



📷 Emily Wiltshire and Brianna Anderson have been training hard to tackle the Kokoda Track this week. Picture: Annette Dew

QLD News

Kokoda Track hikers Emily Wiltshire and Brianna Anderson honour their fallen parents

Vanda Carson, The Courier-Mail
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BRISBANE students Emily Wiltshire and Brianna Anderson know what it is to overcome adversity.

The pair will be tackling the Kokoda Track this week along with 21 others from around the country who have lost a parent who served in the Australian Defence Force.

Their nine-day 96km walk, along with 17 ADF personnel and 21 defence contractor staff, coincides with the start of Legacy Week today, with badges sold to raise funds for the families of those who don't return from service or are injured or become ill.

QUT media student Emily, 19, lost her father, Major Michael Wiltshire, 14 years ago from a brain tumour. He was the guard commander for the return of the unknown Australian soldier from France in 1993, while her great-uncle served in the Kokoda campaign.

Nursing and paramedic student Brianna, 21, lost her father, Richard, five years ago. He served in the army for 20 years, including in the Special Air Service.

Supported by Legacy, Brianna and Emily have been training for the walk with gruelling hikes of up to eight hours up Mt Coot-tha and in the Glass House Mountains.

"I will remember my dad and great-uncles, they served in PNG," Brianna said.

"I'm pretty excited to be going, and to push my boundaries," she added. "I've never done anything like this before."

Staff from British defence contractor QinetiQ raised more than \$100,000 to fund the trip.

QinetiQ employee Sarah Roberson, who will be walking the trail, yesterday said it felt "really good" to give kids who have lost a parent a chance to excel.

Staff raised funds by auctioning off prime executive staff parking spaces and having bake sales and quiz nights.

Next month, a second group of Queenslanders, aged 16 to 21, [will walk the Kokoda Track as part of a program organised by PCYC Queensland](#) for the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award.