

Meeting Update – 31 March 2011

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:

Industry and Investment Presentation by Cheryl Pope on Rural Support Workers

Cheryl Pope from Industry and Investment gave a presentation on the scoping paper on the Rural Support Workers developed by Industry and Investment and asked for feedback by network members that she and Dick Kearns could take away and include in their proposal for funding of the roles.

It was discussed that the real underlying issue is the stigma of mental health that precludes diagnoses. For instance, if people do not put their hand up, you cannot see them, no one can see them. It was established that an important part of the issue is that of mass communication. The message is if you're in trouble, put your hand up. But how do we reach these people? The first point of contact is the Rural Support Worker.

The conclusion was that it was vitally important to keep that first point of call happening and in order to get funding to continue this on, there has to be a focus on capacity building and resilience. This can be achieved by dealing with the packaging about overcoming stigma. When packaged through a RSW, you take away that stigma because it's agricultural orientated, so those affected are more than likely to seek help from a RSW because it's in their area.

Blueprint updates

The Network ran through Blueprint updates from a number of members and then discussed at length the delivery of the Blueprint pathways. An action that was raised during the updates was to start investigating the option of broadcasting mental health awareness messages via possibly ABC rural radio. The Association is currently looking into this.

NSW Police Mental Health Intervention Team Presentation – Joel Murchie

Joel Murchie from the NSW Police Mental Health Intervention Team gave a presentation on what they do. They have a team of 4 of which he is the leader. Joel talked through the history of the formation of the unit, 81 mental health incidents per day, 30,000 incidents per year. They have a partnership with the Schizophrenic fellowship and Health NSW who provide training support for the program. The program ran as a 2 year pilot with independent evaluation by CSU.

The Mental Health Training Program is a 4 day training event. The 3 targeted command areas for training are Tuggerah Lakes, Eastern Beaches/Maroubra and Penrith. There are 80 local area commands, and the inspector in each has been trained. There are 16,186 frontline police and they are aiming to have 10% trained by 2015. They are based at level 5, Sydney Police Centre, Surry Hills.

beyondblue Presentation – Nadine Bartholomeusze-Raymond

Nadine gave a PowerPoint presentation on the *beyondblue* Disaster Initiative. As a result of the floods in the eastern states and bushfires in the west *beyondblue* is developing a dedicated portfolio to work on disasters. They have begun implementing strategies to address the psychosocial impacts of the floods in QLD, VIC and NSW in partnership with the Australian General Practice Network and the Divisions of General Practice.



Blueprint Amendments

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. The Network is continuing to update and amend the Blueprint.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

The Rural Mental Health Network will next meet on 7 July 2011.