) the number of people who were not exposed to the risk and did not develop the disease. If the RRR is greater than one, then this proves the exposed group is at greater risk relative to the unexposed group. Emeritus Professor Tony Shannon, AM, (personal communication, October 13, 2017).


lxxi The Economic Cost of Suicide and Non-Fatal Suicide Behaviour in the Australian Workforce and the Potential Impact of a Workplace Suicide Prevention Strategy (2017).

lxxii The Economic Cost of Suicide and Non-Fatal Suicide Behaviour in the Australian Workforce and the Potential Impact of a Workplace Suicide Prevention Strategy (2017).


lxxiv Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014.

lxxv Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014.

lxxvi Letter to MATES dated 28 October 2014 from Annette Beautrais, College of Education, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. Adjunct Professor Beautrais has worked in suicide research in New Zealand and in the US and has collaborated with research colleagues in many countries. She has published extensively, won awards for her research, and has contributed to the development of national and international suicide prevention strategies. She is a former executive member and vice president of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), an elected member of the Internal Academy of Suicide Research (IASR), has contributed to World Health Organization (WHO) publications about suicide prevention for many years, and has edited suicide research journals.


lxxviii Interview with Jorgen Gullestrup on 25 November 2014.

lxxix Interview with Theresa Grealy on 6 July 2017.
GREG SHANNON, OAM

Greg Shannon was born in Sydney, New South Wales. After completing his secondary education, he trained as an accountant. In 1968, having become a part-time soldier in the Citizen Military Forces (CMF)—the equivalent of today’s Army Reserve—he transferred to the Australian Regular Army as a lieutenant. He served in South Vietnam in 1971 with the Fourth Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. A varied and challenging career in the Australian Army followed and he retired in January 1990 as a lieutenant colonel.

In the same month, he commenced working as the general manager of Construction Training Queensland, an industry training advisory body.

He retired in February 2007 as chief executive officer of the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund at the time of the fund’s transition to Construction Skills Queensland.

In retirement, he has assisted the concreting sector in establishing their industry association: the Master Concreters’ Association of Queensland.

He is the honorary treasurer of Brisbane Legacy and the Chairperson of the Queensland ANZAC Day Trust. He is a past president of the Brisbane Food and Wine Club. He plays golf (indifferently!) and enjoys classical music, good food and wine (obviously), rugby (the Queensland Reds when they’re playing well), and spending time with his family.
He is the author of three previous books (histories):


- ‘Catalyst for Change?’ – *The Development and Growth of the Construction Industry Training Centre, Salisbury, Queensland (1992 to 2011)*, and

- *BUSS(Q) – 30 YEARS STRONG – Success Despite the Odds.*

In the 2013 Australia Day Honours, he was recognised for his contribution to vocational training and education in the building and construction industry in Queensland with the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

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MATES HELPING MATES
A HISTORY OF MATES IN CONSTRUCTION QUEENSLAND

“Suicides in the Australian building and construction industry are far too high … on average, over forty workers each year take their own lives.”

MATES in Construction Queensland (MATES) is an organisation dedicated to reducing the rate of suicide in the construction industry.

This book chronicles MATES’ first decade, demonstrating the positive change that can arise when members of the industry and organisations come together to support their mates, showing that MATES can save lives.

A word of thanks from Wallace Trohear,
Trade Unionist and former Chairman of MATES in Construction Queensland.

I am humbled to have had the privilege of being the original MATES in Construction Chair, an organisation that has made a difference to Queensland construction workers and their families. I am grateful for the foresight of BERT, their initial funding and continued support.

MATES in Construction has grown from the back-of-a-beer-coaster concept that sought to build capacity within the industry using the well built communication structure of the industry. From that basic idea, I have to acknowledge the commitment of Jorgen Guliestrup as CEO and John Brady as Operations Manager in developing and delivering the MATES in Construction program.

The continued success of MATES in Construction will only bear fruit if we continue to deliver on our basic values of building capacity and linking workers to professional services. MATES in Construction has been able to show workers there is a toolbox for our heads. It is very hard to get workers help if they do not believe there are tools for the job.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Queensland Board and Greg Shannon OAM for the foresight in documenting the early history, successes and failures of MATES in Construction Queensland.

Happy 10th Birthday MATES.

Wally Trohear