

# Mental Health Information Sessions Background and Overview



## NSW Rural Mental Health Network

The NSW Farmers' Association is an apolitical voluntary industry body representing the majority of commercial farm operations throughout the farming community in NSW. The mental health of rural and remote Australians is of utmost concern to the Association. The current drought and its ongoing ramifications have hugely impacted not only on farmers, but also their families, communities and even the drought support services themselves. As part of a wider response to this worrying problem, the Association has established the NSW Farmers Rural Mental Health Network, which is a group of key stakeholders who work together to address rural and remote mental health issues across NSW. The Network has developed the *NSW Farmers Blueprint for Maintaining the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the People on NSW Farms*, which outlines the major actions that need to be undertaken collaboratively by Network participants to address rural mental health priorities. Further information on the Network is available at [www.nswfarmers.org.au/mental\\_health\\_network](http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/mental_health_network).

## Project Background

The NSW Farmers' Association received a one-off grant of \$100 000 from the NSW Government in 2006 in order to improve the availability of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses to rural communities of NSW. A Steering Committee consisting of a number of Rural Mental Health Network representatives was established to manage the process. During 2006 and 2007 the Association worked with the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) to plan, deliver and evaluate these MHFA training programs in rural and remote localities across NSW.

Since then, demand for a shortened version of the program has been identified among farmers and farming service providers within the community. Generally farmers and these providers, including Stock and Station Agents, Insurance Brokers, Accountants and others, expressed difficulties attending a two-day program, yet felt the need for some mental health related education. This feedback was discussed and confirmed by the Rural Mental Health Network in late 2007.

A pilot Mental Health Information Session was conducted by the CRRMH in Dubbo 7 November 2007 and the participants rated the course very highly. Feedback<sup>1</sup> on this pilot has already led to a demand for further information sessions from a number of rural communities across the State, confirming the urgent need for this project.

## Aim

To meet this demand, the Association put a proposal to NSW Health to provide a three-hour Mental Health Information Session with the remaining funds from this project, with the sessions to be delivered by suitably qualified and experienced trainers. NSW Health has supported the proposal. The aim of the Mental Health Information Sessions is to provide farmers and farming service providers with information about common mental disorders, strategies to help people with these and appropriate local referral options. The project is directed to achieve the aims of improving the mental health capacity of farmers and those sectors of rural communities working closely with farmers and farm families, and represents the opportunity to build on the experience of the MHFA program by targeting an important and difficult to reach group through the use of a well established but briefer educational program.

## Target Group

The target group for Mental Health Information Sessions is both farmers and farming service providers, either through targeted session attendance (eg a session specifically for Stock and Station Agents) or community-driven attendance (eg a cross-section of farmers and service providers in a community where a session has been requested).

## Timeframes

The Steering Committee will select an appropriately experienced organisation to develop, deliver and evaluate the Mental Health Information Sessions by mid-July 2008, with a view to having sessions delivered as soon as possible, ideally from August 2008 – February 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> Please contact Brianna Casey (details overleaf) if you would like a copy of this feedback.



# Mental Health Information Sessions Tender

Appropriately experienced organisations interested in developing, delivering and evaluating three-hour Mental Health Information Sessions for farmers and farming service providers in rural and remote NSW are invited to complete the following Tender documentation. Completed applications should be submitted to:

Brianna Casey  
Rural Mental Health Network Secretariat  
c/- NSW Farmers Association  
Email: [caseyb@nswfarmers.org.au](mailto:caseyb@nswfarmers.org.au)  
GPO Box 1068  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

by **5pm Friday 4 July 2008**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

## Organisational Overview

*(Please provide a brief overview of your organisation and its interest in rural mental health)*

## Project Aim

*(Please outline the aim of the Mental Health Information Session)*

## Project Objectives

*(Please outline the objectives of the Mental Health Information Session, including what participants should be better able to do upon completion of the session)*

## Implementation and Administration

*(Please outline how the project would be developed and implemented, including provision of suitably qualified and experienced trainers, development and provision of session materials, session promotion, administration and so on. It should be recognised that sessions may need to be scheduled out-of-hours eg 6pm – 9pm, and should have regard to key farming periods eg harvest, in order to maximise target group participation).*

## Evaluation

*(Please outline how the project, including each Mental Health Information Session, will be evaluated, including provision of a final report upon the project's conclusion)*

## Timeframes

*(Please outline the timeframes in which the project will be undertaken, including session development, delivery and evaluation)*

## Costs

*(Please outline the projected costs for the project, including – but not limited to – resource development, trainers' fees, venue/catering costs, project administration/evaluation etc, noting that the total project costs must be less than \$50 000)*