



Royal Flying Doctor Service  
VICTORIA

Thursday 26 November 2015

## Royal Flying Doctors supports ‘Look Over The Farm Gate’ campaign for mental health

The Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria Section is taking part in Victoria’s “Look Over The Farm Gate”, a social and emotional wellbeing initiative to support drought stricken Victorian communities.

The Flying Doctors together with the Victorian Farmers Federation, Country Women’s Association, Country Fire Authority and National Centre for Farmer Health along with funding from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), have all come together to help promote social and emotional health for Victorian communities affected by drought.

RFDS Victoria CEO Scott Chapman said working together with these organisations, we can better address social and emotional health, physical health and domestic violence issues in the Victoria’s farming sector.

“We know that farmers and rural communities have a history of helping out each other when times are tough. So we are encouraging people to look out for one another through a community led effort,” Mr Chapman said.

VFF president Peter Tuohey expressed his concern with drought taking its toll on Victoria’s farming community, as Victoria heads into what will be a tough summer; industry organisations within agriculture have identified the crucial need for added social and emotional health support through a targeted awareness campaign.

“We need to improve communication, advocacy and outreach about the reality of mental stress to rural communities, exacerbated by drought and tough seasonal conditions,” Mr Tuohey said.

There are five key pillars to the campaign:

- **Social and Emotional Health Awareness:** Neighbours helping neighbours improve social and emotional health in rural communities
- **Physical Health Awareness:** Encourage rural communities to recognise their most important asset is their people and respond to signs of distress before they manifest as physical health conditions
- **Family and Domestic Violence Awareness:** Recognising the relationship between distress and family and domestic violence and how this is exacerbated by the financial, emotional and physical toll of drought.



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- **Communities supporting each other:**  
Often the most effective support network is the local community network. This program will tap into this goodwill and train community members to lead others in taking care of their family, neighbours and peers who, in turn, can do the same. This will create a positive cycle of support.
- **Increased service utilisation:** Encouraging people to provide and seek support can improve social and emotional wellbeing. This may be a key measure of the success of this program.

It is expected that the campaign will be rolled out in December 2015 throughout communities in the north and west of Victoria with RFDS providing social and emotional health training to health providers such as GPs, nurses, and pharmacists, as well as key community members such as teachers and CFA members.

To donate to the Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria, call (03) 8412 0400 or go to [www.flyingdoctor.org.au](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au)

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