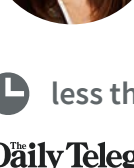


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EXCLUSIVE

Merrick Watts takes on Kokoda Track to raise funds for the Commando Welfare Trust

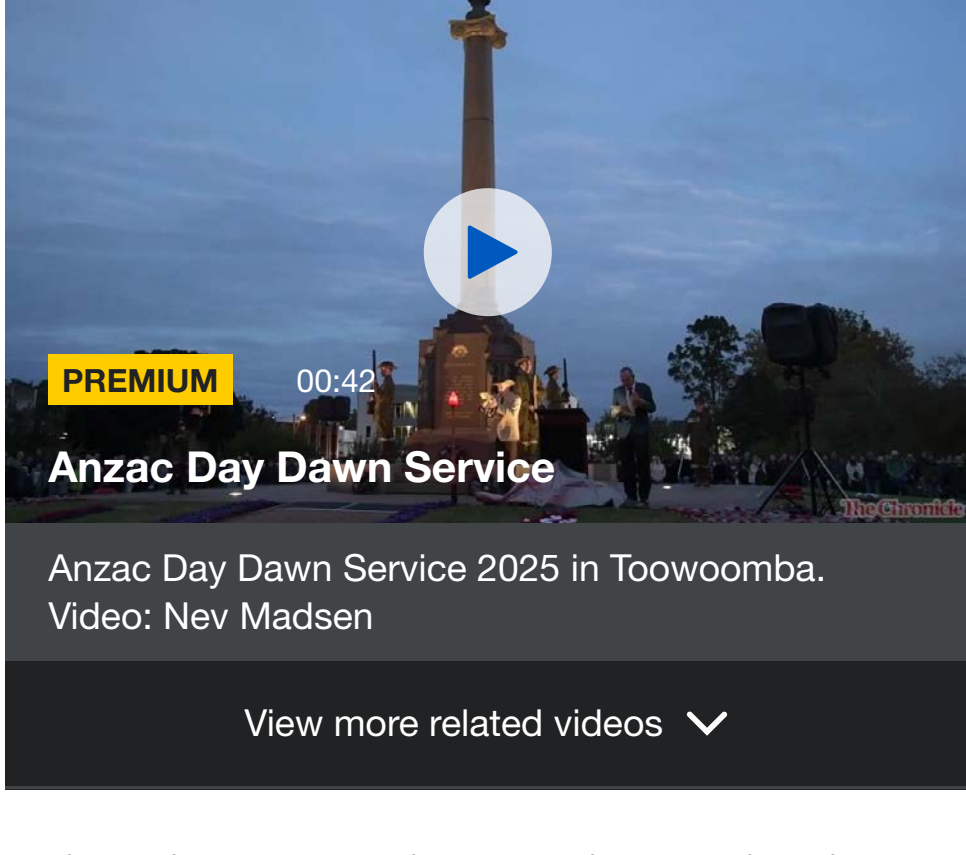
Comedian and radio presenter Merrick Watts will be trading the stage for one of the toughest hikes of his life next month to raise funds for elite soldiers and their families, as he trains to retrace the gruelling steps of our Diggers.

**Elizabeth Pike**[Follow](#)

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Daily Telegraph

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In less than a month, comedian and radio presenter Merrick Watts will be trading the stage for one of the toughest hikes of his life.

The Aussie entertainer will set out to walk the 96-kilometre Kokoda Track through Papua New Guinea from May 1, joining a group of former Australian Commandos to raise vital funds for the Commando Welfare Trust.

Since the trust was established 15 years ago to look after Special Operations Command soldiers, veterans and their family members for life, Merrick has been a staunch benefactor and said walking the track was a “no-brainer”.

“I’ve got lots of mates who are ex-commandos, and I know lots of people in Special Forces in general ... I’ve seen first-hand how these funds are distributed to their families and how important they are,” he said.

“It will be great to be on the track with people who have literally put their lives at risk in the name of defending our nation. It is going to be an incredible experience, and one I just couldn’t pass up.”



Comedian Merrick Watts trains for the track.

Merrick said the Kokoda Track also resonated “enormously” with him on a personal level as Australians across the country marked Anzac Day on Friday.

“In other battles we’ve gone away to fight a war, whereas in Kokoda, we went to defend Australia and that’s a very, very different thing. It was all about do-or-die sacrifice,” he said.

Commandos know this sacrifice all too well as an elite brigade of soldiers who are disproportionately deployed into combat and 50 per cent more likely to suffer injury during service.



The group will take on the gruelling Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea on May 1.

Executive officer Major Paul Dunbavin OAM said the [charity](#) gave a record one million dollars to its beneficiaries last year to help families – including the children of fallen soldiers who died in Afghanistan 15 years ago – manage ongoing financial, medical and emotional hardships.

“We pick up where other support services can’t help members of the special operations community ... and we pride ourselves on providing tangible, real-world support (for the) people who have paid [and continue to pay] the ultimate sacrifice,” he said.