



## **Sirens of Silence Ian & Lyn Sinclair** interviewed by Liz Janney

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The Gibb Challenge is a socially competitive 700-kilometre team relay event raising community awareness and money for charity. In 2016 their Principal Beneficiary is Sirens of Silence - supporting our triple zero heroes. This is the story of Lyn and Ian Sinclair who in 2015 created the charity Sirens of Silence – this is their challenge to help raise awareness of posttraumatic stress disorder PTSD.

*“We were watching a program of a police officer who had suicided, his story was recorded on 000 and that touched us. It was a story that was run over 2 nights on Sunday Night and it basically chronicled his battle with PTSD as a police officer and the impact it had on his family and culminated in him ringing 000 knowing full well that it would be recorded right up to the moment of his death. That story had a profound impact on Ian & I.*

*I was not able to be a paramedic anymore as I had injured my back, said Lyn. So I was also trying to find out where I fitted in with trying to help people. The initial idea came from a peer support page we had on Facebook which is for Ambos specifically and I invited all my ambo mates to share stories, a page where people could peer support each other, cause that is where we felt the change needed to start from the bottom. That grew and we had another suicide a week later (a friend of mine). Where to go from here? How about a Charity?*

*We started Sirens of Silence with our own money and now we are at a point where the selling of the merchandise and our fundraising events keep it going. We are both trained paramedics. I spent 5 years as a volunteers and Ian many more years than me. We moved to Perth in 2006 to do Para medicine. Ian now is a paramedic in Port Hedland and I run Hertz in Broome plus work for the charity.*

*Our aim is to raise awareness along the frontline emergency services personnel that they need to look after their own mental health. Because of the nature of the work they tend to be people that give of themselves. There is not enough self-care or self-awareness about his or her own mental health. They will just go and go until mentally they were a wreck and that would play out in their own family lives with abuse of alcohol, gambling and breakdown of relationships – plus all the evils of life.*

*All the emergency services have their own Chaplaincy and their own help programs but clearly people were still committing suicide, so people were slipping through that formal network for whatever reasons. People are not just suiciding because they are a paramedic or policemen, there are many other life things happening to them at the same time. So they have the usual life pressure plus the pressure of their work. It is not that they just take a tablet and it will fix it, each individual is very different in what they are feeling and require helping them to get better again.*

*Sirens of Silence is there to:*

- 1. To raise awareness and with that we raise money as well.*
- 2. To provide people with external pathways. So we gain all the information of where people can go to trusted and reputable professionals. So when they contact us we can give them choices.*
- 3. Providing people with financial assistance to go and get that help. There is a Hollywood Clinic 12 week program that costs about \$40,000. We do not envisage funding the full amount but we can help with the shortfall. That is just an example.*
- 4. Educational phase – dealing with grief, learning what posttraumatic stress disorder is and self care.*

*We have been overwhelmed that people as far as England and America who are in the emergency services have approached us to take on our model over to them. We are already sending merchandise to them. They are asking, “Why hasn’t anyone done this before?” We hope they mirror what we are doing.*

*The pressure on the job seems to be increasing for emergency service personnel, with the jargon of Key Performance Indicators, response times, work loads changing and expanding – seems to be the way of the world. Sirens of Silence is there to help all emergency service personnel get help”.*

**For further information [www.sirensOfSilence.org.au](http://www.sirensOfSilence.org.au)**