

MELBOURNE'S 35KM WALK TOWARDS VITAL RESEARCH

Re:issue and Correction: Date of walk is Sunday 2 May (tomorrow), not today as per earlier release.

Melburnians will strap on their sneakers tomorrow (Sunday 2 May) and walk 35km across Melbourne to participate in The Bloody Long Walk, a national fundraising initiative for the Mito Foundation.

Mitochondrial disease (mito) is a debilitating, potentially fatal, genetic disorder that robs the body's cells of the energy they need to function properly. Participants will walk for more than 7 hours, clock up nearly 47,000 steps, all the way from Yarra Bend Park, along the Yarra River past Southbank and Docklands, finishing at St Kilda Sea Baths.

And this year walkers will have an extra spring in their step following the recent introduction of the Mitochondrial Donation Law Reform (Maeve's Law) Bill 2021 into Federal Parliament in March this year.

The passing of this legislation is the next step towards preventing mitochondrial disease (mito) in future generations of Australian kids.

Mito Foundation CEO, Sean Murray, said the event is part of a nationwide initiative which supports families affected by mito.

"The response across Melbourne has been unbelievable for this event, which is one of the 9 physical and virtual Bloody Long Walks taking place across Australia this year," Mr. Murray said.

"The truth is every week in Australia one child will develop a life-threatening form of mito – that's 50 Aussie kids a year. Yet most people have no idea that the disease exists.

"All money raised today will help ramp up our support services for mito families, which is critical as our nation continues to navigate the global pandemic.

"The mito community is a high-risk population, with reduced immunity and particularly susceptible to diseases like COVID-19, so they really need our help now more than ever."

Kat Barlow, mother of 10 year old Melbourne boy, Noah, who suffers from mito, spoke about the challenges of having a child who battles the disease.

"Our darling Noah is our miracle child. He was born prematurely at just 29 weeks and as he grew up, he faced significant health challenges. My husband and I spent years trying to find answers and it wasn't until Noah was five years old that the doctors thought it was most likely mito and it wasn't until he was 8 that we got a diagnosis.

"As a parent, nothing can prepare you for this news, but we have the most incredible medical team around us now and despite the daily challenges Noah faces, he manages to smile every day.

"All money raised goes toward important research and support for families who have kids suffering from this rare disease.

"I know we'll cross the finish line exhausted and blistered, but that's nothing compared to what people with mito go through every day of their lives."

The Bloody Long Walk COVID Safe event plan is in alignment with appropriate government and health authority requirements.

For more information about The Bloody Long Walk, to share your support, or contribute a donation, please go to: www.bloodylongwalk.com.au.

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