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GWIC steward takes a colourful approach to supporting Leukaemia Foundation

Bravery takes on many different forms but when it comes to a courageous move from Greyhound Welfare & Integrity Commission (GWIC) steward Steff Richards, there's a colourful explanation.

The usually shy official is now sporting rainbow hair as she gets behind the Leukaemia Foundation's World's Greatest Shave.

While Richards has previously been dared to act as a live canvas for hope for those fighting blood cancer, this year she finally mustered the resolve to become a fundraiser.

"When I first got dared about two years ago, I was eyeing off the rainbow treatment and thought 'I really like this and could potentially do this', but then I bailed out," Richards admitted.

"But this year, I was 'I'm going to do it'. My Mum was very surprised when I said I was doing it because I have never been one to dye my hair and to go extravagant, but she is very proud."

Extravagant is a fitting way to describe Richards' new look, with the team from Wyong's Lotus Hair Design providing her with luminous locks.

It is a look which has made the GWIC steward stand out at greyhound race meetings, but starting conversations is exactly what Richards was aiming for. She has since discovered just how many greyhound racing industry participants have been impacted by Leukaemia.

"Recently we had Eileen Robbo [Robertson] pass away from Leukaemia, which I didn't know until after I set up with the charity. It made me even more determined ... around the tracks everyone has said it looks great and it starts a conversation," Richards said.

"Helping with something like this shows that GWIC is here to help everyone too. My head steward Kevin Adams didn't notice at first, but when he realised what I'd done ... he was really thrown and surprised and happy that I'd decided to do it."

The positive feedback Richards has received from trainers is not where the support the industry is offering her ends either.

Maitland track manager Tony Edmunds created what Richards laughs is "a good nightmare" with the way he has embraced her fundraising efforts, donating five race names on the 11 March meeting which can be sold to sponsors.

Gosford track manager Kade Davis and The Gardens track manager Michael Brady then matched that donation. "It's been fantastic, it's amazing how everyone has jumped on board to help race funds," Richards said.

"I now have 15 race sponsorships available and they will raise \$200 each. It has taken off from something so small, I was just looking at getting some shrapnel change from trainers and now it is something really big and amazing.



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“I’ve grown up around the industry, I was a little toddler running around at the track, I know everyone just gets on board to help out when things like this happen, but was still very surprised with how it’s taken off.”

While the Maitland (11 March), Gosford (12 March) and The Gardens (16 March) will feature the sponsored races, people can also donate online or at those tracks.

“Any amount, big or small, will make a real tangible difference,” Richards said.