



Tour de Cure

ONE INSURANCE BROKER'S PUSH TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



There's a personal satisfaction that comes with getting involved in a cause and giving back to your community – as Allsure Insurance's Aaron Donaldson found out firsthand.

BY MELISSA MONTANG

The insurance industry, especially insurance broking, has some of the most generous and community-involved people in the world. Perhaps it's because brokers see the worst when it comes to claims – catastrophes, accidents, disasters, interruptions and illnesses – that they feel so strongly about getting involved in their local communities, about giving something back. Insurance Adviser recently had the pleasure of meeting with one such individual, Aaron Donaldson of Allsure Insurance.

Co-run by Aaron and his sister Melissa, Allsure was started in Geelong, Victoria, from the ground up in 1986 by their parents, Ian and Christine. The siblings bought the

business in 2007 and transitioned from a multi-endorse authorised representative to an authorised broker, as part of the Community Broker Network (CBN). Currently the business has four staff and has recently expanded its presence into Hobart, Tasmania.

Aaron began his insurance career in 1993. He's married to his beautiful wife Sarah, with two gorgeous step-kids Lola, 11, and Eddie, 9. He's also a part-time employee of Telstra Broadcast Services, taking part in live sports broadcasts as an engineer/operator for the Big Bash Cricket, Tour Down Under, NRL, Marathons and Melbourne Cup. He also started up his own drone and videography

business (onairmedia.com.au), which has given him the opportunity to present at NIBA events and the CBN conference on drones and insurance.

GETTING INVOLVED IN THE TOUR DE CURE

Aaron initially found out about the Tour de Cure directly from one of its founders, Gary Bertwhistle, who spoke at a CGU AR Conference in Queensland. He also worked with Mark Beretta, a regular V8 Supercars commentator for Channel Seven, when Beretta was pit reporting and Aaron was handling the on-board cameras.

"I went to school with Mark's little brother Paul," explains Aaron. "At the time,



Left Aaron at Mt Hotham in 2017, capturing drone footage for that year's Tour de Cure documentary. **Clockwise from above** Aaron with 17-time Tour de France competitor and stage winner Jens Voigt; Aaron hanging with Eric Bana; Aaron posting a triumphant 2nd place in the 2017 Victorian Penny Farthing Champs.

Paul owned a bike shop in Geelong and would go on the Tour as a mechanic. I'd helped Paul's fundraising efforts in past years, and when my dad passed away from brain cancer in 2014, I signed up to help out.

"Dad's mum died from breast cancer, my dad from brain cancer, my aunty from breast cancer, my uncle from prostate cancer and too many other people to mention. I just had to do something."

Since 2014, Aaron has personally raised more than \$30,000.

"I first applied as a volunteer, and listed my skills and abilities, and that I had a homemade drone to bring along to help with the filming," says Aaron. "Now every year I do drone footage for the Tour documentary and help out with video production and other digital media requirements. It's added a new perspective and dimension to the documentary, which hopefully increases the reach and appeal of the messages, to enhance the fundraising and awareness of Tour de Cure."

HOPPING IN THE SADDLE

Last year, Aaron decided to truly put his money where his mouth is and participate

in an actual Tour de Cure ride himself. He began his training, and immediately found that trying to find the extra eight to 10 hours a week to ride meant getting up "stupid early" at least three days a week.

"It was a great journey," he says. "I felt better health wise and improved my level of fitness with no impact to my joints. At one point on a training ride, I was unsure if I could tackle the 60km I needed to do that morning, as I hadn't ever gone that far before. After I'd done the hardest part of that ride, I was on my way home, with the sun shining and the wind blowing at my back, I just started flat-out crying. I would have looked a right sight to the commuters on the way to work that morning!"

All the hard work paid off, and Aaron rode in the Tour de Cure Peter Mac Hospital 3-day Victorian ride, completing over 100km a day around Victoria and the top of Tassie.

FAMOUS FACES ALONG THE WAY

Over the years, Aaron has met a number of actors, entertainers and even other insurance industry colleagues. His celebrity list

ABOUT THE TOUR DE CURE

The Tour de Cure's vision is a world without cancer. Its purpose is to raise vital funds to support the doctors and scientists who have dedicated their lives to uncovering a cure. Since 2007, the Tour de Cure has had more than 6,000 participants, raised over \$35 million and funded 306 projects (with 22 scientific cancer breakthroughs!). Additionally, more than 100,000 kids have been reached through the 'Be Fit! Be Healthy! Be Happy!' program, helping to demystify cancer and encourage kids to make healthy lifestyle choices for their future.

