

## Country mental health access a fifth the rate of city

New research reveals remote Australians die on average from suicide at twice the rate of city people, yet are only able to access mental health services at a fifth of the rate of city people.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) research - *Mental Health in remote and rural communities* - released today identifies farmers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as among the most at risk of suicide.

RFDS CEO Martin Laverty said *"One in five Australians experience a mental disorder each year. In remote and rural Australia, that means 960,000 each year deal with their mental health. Yet country people can't access the same services as people in the city."*

*"There's no difference in prevalence of mental illness between city and bush. Yet Flying Doctor research reveals dramatic differences in how sick people become. Poor service access, distance, cost, and continued reluctance to seek help all contribute to higher mental illness acuity."*

The research shows there is no difference in common mental health risk factors of family history, stressful events, substance use, and health problems between city and bush, country residents risk exacerbated mental illness because of insufficient early intervention and prevention services.

The research studied a snapshot of 2,567 country Australians flown by air from different parts of country Australia for emergency mental health care by the RFDS from July 2013 to June 2016. The research revealed:

- Schizophrenic psychosis, depressive disorders, and drug psychosis were the three main reasons for RFDS transfers of people with mental disorders;
- 61% of people transferred by the RFDS with mental disorders were male;
- The age range of people transferred by the RFDS with mental disorders was between 4 years and 85 years of age, with the mean age being 35-39 years.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 1.2 times more likely to die from mental disorders than non-Indigenous people, and 1.7 times more likely to be hospitalised. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 12-24 years are three times as likely to be hospitalised with mental illness as non-Indigenous young people.
- Mental health disorders are associated with other illness such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and avoidable injury.

The research outlines the thirteen specific mental health programs operated by the RFDS in the last financial year. These services range from visiting mental health clinics, 24 hour telehealth services, through to emergency air transfers of people requiring city based acute care.

*"This research makes the case for more mental health resources in the bush", Mr Laverty said.*

*"The RFDS is grateful to Government for the support it provides, but more is needed. To those who support the Flying Doctor with donations, we're also grateful and invite your ongoing support."*

You can access the research paper "*Mental Health in remote and rural communities*" at [www.flyingdoctor.org.au/research](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au/research).

If this media release raises matters of concern for you, contact RFDS emergency services in your state by visiting [www.flyingdoctor.org.au/contact/](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au/contact/) or call Lifeline on 131114 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.