

'I'd had enough': Luke finds a way forward by opening up on struggles

By Beau Greenway

Updated August 15 2024



Construction foreman Luke Humphrey hopes by sharing his journey with depression he can encourage more in the industry to speak up about mental health. Picture by James Wiltshire

Luke Humphrey was ready to give in.

The North East civil construction foreman was in a fight with depression and thought it had beaten him.

"At Christmas [in 2023], it really broke me," he said. "I had some big meltdowns. I'm ashamed I didn't speak up and ashamed of where it was going.

"I'd had enough, and it felt like everything I was doing wasn't good enough."

Mr Humphrey didn't seek help for six months as [he tried to tackle his depression alone](#) but opened up to his wife and family, who helped get him to a doctor.

"I wasn't one to speak up to start with. I was too busy worrying about everyone else instead of worrying about myself," he said.

"The work-life balance wasn't adding up, and it took its toll. I went to the doctor last July, and my anxiety was through the roof. I hated myself and hated the way I looked.

"Some medication took the edge off, but I changed medication, and it did me no favours.

"I reckon I've cried in the past two years more than I have in my whole life."

Mr Humphrey, who lives at Huon, said the turning point was [when he started to see a psychologist](#).

'You don't have to be sad to be depressed'

"The best thing you can do is talk to someone you don't know. They don't judge you, they give you some insight into what the cause is or what is going on in the mind," he said.

"I would talk to my friends, and it was amazing to see how many are going through anxiety or depression.

"You don't have to be sad to be depressed. I was angry.

"I was travelling a lot and would have a lot of time to think. A song would trigger me. Some make you happy, others don't."

[Building and construction workers](#) are six times more likely to die from suicide than an accident at work, and one in four are likely to be experiencing a mental health issue at any one time.



Luke Humphrey and Beyond Blue philanthropy relationships lead Zareen Syed at an event in Wodonga that saw \$20,000 donated to the mental health support organisation. Picture by James Wiltshire

'It doesn't hurt to cry'

Mr Humphrey, who works for national civil construction company Winslow Group, spoke up as part of its Tell Your Story initiative, which encouraged employees to nominate a charity that had made a difference in their lives.

After hearing Mr Humphrey's story at an event in Wodonga on Wednesday, August 14, Winslow committed to donate \$20,000 to [mental health support organisation Beyond Blue](#).

"I hope this shows a few blokes that it doesn't hurt to cry or to break down to your best mate and tell them you're not feeling well," he said.

"They are a very supportive company. I didn't know them from a bar of soap, but straight away, they were there to support me, and it blew me away because I haven't had that before."

High demand for mental health help

[Beyond Blue](#) philanthropy relationships lead Zareen Syed said more than 275,000 people had contacted the service in the past year.

"Nobody should ever feel it's too far away or too hard to get in touch because we're there for you," she said.

"Most people wait until they are in crisis until they seek support. We need to get people talking about what it is like to have anxiety and what it is like to feel depressed so they get the support earlier.

"A lot of funding goes to crisis support, but why do we have to wait until we get that far in order to help others?

"There's a lot of people who are impacted by what we're able to do at Beyond Blue, but it doesn't happen from people in the office, it happens from people out in the community who are talking about mental health and making it easier for someone else to seek support."



Winslow Group's Wodonga employees pass on a check for \$20,000 to Beyond Blue on Wednesday, August 14. Picture by James Wiltshire

Courageous act to benefit workers

Winslow Group operations manager Stephen Strano acknowledged mental illness was a serious problem in the construction industry and was grateful Mr Humphrey shared his story.

"When we read Luke's story, we were so moved and amazed by his courage in speaking up," he said. "We know this couldn't be an easy story for him to share, but he has done it to help his Winslow family and the community."

"We care about the health and wellbeing of our employees and their families - the Winslow family - which is why we are eager to support Beyond Blue and the vital work it does for the community."

Mr Humphrey is no stranger to charity work, having helped organise the [Rise from the Ashes concert at Corryong in 2020](#) after the Black Summer bushfires, and has also raised funds for the Corryong Hospital's mental health services.

- If you or someone you know needs help, call Lifeline: 13 11 14

Printed in *The Border Mail* on August 15, 2024.

Link: <https://www.bordermail.com.au/story/8729889/north-east-foreman-luke-humphrey-opens-up-on-depression-battle/>