Top 4 reasons

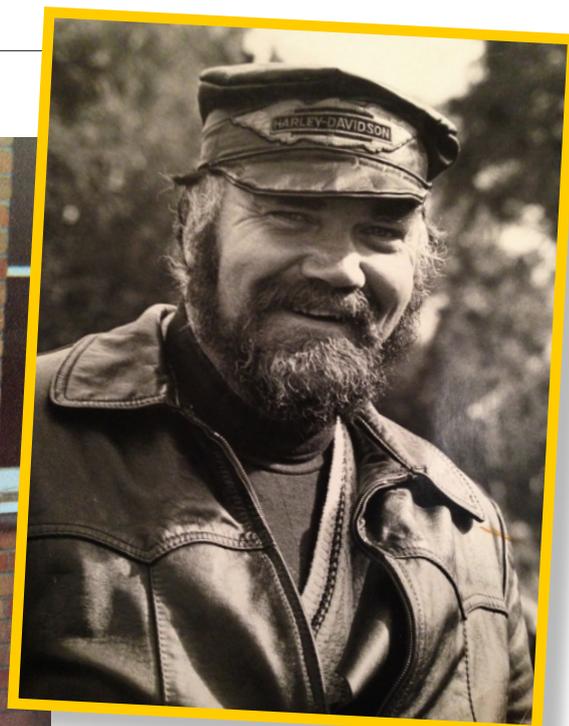
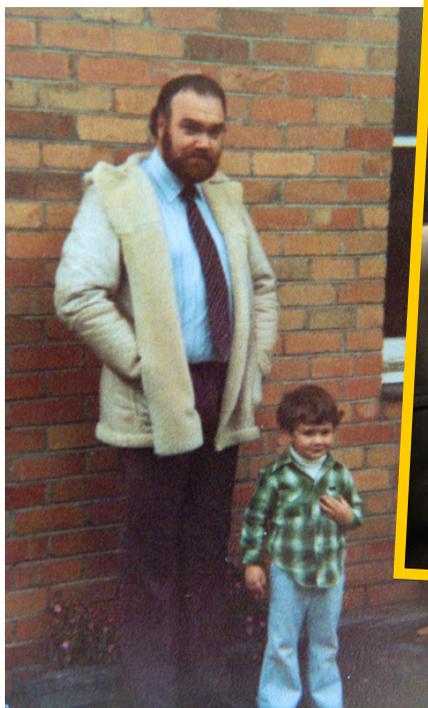
TO FIND YOUR OWN CAUSE AND GET INVOLVED

1. BUSINESSES NEED TO WORK to create their networks, their connection to communities. Doing something for the greater good brings together like-minded people and has quite naturally led to some good business introductions and winning new business with highly sticky clients. "Several times now, we've also donated our broker fee for all new business during the Tour," notes Aaron. "It gives the clients a bit of a kick knowing it's going there."

2. HAVING A CAUSE that your business genuinely cares about is also great to build your online presence. You can share the story of what you're doing and why through your social media channels and it helps drive strong engagement. "The first time I did the ride," says Aaron, "we posted about it with a photo and a few links, and before you knew it, our organic reach was in the thousands. That one post helped raise hundreds of dollars in donations."

3. LEARN AND GROW with connections outside your immediate industry. "Being a small business owner, I feel there is a need for mentors outside the industry," says Aaron. "With my connections thanks to being involved in the Tour de Cure, I get to chat with large company execs - CEOs, CFOs, CTOs, - and other small business owners and bring back the knowledge and experience to apply it to our business."

4. INCREASE YOUR OPPORTUNITY to diversify or specialise. "On tour, I'm known as the drone guy, and when people find out it's not my full-time job, they're surprised I've joined three different styles of business together. My varied experience means a wider knowledge base for the insurance side of things. I can specialise in media-type insurances, drone insurances, event insurances as well as all types of business."



Left Aaron with his father Ian in 1980, when Aaron was four years old. **Above** Ian at age 50, and the inspiration for Aaron's continued involvement in the Tour de Cure.

includes *Sunrise's* Mark Berretta, Eric Bana of *Chopper* and *Black Hawk Down* fame, Jens Voigt - a German ex pro cyclist and Tour de France stage winner - another Tour de France stage winner in Robbie McEwan, Aussie pro cyclists Sarah Roy and Mark Renshaw, rowers Drew Ginn and Nick Green of the Olympic Gold Medal-winning Oarsome Foursome, TV presenter James Tobin and the inimitable Paul "Hoges" Hogan - to name just a few.

While Aaron says he will be back volunteering at the Signature Tour, which will go from Mackay to Cape Tribulation at the end of April, his riding days aren't done either.

"Now that I've been bitten by the riding bug, I'll have to do the three days again for Peter Mac," he says. "The whole family gets involved now - my stepdaughter Lola is just itching to come along and help out. My mum has always been a huge supporter and has hosted functions in the past for Tour de Cure, as well as sharing the story via social media."

"I really want to add that I couldn't do this stuff without the support from my sister, Melissa, and the Allsure staff while I'm away from the office."

HOW TO GIVE BACK... AND WHY

While Aaron would preface any business development comments strongly by saying

it wasn't and should never be the intent of a business or person to make money through giving back, he does acknowledge that "doing good is good business".

It makes sense, if you think about it - if you had to choose between two similar service providers and one went above and beyond to give back to the community, which one would you choose? Likely the one that isn't purely about their own profits!

Some insurance brokers shy away from promoting their community service or fundraising efforts, but these days clients want the option of making a choice between a business that does good for the community and one that doesn't.

It's also an amazing way to connect more closely with clients - it's a personal story, and they can be part of it if they want. Aaron says, "It helps to retain clients, especially those that were close with my dad. I've had good donations from clients that have known him for 30 years or more and they felt great that we were doing something to help out."

"Oh, and I reckon that cycling is the new golf in the corporate world. It's a great social activity, easy to chat to the rider beside you while you roll along, or hang out at a coffee shop after the ride. I've found that it's a great place to network and meet new clients and cement relationships with old ones." ■