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## Queensland Runner to Honour Detective With 550km Ultra

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A Sunshine Coast mother of four is preparing to run 550 kilometres across Queensland in memory of a fallen police detective, while raising awareness and funds for police mental health.

Local ultramarathon runner Jess Miller will begin her challenge on September 22, starting from Woodgate near Bundaberg and finishing in Brisbane on September 29 to coincide with National Police Remembrance Day.

The run, named *Blue HOPE Ultra: A Fuss About Russ*, pays tribute to Detective Senior Constable Russell Sheehan, who died by suicide in December 2015 after a distinguished 33-year policing career. Sheehan was among the first responders to the Childers Palace Backpackers Hostel fire in 2000, one of Australia's most devastating tragedies.

Miller said the challenge is both personal and purposeful, aiming to highlight the importance of mental health support for police officers.

"You couldn't meet more genuine people than Kath and Russ," she said. "He was a kind, beautiful man with a smile for everyone. With the 10-year anniversary of his passing

approaching, I wanted to do something meaningful—to show his family that Russ is not forgotten, and to honour his legacy by helping others who may be struggling.”

Miller’s goal is to raise \$50,000 for **Blue HOPE**, a Brisbane-based volunteer organisation providing independent and confidential mental health support to current and former police across Australia. Since its founding in 2014, the service has supported more than 1,500 officers and was among the first to reach out to Sheehan’s widow, Kathy, after his death.

Along her 550km route, Miller will stop at police stations in Bargara, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Noosa Heads, Maroochydore, Caboolture, and Albany Creek to connect with serving officers.

“These visits are about connection—showing our officers they are not alone, and that their wellbeing matters to the community,” she said.

Kathy Sheehan, who has given her full support to the initiative, said the campaign carries deep meaning for her and her family.

“Time hasn’t completely healed the wounds,” she said. “But raising awareness is essential—conversations about mental health need to remain front and centre. We must not become complacent.”

Miller’s campaign adds to growing calls for greater recognition of the mental health challenges faced by law enforcement officers. With community backing and the support of Blue HOPE, she hopes her journey will inspire conversations and encourage those struggling in silence to seek help.