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MEDIA RELEASE

8 May 2024

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- AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE APPAREL (ADA) PARTNERS WITH THE AUSTRALIAN KOOKABURRA KIDS FOUNDATION FOR A HEARTFELT INITIATIVE: OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF ADA'S DIGGER THE PLUSHIE PUP WITH A PURPOSE -

Australian Defence Apparel (ADA) is the largest uniform and equipment provider in Australia spanning military, law enforcement, healthcare and numerous government and corporate industries. Today, ADA proudly announces a unique collaboration with the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation (AKKF), an organisation committed to empowering young people to thrive beyond the impacts of family mental illness; together, they are set to unveil and welcome 'DIGGER', the Plushie Pup with a Purpose. The official launch event and 'first look' at DIGGER will take place on Saturday 18 May 2024 from 10am to 4pm at the award-winning, interactive science centre, 'TwistED Science', Moorabbin, Victoria.

DIGGER represents the commitment of ADA and AKKF to support the mental health and well-being of young individuals across Australia. With every plushie purchased, all proceeds will directly support the AKKF programs which supports the unique needs of young people from current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) families. Through ADA's longstanding partnership with AKKF, this initiative marks a significant stride in recognising the invaluable service of both human and four-legged heroes.

ADA is a proud founding partner of the *Kookaburra Kids* program. ADA's contributions help Kookaburra Kids support young people who have family members protecting and serving our community on the front line.

This event will be a celebration of compassion, resilience, and community support with a focus on the official debut of DIGGER, a Plushie Pup with a Purpose. DIGGER will be formally introduced on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2024 by Kookaburra Kids CEO, Renée Coffey, ADA representative Jason Semple, a Police Special Operations Veteran, and Kookaburra Kids Ambassador Belinda Neil, a passionate advocate of the importance of prevention and early intervention of mental health.

Renée Coffey, CEO of Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation, expressed her enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "We are so excited to continue our partnership with Australian Defence Apparel. To date, ADA has generously contributed \$75,000 to Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation programs, providing crucial support to young people in families impacted by mental illness. Along with ADA's unwavering support of Kookaburra Kids, this initiative marks a significant step forward in recognising the invaluable service of our heroic four-legged soldiers, who stand alongside their courageous human counterparts. We have eagerly anticipated the launch of this new endeavour in 2024, envisioning DIGGER, a beloved mascot, bringing joy to the hearts of many fortunate young people."

Chris Dixon, CEO of Australian Defence Apparel echoed these sentiments, stating, "DIGGER embodies ADA's commitment to supporting the mental health and well-being of young individuals across Australia and this initiative is a testament to our ongoing commitment to supporting young people from defence families facing adversity. Through the DIGGER Plushie Program and our partnership with AKKF, we aim to make a meaningful difference in the lives of these courageous individuals and provide a beacon of hope for children navigating difficult circumstances. We are proud to be a founding partner of the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation, and honoured to present DIGGER as a conduit for raising funds that empower young individuals." remarked Chris Dixon.



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Guests will have the unique opportunity to engage with a real-life, kitted-up German Shepherd personnel dog travelling down especially for this event from K9 Training Centre in Canberra, providing an irresistible photo opportunity that celebrates the profound connection between humans and their faithful companions.

The launch event will bring together community leaders, volunteers, and young heroes to celebrate resilience, hope, and the power of support. The event will be attended by the CEO of the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation and volunteers, who will be present to support the activities and engage with the attendees.

ADA's Jason Semple remarked "Early intervention with a focus on the provision of psychological and resilience measures, are essential tools for emotional regulation, which in turn provide proven cognitive avenues that allow our kids to transform post traumatic events into 'post traumatic growth'.

Teaching our kids to harness the effects of adversity in a manner which promotes positivity and long term healthy psychological pathways, will promote resilience & happiness now and as they transition into adulthood." he says.

As the event unfolds, discussions on mental health education from Kookaburra Kids Ambassador and ADA representatives will highlight the importance of nurturing emotional well-being from a young age. Attendees can embrace the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations, reinforcing the message of support and understanding.

The launch of DIGGER the Plushie German Shepherd marks the beginning of a journey filled with compassion and solidarity. ADA and AKKF remain steadfast in their commitment to fostering a brighter future for generations to come.

*Official event invitation attached for more information and agenda timings.*

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**About Australian Defence Apparel (ADA):**

Australian Defence Apparel (ADA) is a leading provider of cutting-edge apparel solutions for defence, law enforcement, and emergency services personnel. With a focus on innovation and quality, ADA is committed to equipping those who serve our communities with the best-in-class gear.

<https://www.ada.com.au/digger-the-dog/>

**About the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation (AKKF):**

The Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation (AKKF) is a registered charity dedicated to delivering services to young people (8-18) impacted by family mental illness with the aim of empowering them to build resilience lifelong knowledge and abilities to reach their potential. This is carried out through face-to-face programs and online Connect sessions which are fun, free and run across Australia.

<https://kookaburrakids.org.au/>

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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