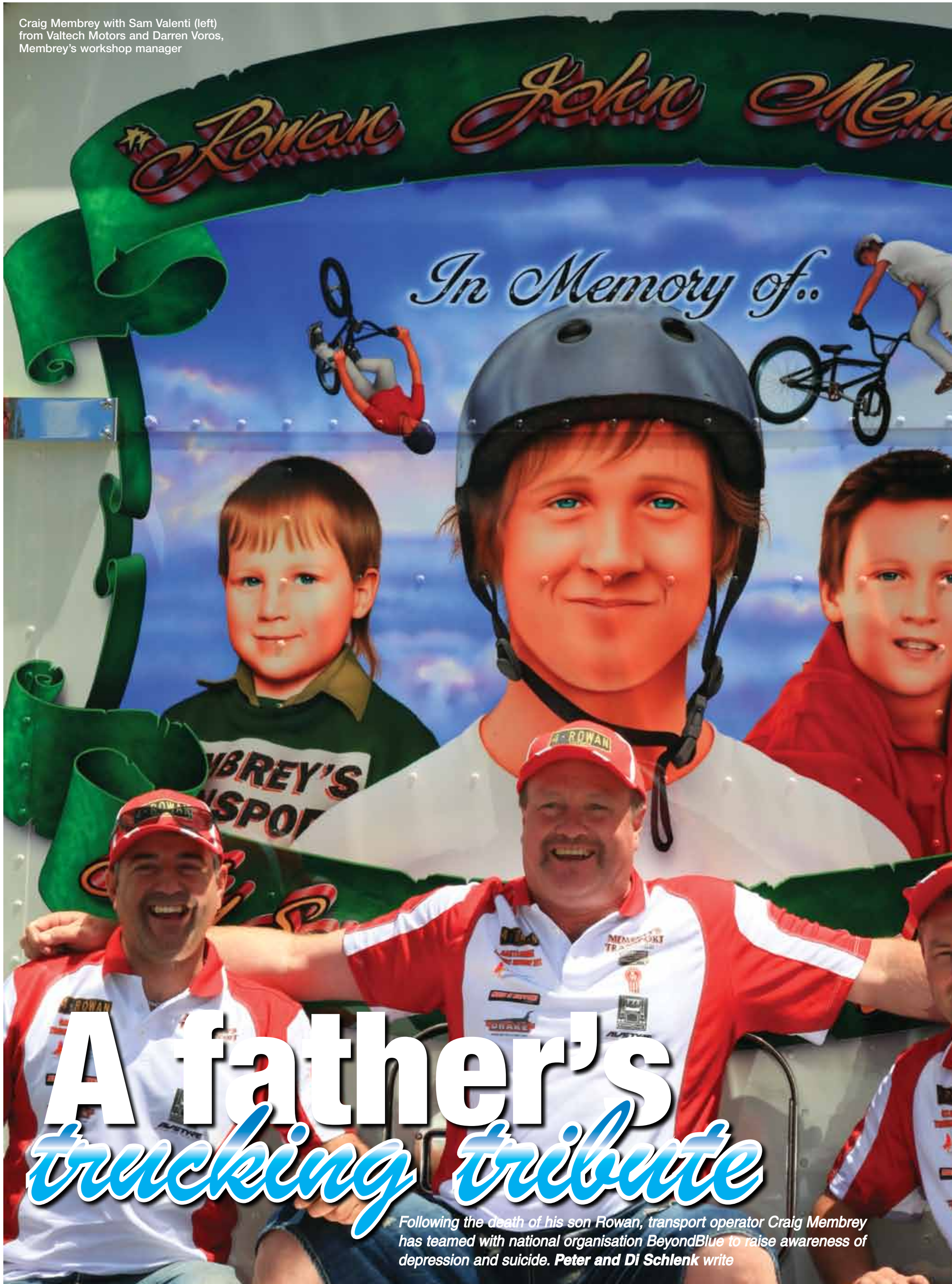


Craig Membrey with Sam Valenti (left) from Valtech Motors and Darren Voros, Membrey's workshop manager



A father's *trucking tribute*

Following the death of his son Rowan, transport operator Craig Membrey has teamed with national organisation BeyondBlue to raise awareness of depression and suicide. Peter and DI Schlenk write



The Kenworth T904

FOR THOSE involved in road transport around Melbourne, the trucks from Membrey's Transport & Crane Hire are a familiar sight along the major arterial roads.

