

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JULY, 2019

Background

Our region experiences poorer mental health and higher suicide rates with lack of services and significant gaps in timely, appropriate service delivery. The Rural Outreach Program aims to overcome barriers with access to services through a timely free community based response without the need for a referral.

It is an initiative by the Wimmera Southern Mallee Mental Health Seasonal Conditions Partnership with a shared concern about the wellbeing of our communities. Through collective pooled seasonal conditions funds with support from WPCP, DHHS and WVPHN the Rural Outreach Program commenced in December 2018. It is a community based program helping people in psychological and situational distress.

Contact us:

1300 OUTREACH
(1300 688 732)

www.ruraloutreach.org.au
info@ruraloutreach.org.au

It costs nothing to talk

Rural Outreach Program

The Rural Outreach program is a consortium of eleven agencies with the lead agency through the Edenhope Memorial and District hospital and covers the Wimmera Southern Mallee region.



The Rural Outreach program will provide support to community members by;

- Service navigation and collaboration with local network of services.
- Responsive with convenient time and location
- Non-clinical and less threatening service
- Mental Health training and raising awareness across the community
- No referral needed. Just a phone call



THE TEAM

L - R

Rural Outreach Workers; Mal Coutts,
Murray McInnes & Alistair Baker
Program Coordinator; Ngareta Melgren

HOW

The strengths of program and delivery are rapid response times, non-clinical informal approach and local non-stigmatising assistance for people struggling during difficult and challenging times. The accessibility of the Program allows community members to avoid long wait times for referrals who could benefit from just someone to talk to in a non-clinical setting. Community members may access the Rural Outreach Program after-hours, in the privacy of their own homes, at no cost. No referral is needed, just a phone call for yourself or someone you are concerned about.

In conjunction with Wimmera Primary Care Partnership the Rural Outreach Program also facilitates Mental Health First Aid training targeting all sectors of the community. There is a course offered in all the four shires and has trained over 1000 participants in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. For more information please contact lissy.johns@wimmerapcp.org.au

OUTCOMES

The Rural Outreach program has engaged Swinburne University to evaluate the program with the first report completed in June 2019.

Through anecdotal evidence the program is highly regarded and has helped many community members including one interstate person visiting his local family. The extent of support varies from a chat to collaborating with mental health services for family units with other support services as required.

The nature of the issues for support ranges from Depression and/or anxiety, support for a suicide to financial issues.

To effectively provide the program it is imperative to have excellent partnerships with mental health services and all sectors of the community. From capitalising on the Wimmera Primary Care Partnership platform the program can continue to create a fantastic service that meets community needs.

FUNDING

The Rural Outreach program is funded through a regional collaboration with State and Federal agencies facilitated by Wimmera Primary Care Partnership until June 2020. Through advocacy and lobbying at all levels of government, we are hoping to secure funding to continue on this vital service into the future. Our vision and priority is for an ongoing program for three years securing the future of this important service. If you would like to express your support and appreciation for the service, you can write or email a letter to Ngareta Melgren at ngaretam@edmh.org.au or PO Box 501 Horsham Vic 3402.