



Special points of interest:

- The average age of the Paddledogs is 45 years
- Two Paddledogs (Greg & Robin) will make the crossing in a double kayak
- Tax deductible donations to the Black Dog Institute can be made online at www.paddledogs.org
- The crew will upload photos and blogs to their website throughout the crossing using a tiny on-board computer and Next G technology
- 66% of forecast winds in Bass Strait in autumn are 20 knots or higher; 33% of maximum seas are 2.5 metres or higher
- The Paddledogs have formed a 'cabinet' with various 'ministerial portfolios' to share the team responsibilities
- Training involves at least 3 paddles per week + running/cycling, weights and stretching
- The trip will take between 10–14 days, depending on weather

Why kayak Bass Strait? 5 mates, 1 strait, 1 life...why not?

Over 300 kilometers of notoriously unpredictable seas and weather in little more than a plastic tub doesn't seem like much fun to most people. But to the five crew of the Paddledogs, the idea of kayaking across Bass Strait is inspiring.

Five middle-aged professionals from Lake Macquarie and the Central Coast of NSW are in training to cross the eastern side of Bass Strait in March 2009 in their sea kayaks. Their mission is to raise awareness about bipolar disorder and funds to support research by the Black Dog Institute.

The sea kayaks are between 5 and 6 metres long, a little over

half a metre wide, and will hold all of their food and equipment for the trip. Risks include huge seas, ferocious winds, sharks, fatigue and injury. But Paul, one of the 'Dogs', counters this with "the awe inspiring natural beauty, the thrill of adventure, and the satisfaction of contributing to a worthy cause".

The Paddledogs are all 'mates' that have enjoyed outdoor adventure pursuits to "get them out of the office" for many years. The idea of paddling across Bass Strait snowballed in early 2008 with the idea of combining adventure with supporting a good cause.

The Paddledogs have witnessed the impact of mental



Troy McDonald, Brendan Clark, Greg Gambrill, Paul Cranford, Robin Hay

illness on families and are keen to support research that helps with early detection of bipolar disorder in adolescents.

Private and corporate donations can be made online at www.paddledogs.org, where there is fascinating reading about the Paddledogs' plans.

Why bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that causes extreme moods, often with swings from depression to elevation. The condition is also called manic-depressive illness and is believed to be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. The illness sometimes runs in families and affects around 1 in 80 men and women of all ages.

According to the Depression & Mood Disorders Association of NSW, "**When we're**

up...we feel good, ready to save the world, creative, zappy, sexy, bossy, we spend money extravagantly, are overly generous and talkative. We can become self-absorbed, irritable and aggressive. Sometimes our relationships suffer. We stay up all night, stop eating, and race around until the whole thing spins too fast. We might end up in hospital...crazy.

When we're down...we feel tired and getting up in the

morning is a tremendous effort. We have no self confidence, are not interested in sex and even simple tasks seem too difficult. We find it hard to concentrate and make decisions. We feel a heavy sadness that never lifts: our face and body muscles may sag and we may look blank. Or we may be agitated and anxious. We need other people but feel that we are a nuisance. We may feel worried about the future and filled with despair...suicidal."