

Biography – McQuilty Quirke NSC

McQuilty Quirke has inspired many people with his courage, determination and positive mindset after battling through Post Traumatic Stress from Iraq, then the physical wounds sustained after being Wounded-in-Action in Afghanistan. He was a leader, a company medic, a soldier, and his life was in the hands of his mates.

McQuilty enlisted into the Australian Army on 7 December 1999, into the Medical Corps. He wanted to save lives, and he was very good at his job. He would apply these lessons in East Timor in 2001 treating children and adults impacted by the conflict. All his training would not prepare him to see the horrors of war in Iraq in 2006 and his mind was injured. Upon returning home McQuilty delved into a nightmare ridden life, consuming alcohol to drown out the horrors of his time in Iraq. He was lucky to have his wife, who along with their two kids saved him from a perilous journey of minimal sleep, nightmares, flashbacks and suicidal thoughts.

In 2007, McQuilty was awarded the Nursing Service Cross for his lifesaving treatment of a soldier with multiple neck fractures sustained after a dead tree fell on his head during a training exercise in North Queensland in 2004

. McQuilty provided exceptional first aid to the injured soldier and displayed outstanding leadership on the ground to enable the effective treatment and evacuation of the injured officer. His ability to treat under immense pressure was an overwhelming contributor to the officer being able to walk and continue to serve.

McQuilty developed resilience, a positive mindset, and fought back to be deployed again. He deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 with the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. On the 13 August 2011, McQuilty's life changed again, forever. McQuilty was Wounded-in-Action by an improvised explosive device detonated under his vehicle. The vehicle was thrown ten metres from the blast site, McQuilty was ejected from the rear hatch and thrown thirty metres and landed on the side of the road headfirst.

McQuilty sustained multiple life threatening injuries to every limb, had a traumatic brain injury, and shattered two vertebrae. Due to the efforts of his mates on the ground he was kept alive until senior medical help arrived. Shortly after, McQuilty was nil signs of life for four minutes on the ground, then four minutes on the aero medevac helicopter. He spontaneously came around, and was rushed into life saving surgery where he died again. He was revived and sent to Germany, however he died again and an emergency landing to a health facility saved him again.

McQuilty landed in Germany on 15 August 2011, and on the 16 August 2011 he had his 31st birthday. His wife arrived on the 17 August 2011. McQuilty arrived back in Australia on 31 August 2011, and began his recovery in various hospitals. He spent 6 and half months in hospital, and has endured 32 operations to date. He defied all doctors' prognosis and walked his first steps three months after his incident, despite being advised it would take up to 18 months to be able to walk on his left leg due to the damage.

In 2013, his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. Showing incredible strength and resilience he learnt how to walk again and became primary carer. During this period he also lost his father to lung and throat cancer, which had a massive impact on his recovery and resilience journey. Despite the setbacks McQuilty and his wife both showed incredible perseverance to work through together.

McQuilty currently works as a National Rugby League Game Development Officer in North Queensland as well coaching in the local Senior Rugby League Competition. He completed his Bachelor of Sports and Exercise Science in 2017 and has worked with Junior Representative teams, Townsville Blackhawks, and North Queensland Woman's Goldstars Squad in a volunteer capacity. He also works with ERGT as a Helicopter Underwater Escape Training Instructor and Safety diver.

McQuilty uses his lived experiences to inspire and motivate everyone. His incredible positive mindset encourages individuals to build mental, emotional and physical resilience. He speaks on leadership; resilience; perspective; adversity and how to work through to develop better wellbeing and lifestyles. He has spoken to local schools, NRL Toyota Cowboys, NRL Cowboys U20s, Queensland Reds, Qantas Wallabies, and Australian Kangaroos and various businesses, corporations and military units.

He is currently writing a book to document his experiences in the hope of inspiring individuals to rise up, learn through lived experience and live a fulfilled life. He has a strong focus on wellbeing, particularly helping fellow veterans and first responders, and mentoring younger generations. McQuilty is an Ambassador for veteran owned Non-for-Profit Company Swiss 8 and uses his lived experience to promote healthy wellbeing. He is married to Tammy with two children, and they reside in Townsville.