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## **MITCH MCPHERSON, LOCAL CHAMPION UP FOR NATIONAL AWARD**

Mitch McPherson, founder of Tasmanian suicide prevention charity SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY will head to Canberra on the 25<sup>th</sup> January to find out if he is the 2017 Young Australian of the Year, following the announcement of his win as Young Tasmanian of the Year.

Following the loss of his brother Ty to suicide in 2013, Mitch has delivered over 350 presentations and is now a leading advocate for mental health awareness in Tasmania. Since receiving the nomination, the 29 year old from New Town, has been reflecting on what winning the national award would mean to him. “Coming up to the anniversary of Ty’s death really makes this nomination even more important to me.” Mitch says “The award isn’t about me, it is about recognising the struggle and pain that so many people go through each day.

The key message of the charity is to that it is ok to not be ok. The message encourages people to understand that no matter what people might seem like on the outside, sometimes that are fighting a daily battle on the inside. “We can all make a difference, we just need to be willing to reach out and offer support to those who might need it”, says Mitch.

2016 was a huge year for Mitch with the launch of the charity’s partnership with Relationships Australia and the Tasmanian Community Fund to deliver the #TeamChatTY schools program throughout high schools across Tasmania. Since starting the charity Mitch has delivered over 350 presentations to schools, workplaces and community groups and raised in excess of \$350,000.

“Winning the 2017 Young Australian of the Year Award would give us the chance to spread the message even further. It is my dream that someday SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY will be a national charity, spreading positive mental health messages and building the resilience of young people across Australia”.

Relationships Australia Tasmania CEO, Mat Rowell, nominated Mitch for the award. “We saw something in Mitch and his story when he first started the charity and knew that we needed to help him make his dream a reality. Since then we’ve watched him, and the charity gain momentum. It has been an absolute privilege to watch this young man grow into one of Tasmania’s community leaders and is something I am very proud to have been involved in”.

### **About SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY**

Stay ChatTY is a registered not for profit charity that works to help prevent suicide by spreading the message that nothing is so bad that you can’t talk about it. Mitch McPherson established the organisation after his younger brother Ty took his own life in 2013.

As an organisation funded solely on donations, SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY relies on the generosity of the community to spread positive mental health messages. For more information, or make a donation please visit [www.staychatty.com.au](http://www.staychatty.com.au)

**For all media enquiries, please contact Mitch McPherson [mitchm@reltas.com.au](mailto:mitchm@reltas.com.au) or 0488 454 001**