



# Primary Source

## Mental Health - Rural

Vol No.1 Issue No.2 January 2011

### From the Principal Network Adviser - Drought

Welcome to the second edition of the Primary Source Mental Health – Rural newsletter. This Primary Source is predominately focused on work of the federally funded *Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities initiative (the Initiative)* however, recent events show how this initiative goes beyond drought.

Floods, rain, locusts and fire have ravaged various parts of Australia bringing about significant devastation and loss to life and property. In particular our thoughts are with all those affected by the flooding which has swept across a number states.

This edition of Primary Source Mental Health - Rural is about **partnerships**. Their value. Their strength. Their achievements. The *Initiative* through Community Support Workers demonstrates the power of partnerships and you see a glimpse of this below.

If you wish to contribute to the Primary Source Mental Health- Rural newsletter contact Elaine Dunn, AGPN Principal Network Adviser – Drought [edunn@agpn.com.au](mailto:edunn@agpn.com.au) Encourage colleagues to subscribe to this newsletter or any of the other Primary Source newsletters being offered by AGPN via the website: [www.agpn.com.au/media/subscribe](http://www.agpn.com.au/media/subscribe) and most importantly, enjoy reading.

**Elaine Dunn AGPN Principal Network Adviser - Drought**

### Flood information & help for you

AGPN : <http://www.agpn.com.au/media/flood-crisis> *beyondblue* : <http://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

To help people deal with the emotional impact of a disaster, *beyondblue* has a free booklet – **Looking after Yourself after a Disaster** – which was developed in association with the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, the Australian Red Cross and the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement.

The booklet contains helpful information about the common reactions people may experience in the weeks and months following a disaster. It can be downloaded or ordered from the *beyondblue* website: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) or by phoning the *beyondblue* info line 1300 22 4636.



[Click here to view the events calendar.](#)

From the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health you will find easy to read information about trauma. Web link [http://www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/trauma/about\\_trauma.html](http://www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/trauma/about_trauma.html)

## Impact of disaster on children – Red Cross booklet

The *After the Emergency* activity book for primary school children has been developed to enable children to think about what has happened and be aware of the feelings they may have after an emergency. It encourages children to talk about the event and seek help and support from those around them.

The resource has been developed in consultation with a child psychologist to ensure the content is appropriate and useful for children coping after an emergency. The activity book is not hazard specific so can be used by children affected by any emergency. Go to: <http://www.redcross.org.au/ourservices> to find out more.

## Network update

The boundaries for **Medicare Locals and Local Hospital Networks** have been announced.

Medicare Locals and Local Hospital Networks will mean Australians will benefit from access to better coordinated health care and more efficient use of resources and will find it easier to navigate between service providers and health services.

A total of 42 Medicare Local boundaries have been agreed across all states and territories with the exception of Victoria. The Commonwealth has extended the time for the resolution of the boundaries with the new Victorian Government until the end of January. The first group of Medicare Locals and their associated branch offices will begin operating in mid 2011, with the remainder starting in mid 2012. Medicare Local boundaries were developed following consultations with the states and territories and consideration of approximately 120 submissions from the health sector and the wider community.

[View the Medicare Local boundaries](#)

For further information about primary health care reform go to: <http://www.agpn.com.au/media/Primary-Health-Care-Reform>

## Primary Source: Medicare Locals - Transition

The first edition of **AGPN's Primary Source: Medicare Locals - Transition** will be issued in the **first week of February**. This monthly newsletter will provide subscribers with the latest information about the transition process to Medicare Locals throughout the General Practice Network.

Primary Source subscribers who ticked the 'ALL' box will automatically receive the Medicare Locals – Transition newsletter. If you know of anyone else in the primary health care sector who would benefit from receiving this monthly newsletter urge them to go to AGPN's website to subscribe: <http://www.agpn.com.au/media/subscribe>

## It's all about partnerships

**Ruth Turpin, Rural Support Worker, Murray-Plains Division of General Practice**

As one of the original team of Community Support Workers (CSWs) in the Commonwealth Government's, "*Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities*" Initiative, we know this project is successful ... and it's successful because of partnerships with a strong focus on networking and our proven ability to work together and reach out to corners of local communities where services and supports are often difficult to get to.

It also needs to be recognised that without the ongoing partnership between **beyondblue** and the **AGPN**, our roles and abilities to promote, offer choices, provide a wide range of resourcing options to organisations, small businesses, rural communities in a wide range of outreach settings would not be possible.

At the recent CSW Workshop in Melbourne in October, **CSWs from Queensland, NSW, Victoria and SA** were keen to share their experiences and add to the repertoire of strategies and practices that collectively, is impressive. Sharing challenges as well as best practice endorsed the value of the project's outcomes.

