

Ride of a lifetime

THE life of local cyclist Wayne Russell was devastated at this time last year when his housemate Gordon Mercovich died from a ruptured aorta.

Mr Mercovich was 29 at the time and suffered from Marfan's syndrome, an inherited disorder of connective tissues within the body that commonly affects the functioning of the heart and large blood vessels.

The friends met through Air Force Cadets.

Mr Mercovich was a founding member of the Tuggeranong Air Force Cadet unit.

According to Mr Russell, he had developed an almost legendary reputation within cadets nationally and brought out the best in a lot of young people, including himself.

"His dedication and passion were second to none," the Kambah resident said.

A year after Mr Mercovich's death, Mr Russell planned a memorial bike ride on Friday, May 16 from Goulburn to Canberra to raise money for the Canberra Hospital emergency department.

"We hope to increase community awareness of Marfan's syndrome, and at the same time raise money for a new relative's room in the Emergency Department," Mr ~~Mercovich~~ ^{Russell} said.

"I wanted to turn the negative into a positive."

The funds will upgrade the relative's room, which is a space for grieving family members that is set away from the normal waiting room.

Mr Russell said the emergency department staff and the relative's room were extremely comforting to him when his friend was admitted into hospital.

Canberra Hospital clinical nurse consultant Jeni Ritchie said they really appreciated and acknowledged the efforts of Mr Russell.

A few staff members from the hospital will join him on the ride.

The riders will arrive at Regatta Point at about 2pm and continue to the hospital.

To donate, call Mr Russell on 6161 1384 or 0402 526 070.