

## MEDIA RELEASE

As Joint Patrons of Integra Service Dogs Australia, Their Excellencies, The Governor General of Australia General the Honourable David John Hurley AC DSC (retired) and Mrs Linda Hurley today proudly launched the 2021 Integra Coast-to-Coast Ride.

“Integra Service Dogs Australia is a great organisation and does important work. The Integra Ride helps support former and current serving ADF veterans and First Responders suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and their families” said His Excellency.

Two brothers both in their fifties – Brian and Ian Schumacher– whose families have several current ADF members and first responders – are embarking on this monumental bike ride from Fremantle, Western Australia to Sydney, NSW during April, and May 2021.

This year’s Integra Ride starts in Fremantle on Thursday 1 April and finishes in Sydney on Saturday 15 May. The cycle route is a distance of about 4,400 kilometres. The planned route will take this two-man dedicated team through many small communities and towns along the way in WA, SA, Victoria, the ACT and NSW.

The two brothers are seeking to raise funds, through Corporate Sponsorship and public donations for the charity – Integra Service Dogs Australia – and raise awareness of the role of quality assistance dogs working alongside those who serve our community and country.

“Over the course of nearly 50 days in the saddle, [Brian and Ian] will help raise awareness of:

- the importance of mental health among those who serve our community, and
- the role that assistance dogs can play in supporting these individuals in managing their complex physical, mental and emotional injuries” his Excellency said.

Her Excellency, Mrs Hurley advised “You can follow Brian and Ian’s daily progress on the Integra website as they travel from Fremantle to Sydney, pushing through more than 100 kilometres each day. The Integra website [[www.isda.com.au](http://www.isda.com.au)] has details on how to help Integra raise funds for its life-saving work.”

Integra Service Dogs Australia dogs are specially trained canine guardians for veterans and first responders who are suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The dogs are trained to become emotionally tuned to their handler and provide unconditional support through the trauma and stresses of everyday life. It costs approximately \$35,000 to train, match and place an Integra Dog with a veteran or first responder (such as former police officer or emergency services worker) suffering from PTSD.

His passion for endurance adventures saw Brian ride almost 1000km from Hay, NSW, to Maitland, NSW, in January last year in support of his brother Ian on the second leg his own Maitland, SA to Maitland, NSW ride in support of families who had lost someone through suicide. Brian and Ian lost their sister, Marilyn to

suicide in 1997 after a long battle with mental illness. Thus, the brothers have a passion for supporting mental health initiatives and for getting behind causes like Integra Service Dogs Australia.

“There’s something liberating about being on a pushbike. You get a very different perspective of the country and you meet the most amazing people. Whenever you stop in a town for a cup of coffee or a bite to eat, people will always come up for a chat and ask you what you are doing and why,” Mr Schumacher said.

Brian has sons in the Police Force and Army, so understands the pressures on first responders and defence force personnel. Their decision to ride for Integra Service Dogs Australia came not long after the bushfires that ravaged so many communities over the 2019/2020 summer when it was expected that many of those brave first responders would themselves suffer long term trauma associated with their work. The onset of COVID-19 has added to the toll on these important groups of Australians who live and work in every town and city across the country.

“This coast-to-coast ride is a good opportunity to support an organisation which is doing wonderful work for veterans and first responders who have served Australia with distinction and are now suffering from PTSD,” Mr Schumacher said. “This is our way of saying thank you for your service. The impact of providing vulnerable people with a support dog that gives them renewed purpose, greater confidence and unconditional support is life changing – and it saves lives.”

“Australia owes a debt of gratitude to our Veterans and First Responders and, by extension, their families. I commend all at Integra Service Dogs Australia for the work you do in helping those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

It is now our great pleasure to launch the 2021 Integra Coast-to-Coast Ride ” declared his Excellency.

**Our Heroes need your help – donate to the Integra Coast to Coast Ride or join the ride today at [www.isda.com.au/coast-to-coast-ride/](http://www.isda.com.au/coast-to-coast-ride/)**

Integra Contact: Jen Barbour 04 3863 4546 or [Jen@isda.com.au](mailto:Jen@isda.com.au)