In addition, anyone who spends time at Victoria's truck shows would know of Craig Membrey, an outgoing individual who always lives life to the fullest.

Craig is the owner of Membrey Transport & Crane Hire in Dandenong. The company specialises in moving anything bulky or cumbersome, high, wide or heavy.

Craig's father, Jack William Hadley Membrey, started the business in 1962. Consequently, this year the company will celebrate 50 years in the transport industry. It is a genuine Australian family business which today operates over 100 pieces of machinery and employs 60 people.

Back in March 2011, Craig bought a second-hand T904. Sadly, two days later, his son Rowan took his own life.

Craig was devastated, and after coming to terms with what had happened, decided to do the T904 up as a tribute to Rowan.

Others heard what Craig was planning to do and offered to help out. Major contributors to the project were Paccar, the Hallam Truck Centre, the Crawford family and the Truckers Toy Store.

"Before my son died, I didn't know who BeyondBlue were and I didn't care either as I was just too busy living the dream. Go, go, go all the time but now that has changed," Craig explains.

"My family decided to have no flowers at the funeral, choosing to offer BeyondBlue envelopes instead. We had 600 seats at the service and over 2,000 people attended. Some serious dollars were donated to BeyondBlue."

Craig believes, mentally, his son was in a dark place before taking his own life on March 17, 2011.

"I've nearly lost the business in the tough times but we are all human. Transport is my life; I wouldn't know how to kick a football or any sport at all. Sometimes I wish Dad had left me a lolly shop," Craig says.

"However, it has always been trucks and so this truck is all about my son. When you lose someone, all you can



Supporting BeyondBlue



Craig Membrey with wife Nicole, son Jack and daughter Leah

"When you lose someone, all you can remember are the good times."

remember are the good times. This is all about my son, to live his memory and build this truck up and honour him."

When Craig decided to support BeyondBlue, he says he had trouble making contact and obtaining permission.

"I decided to go to the top. I asked one of my personal assistants, Shelley, to get Jeff Kennett's number right away," he says.

