

2021 is proving to be a year like no other for the Leukaemia Foundation's iconic World's Greatest Shave, with an astounding number of shavers harnessing the power of social media platforms to lop off their locks and sacrificing some larger-than-life hairstyles to support Australians with blood cancer.

As 'Shave Week' (March 10-14) kicks off, the Leukaemia Foundation has its sights set on raising \$15 million through World's Greatest Shave (#worldsgreatestshave / #shaveforacure / #shavechallenge) to provide vital support for the growing number of Australians diagnosed with blood cancer including leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and other blood related disorders.

In a week when Australians would usually pack out clubs, pubs, workplaces, schools and malls across the country to cheer on thousands of brave shavers, Leukaemia Foundation CEO Chris Tanti said the COVID-19 pandemic and crowd restrictions have instead prompted shavers to reimagine their campaign, reassess what they're willing to lose and think outside the box to connect with others and smash their fundraising targets.

"As Australians continue feeling the effects of COVID-19, we're seeing a massive and unique shift in the way the community is engaging with World's Greatest Shave this year – swapping shopping centres for shaves on screen, and going that extra mile by growing - and losing - some lengthy mullets and manes. It really is a year like no other for this iconic event," he said.

"We've been experiencing some extraordinary digital engagement with the campaign, with more than 9 million views of World's Greatest Shave user generated content using tags like #worldsgreatestshave on TikTok alone, plus a significant rise in engagement through Instagram and Facebook, so clearly Australians are embracing trending social platforms to spread the word about their shaves in a new way we've never seen before.

"Not only that, why people are shaving and the volume of hair being shaved is changing too – after the year that was 2020, we're definitely seeing a number of Australians chasing 'a fresh start' and shaving their heads to symbolise this, however long their locks, or fearlessly donning an eyebrow-raising 'do' to capture community attention and garner support for their shave. The result is some unique approaches, and some brilliant outcomes.

"In the 23rd year of this beloved campaign, we're thrilled and extremely grateful that the national community is continuing to show up, support, and celebrate the World's Greatest Shave with us and seeking new and inspiring ways to do so in a changing world."

Mr Tanti is joining with what is expected to be around 20,000 Australians participating in World's Greatest Shave this year, utilising social media to share the moment he loses his locks at the Leukaemia Foundation ESA Village in Brisbane.

"With 47 Australians diagnosed with blood cancer every day and that number set to double to close to 100 by 2035, there has never been a more important time to get behind World's Greatest Shave, and I'm proud to be joining the army of Australians shaving their head as we all keep up the fight against this deadly set of diseases," he said.

Blood cancer does not discriminate. It can develop in anyone, occur at any age from newborns to older Australians across all states and territories. Sadly, there are no screening programs available for blood cancers and there is no way to prevent blood cancer through lifestyle change.

Mr Tanti said blood cancer symptoms can sometimes be subtle or similar to other conditions such as a virus, often making it a silent disease that can be tricky to catch - but if it remains unchecked, the consequences can be devastating.

"We also know Australians living with blood cancer are particularly susceptible to COVID-19, and as a result the Leukaemia Foundation has more than doubled support over the past year as those diagnosed continue to ride the emotional and mental roller coaster of the pandemic.

“By signing up to World’s Greatest Shave and raising money, you can help ensure that the growing number of families facing blood cancer have someone to turn to every step of the way in their journey, a place to call home during treatment, and access to the best possible care.”

World’s Greatest Shave is the single biggest source of funds that enable the work of the Leukaemia Foundation each year. Not only does the money raised support families impacted by blood cancer, but it also helps the brilliant research scientists continue their search for better ways to diagnose and treat blood cancer more effectively.

“Shaving is the ultimate act of solidarity with Australians living with blood cancer. Every year, thousands of brave heroes send a powerful message of hope to those diagnosed, and this year that message is ringing especially loud and clear.

Whether you have a personal connection to cancer, wish to tick an item off your bucket list or simply want to raise money for a good cause, we urge you to sign up to World’s Greatest Shave or donate to someone who has, and make 2021 the year that you help to make a significant difference,” Mr Tanti said.

To help shave the world from blood cancer, simply download the World’s Greatest Shave app, sign up online at worldsgreatestshave.com or call 1800 500 088 for more information.

#worldsgreatestshave #shaveforacure #shavechallenge

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