

Tears for big 'Rooch', from New York to NT

Fund set up to get Alex home to US

WILL ZWAR
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A FUNDRAISER set up to help take the late Alex Aurrichio home to the US smashed its \$50,000 goal within five hours of starting.

The fundraiser, started by former Waratah and AFLW player Abbey Holmes, called on Aurrichio's friends and teammates in Australia to help support his family and return him to New York.

At the time of print the fundraiser reached more than \$60,000.

"It makes me feel proud, from this response you see how much he meant to everybody, how much everybody wants to help the family during this terrible time, it's pretty crazy how quickly it's all blown up," Holmes said.

More than 350 people contributed to the fundraiser.

Hundreds shared kind words and memories of the beloved footballer.

Louise Fox: Alex was a special person, a surrogate son, so caring, generous in spirit and became a big part of my life. His family deserve this acknowledgment because they too are beautiful people

Kristian Jaksch: Rest easy big man

Angus Liehr: RIP Alex get home safe

Dion Khan: A champion cause for a champion bloke

Alexandra Growden: Alex was literally a larger than life larrikin with infectious energy and a passion for making the most of any situation. Sending all my love and support to his family and everyone else who loved him

Traceylee Narain: Such a tragic loss. Alex will be missed by many, and our thoughts are with his family

To help and donate funds visit gofundme.com/alexander-aurrichio-lets-get-rooch-home



The scene of the crash where Alexander Aurrichio was killed. Insets: Aurrichio (top) and flowers left at the scene yesterday Main picture: KATRINA BRIDGEFORD

WILL ZWAR AND
RAPHAELLA SAROUKOS

SPORTING clubs and players from across the globe are mourning the loss of Alexander "Rooch" Aurrichio, describing him as a loveable larrikin with a heart bigger than his 198cm stature.

The 30-year-old Waratah ruckman tragically passed away on Monday after the bicycle he was riding collided with a car at Howard Springs.

Former Waratah Football Club player Abbey Holmes,

who met Aurrichio through her partner Keegan Brooksby, fought tears as she remembered her final adventure with the US-born and raised Aurrichio just a week ago.

"It's pure devastation to be honest," she said.

"Last Sunday Rooch and I went out to the Top End safari camp together, I'm so grateful that we had that last experience together.

"That's just the kind of guy he was just chasing the next adventure wherever he went."

Holmes said Aurrichio had an unbreakable bond with his family.

"Last weekend we were talking about coronavirus and his mum and how incredible she was and he said 'my biggest fear is if something happened to my family and if I can't get there,'" she said

"It's devastation, pure heartache knowing what his family are faced with."

In New York, NBA player Tobias Harris, who donated \$15,000 to a fundraiser to get the footballer home, posted a

heartfelt farewell to his childhood friend, former colleague and mentor.

"I've honestly been in a shock all morning with the news of my friend Alexander Aurrichio passing," he said.

"I think of all the memories, the basketball, the training the times you looked after a young 8th grader on the court with you, the rides home from practice telling me to keep my head on straight.

"I hope you knew how much I respected you, how

much a young kid in high school looked up to you."

Aurrichio's former football clubs reflected on their time with the big man.

"Footy has lost an extremely dedicated player and a great individual," wrote the Southport Sharks on the Gold Coast.

"The day the Big American walked into our club, a larger than life character influenced our group with enthusiasm and motivation," wrote the Northern Blues from the VFL competition.

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