

# MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

## Mental Health First Aid Training across the Wimmera



### PURPOSE

- Mental health, specifically the capacity to respond to those who are in psychological distress and/or the emerging signs of mental-ill health was identified as a significant area of concern by councils across the Wimmera and Southern Mallee
- Pooled 'drought funds' to enable local people from each Local Government Area undergo instructor training for the delivery of Mental Health First Aid within the Wimmera PCP catchment

### WHY?

The intended outcome of the initiative was to create community champions in identifying the signs and symptoms of mental ill-health so that appropriate and professional help could be sought before a crisis ensued

### PARTNERS

- Horsham Rural City Council
- Hindmarsh Shire
- West Wimmera Shire
- Yarriambiack Shire
- Edenhope & District Memorial Hospital
- Wimmera Health Care Group
- Rural North West Health
- West Wimmera Health Service
- Harrow Bush Nursing Centre
- Woomelang Bush Nursing Centre

### OUTCOMES

- Approximately 3% (1,111) of the population of the Wimmera and Southern Mallee now trained in Mental Health First Aid across 70 sessions since 2016
- **The training has been delivered to 315 students across 7 schools**
- Sessions result in a waiting list to attend and groups regularly request bespoke sessions such as Workplace Mental Health First Aid or shorter sessions to raise awareness of mental health issues
- **Towns with recent suicide events will engage with WPCP and arrange delivery at a time and day that is safe for all**
- Participants and their employers report the benefits of local delivery by local instructors with enormous cost-savings

*"Wimmera PCP has travelled extensively to deliver Teen Mental Health First Aid education to secondary students in rural towns. This directly meets the needs of these communities, who are statistically at higher risk of anxiety, depression and suicide but with limited access to mental health professionals and public transport. The TMHFA program has filled an essential gap in local service delivery, only achievable in partnership with the resources of Wimmera PCP and the TMHFA has been one of Uniting Wimmera's SFYS most successful interventions."*

Jaimie Clarkson  
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