### **Our Legacies:**

- A greater awareness in rural communities about who and what support services are available for individual and communities to access. This provides CHOICE – choice offers a greater sense of empowerment
- A sustainable healthy community that is aware and comfortable with matters of mental health wellbeing
- Communities are better equipped and more likely to respond to people with mental health issues
- Cultural change so mental health is equal to physical health
- Divisions of Practice being more 'community centric'
- Documented mapping & plans of local services for rural communities

### **Achieving those legacies:**

*Mental Health First Aid* : *beyondblue Rural Frontline training* : *Pitstop* health checks particularly for men : Saleyard health & wellbeing checks : Farm gate cold calling : Networking with other service providers & health professionals : community consultations : Increasing mental Health literacy in rural communities : Promoting referral pathways : *No Bull support* workshops : Breakfasts, forums for small businesses and communities : Directories of services for rural communities : Individual crisis counseling and referral support : an ability to respond to rural crises ... flood, fire, drought and in some divisions all three within a given year.....

Our challenge now is to ensure the skill-set of intervention, outreach and education, and the trust that has been



developed between **CSWs and their communities** is maintained within the new Primary Health Care Organisation development.

## **Nominations for the National Primary Health Care Awards open in March 2011**

Australia's frontline health service providers will now be able to achieve well earned recognition and rewards for outstanding performance through the inaugural **HESTA Primary Health Care Awards**.

HESTA in conjunction with AGPN created these awards to mark excellence in primary health care.

HESTA CEO Ms Anne-Marie Corboy said the awards were designed to recognise innovation and leadership.

"These are two fundamental elements of a skilled and responsive health workforce," Ms Corboy said.

AGPN CEO David Butt said the awards were timely in light of the incredible health reform agenda facing this sector.

"These awards recognise the role of all those who are usually the first the community turns to when they are sick or injured," Mr Butt said.

**ME Bank has provided \$25,000 in prize money** for the awards which will culminate in a gala dinner at the AGPN's National Forum, to which finalists will be flown.

There are three categories for nominations:

**Young leader**

**Individual distinction**

**Team excellence**

**Nominations open in March 2011 and can be made online at <http://www.phcawards.com.au/>**

## **'xox GettingReal xox'**

**Report by Jane Francis, Population Health Programs Officer, Yorke Peninsula Division of General Practice Inc.**

It came to the attention of the Division that bullying and relationships issues were causing conflict with the female students throughout various levels at **Kadina Memorial High School (KMHS)**. A number of issues were also reported with the male students and it was discovered that the male issues were a direct outcome of the girls' problems. With that in mind, the **Yorke Peninsula Division of General Practice (YPDGP)** in conjunction



with KMHS, developed the "xoGettingRealxo" program and delivered it to a group of randomly selected **year 8 girls**. The aim of the program was to support them in their transition to high school and help them develop social resilience. There is immense pressure to conform and fit in when starting high school including dealing with bodily changes and changes in the way that school is structured. One of the first things associated with being a teenage girl is changes, changes and more changes! Not long ago they were playing with dolls and having "dressups" with their girlfriends, but all of this "young girls stuff" has to change at some point.

The program was run as a pilot project and was assessed and reviewed to identify what worked. It ran over five sessions and a suitable venue was chosen at the local church hall nearby where sessions commenced in term four, 2010. We were concerned that we may have found it difficult to get this group of girls to engage, but they just thrived and we found each week to be better than the last.

The facilitators compiled a workbook and guide and we evaluated all tools and successfully gained **parental and community support** and involvement.

Through discussion, role play, small group work and various activities, the girls explored the media representations of girls and women, self image, self esteem, goal setting and support strategies. The program also investigated where messages about girls fighting, competition and distrust come from.

The sessions were run by the social worker from YPDGP with the Christian pastoral support worker from KMHS. Three other project staff from the Division and other **community members** provided support where necessary to ensure that



areas of concern were promptly identified and dealt with. This also offered an opportunity for networking and involvement of external resources. All of the girls thoroughly enjoyed the program and continued through until the end. Each Thursday the girls were excited to attend and required no promoting from **teachers or carers**.

The final session provided an opportunity to bring together the key messages of the group around girls/women working together and supporting each other. It was inspiring, interactive and very informative for the girls. Local health and beauty experts joined the group to give participants tips on hair, beauty and nutrition. The girls enjoyed receiving the special attention and had a great deal of fun.

The initial evaluation from the girls was extremely positive and at the follow up evaluation held two weeks later further confirmed the positive outcomes the girls gained. The girls reported that they had taken some valuable messages away with them, comments included:- "It's good to be yourself, stick up for other people that are getting teased and bullied" and "To be confident with yourself, be who you are". When asked what changes they

had seen in themselves, the comments were very encouraging and included “I am more confident than before” and “I know people better now, and I know that I can’t be like the people in the magazines!”

The pilot program was extremely successful and was a wonderful opportunity to build resilience amongst this group of girls. The plan is to continue and expand on the existing program next year at KMHS and possibly offer it to **other local high schools** in the Divisions area as well.

**Mental Health – rural project contact:**  
[edunn@agpn.com.au](mailto:edunn@agpn.com.au)

[Click here to unsubscribe](#)

**AGPN acknowledges the financial support of the  
Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing**

25 National Circuit Forrest ACT 2603 | PO Box 4308 Manuka ACT 2603  
**T** 02 6228 0800 | **F** 02 6228 0899 | [www.agpn.com.au](http://www.agpn.com.au) | ABN 95 082 812 146

**Delivering local health solutions through general practice**

