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INSPIRATION: Mike Dwyer with his daughters Samantha (left) and Jamie-Lee.

Picture: Glenn Barnes

Double dose of drive proves doctors wrong

Natalie Gregg

WHEN doctors told Mike Dwyer his daughters would not live to see their 20th birthdays he set out to prove them wrong.

Eight years ago Samantha, 18, and Jamie-Lee, 19, from Runaway Bay on the Gold Coast, were diagnosed with the rare, genetic degenerative disorder Friedreich's Ataxia.

Since their diagnosis Mr

Dwyer has dedicated his time to supporting research into the rare disease, which affects one in 50,000 people and is physically crippling and life-threatening.

"The two girls are my inspiration - they are always so positive," Mr Dwyer said.

"They have just got on with life and are like normal teenagers - they go out, they go to university."

He set up the Friedreich's

Ataxia Research Association, which has raised \$2.5 million to help find a cure, as well as improve life for those living with the devastating disease.

Mr Dwyer has been the driving force behind Queensland's first multi-disciplinary clinic dedicated to FA at the University of Queensland's Centre for Clinical Research, which opened yesterday.

The new Herston clinic brings together health profes-

sionals from the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital with UQ researchers to treat the 30 Queenslanders with FA in the one place.

Jamie-Lee said the new clinic meant she and her sister no longer had to travel to Melbourne for treatment.

"I'm so proud of Dad. Both my parents are my role models and they give me hope that one day we'll find a cure."

Information: www.fara.org.au