

Meeting Update - 11 November 2010

The Rural Mental Health Network met on Thursday 26 August. Network participants that were represented included the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health, Wesley Mission, the Uniting Church, Industry and Investment, the Salvation Army as well as many other organisations that work in the field of mental health. Issues that were discussed included:

The Murray Darling Basin Plan;

The Association briefed the Rural Mental Health Network on the recently released Guide to the Murray Darling Basin Plan and its lack of a triple bottom line approach to the analysis of water cuts and sustainable diversion limits. The guide lists cuts across basin valley by valley of 3000-4000 GL per year. The Griffith and Deniliquin Guide consultation meetings were booked out, thousands of people turned up and people were also locked out. The different people that showed up to the meetings highlighted that it was a real community issue and not just an issue for farmers. The Association also briefed the network on its own survey conducted on this issue. According to findings from the survey in terms of what would the cuts mean for communities and farmers, 72% farm families said they would leave the district if the plan was enacted as is. There were also major debt to equity ratio concerns and it was agreed that at the next meeting the Association could attempt to get a representative from the Australian Banking Association to talk about this financial impact. Another action agreed upon by the Network was for individual participants to provide submissions to one of or all three of the reviews into the Guide.

Rural Health and Mental Health Service Mapping

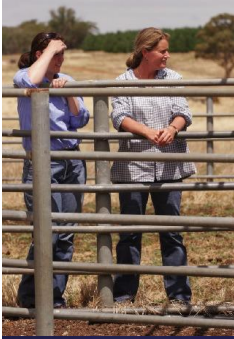
A mapping process, outlining where, what type and other detailed information, of rural health and mental health services was discussed. The Association presented an initial idea of how this mapping process would work by overlaying specific services on a map of the Murray Darling Basin. The idea behind the mapping process was to identify what services were available and where as well as identifying major gaps in service delivery and what could be done to minimise these gaps and provide appropriate resources and services to rural areas affected by the proposed cuts in the Murray Darling Basin.

Rural and Regional Drug and Alcohol Counsellors

Claire Preece from the NSW Health's Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Department attended the meeting and discussed the role that rural and regional drug and alcohol counsellors play in rural and regional communities. Claire also handed out copies of the recently released NSW Suicide Prevention Strategy 2010-2015.

Blueprint Amendments

The Network discussed and agreed upon forming a 'Blueprint Working Group' to amend the current blueprint as many believed it was built with a drought perspective in mind.





The recent announcement that the drought had ended in NSW coupled with the increasing stress and anxiety caused by the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan and the emergence of other 'non-drought' related issues causing mental health issues, created a need for the Blueprint to be amended to cater for the new challenges now facing rural and regional communities. It was agreed that a select number of network participants would work together and update and amend the Blueprint accordingly.



Blueprint updates

The Network ran through Blueprint updates from a number of members and then discussed at length the delivery of the Blueprint pathways. The Network will attempt to invite a speaker from the NSW Police Force, Mental Health Intervention Team to talk about the work they do within the police force.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

The Rural Mental Health Network will next meet on 31 March 2011.