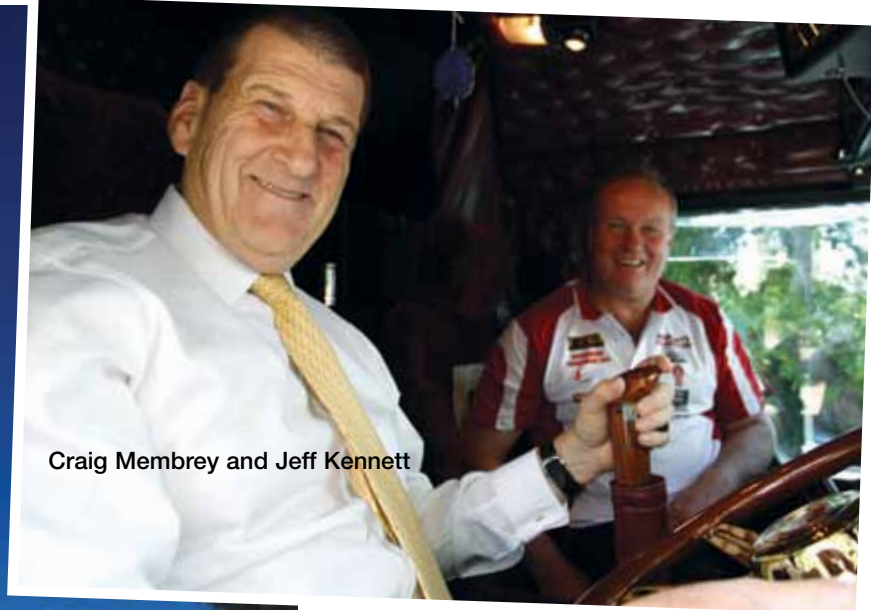
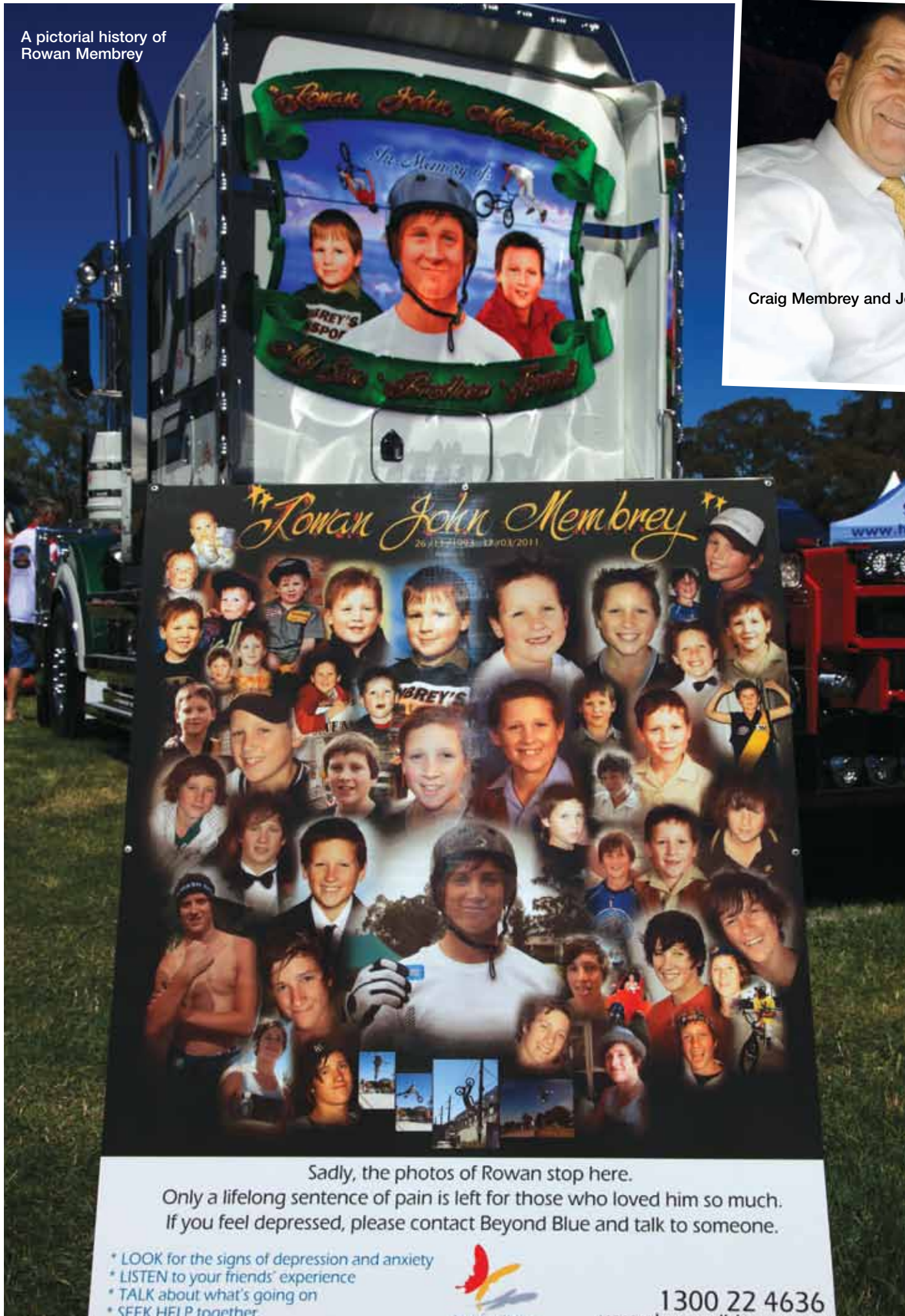
"I'm a pretty demanding person to be fair, and I was talking to Jeff within two hours."

Craig talked about Rowan and his ideas for the T904. Membrey's company slogan is 'Make It Happen' and Jeff made it happen for Craig and pulled everything together. It was Jeff's intervention that allowed Craig to put BeyondBlue on the T904.

One of the questions Craig had for Jeff was why there wasn't more publicity about depression when it affects one in five men.

"I thought that it would have been on TV and in the paper much more, but it is all about money or rather the lack of it."

A pictorial history of Rowan Membrey



Craig Membrey and Jeff Kennett

Michael Crawford from Hallam Truck Centre who contributed towards the mural on the sleeper," Craig says.

"The Trucker's Toy Store supplied all the bling and allowed us to use their facilities to customise the T904. Chad was very, very generous and we have become very close friends.

"I think it has hit a lot of people's hearts. I probably shared 100 stories with numerous people who in turn share similar stories."

Craig doesn't know the statistics but he doesn't think enough is done to get the word out there that depression is a big health issue in Australia. Like Craig admits himself, he didn't care who BeyondBlue were, but now he has knowledge and experiences and will give it all to get the word out.

Craig hopes the T904 can act as a catalyst for action and dialogue, especially between truck drivers and their families, similarly to the attention garnered by the McGrath Foundation on breast cancer sufferers.

As for the T904, it won't be put to work until it has done the rounds of truck shows. Its first outing was at Castlemaine where it won the Rig of the Day award on November 19, 2011.

Craig lives in the Berwick region, south east of Melbourne, and says the T904 will make a special appearance alongside BeyondBlue at next month's Berwick Show.

"We are actually calling it 'Make It Happen for Rowan Membrey'. We're getting 10 teams of people, and each will pull the truck 25m with the President of the Berwick Show, Anne Reynolds steering.

"We have some fantastic sponsors and I think we have raised about \$6,000 with \$2,000 worth of prizes on offer. We're looking for more sponsors with all proceeds being donated to BeyondBlue."

Craig says complete strangers are now coming up to him and saying "well done", which makes him feel he's doing something worthwhile for the community.

"We need to get the message out and the Kenworth is our tool to do that," he says.

"I am a bit of a king in promoting myself and our business, so now we have just turned our promotions towards BeyondBlue." ■

"BeyondBlue has no financial backing. Everything that we can do will help this worthy organisation.

"I can't change the world and I can't bring my son back, but if I can help save one life, that is my goal. Life is too short and I am thankful that Jeff made it happen."

It is said that men can be islands. This is particularly the case with truck drivers, who spend much of their working day isolated from the rest of the community.

However, most truck drivers love what they do, but many drop out of school early, as Craig did. Despite the lack of education, there are financial pressures and the need to make a living. Craig feels if this truck can help attract the public's attention, it will serve its purpose.

Craig is immensely proud of his team at Membrey's. On the day he announced his son had passed away and he didn't know how he was going to handle it, the employees rallied to help.

"The bonding of my team, with staff members joining with my family, was absolutely mind blowing. There are some lovely people out there and I am lucky to have some of the best as staff, suppliers and customers, who have all given me tremendous support."

Darren Voros, Craig Rogers and Chad Panettieri from the Truckers Toy Store, helped Craig complete the project on the T904. Rogers painted the mural on the back of the prime mover.

"If it wasn't for Russell Davey from the Hallam Truck Centre, I would never have found him," Craig says.

"Rowan was an Aussie boy, so we wanted an Australian truck and customised it accordingly."

Craig wanted gold Kenworth badges but soon found there were none available in Australia. He then contacted Paccar Australia's Director of Sales and Marketing, Andrew Hadjikakou, who made inquiries to Paccar headquarters in the United States. He found there were only seven left in the world.

Now, four gold badges remain in Seattle; the other three sit proudly on the Craig's T904.

"Paccar were very generous, as was

BeyondBlue is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related disorders in Australia. BeyondBlue can be contacted on 1300 22 4636 or, alternatively, phone Lifeline on 13 11 14.