

Media release

4 March 2019

Free mental health support for drought affected Western NSW

Drought affected communities across rural and regional Western NSW can now access free mental health coaching support developed by Beyond Blue and delivered locally by Marathon Health

Most of NSW remains drought stricken and the sustained stress on locals, along with uncertainty around livelihoods, can take a toll and leave lasting effects on people's mental health.

With many farmers, small business owners, workers and parents feeling the pressure, it is vital that people receive mental health support as early as possible to prevent their issues leading to more serious mental health conditions.

- In 2015-16 more than 20,000 people in Western NSW area received mental health treatment plans from their GPs
- In 2013-14, 3524 people were hospitalised for mental health reasons while 401 people were hospitalised for intentional self-harm
- The five-year average suicide rate is 16 per cent higher than the NSW average

The NewAccess program was launched in Dubbo on Wednesday, March 13 and is now available to people over 16 years living in the Western NSW Primary Health Network (PHN) area, which covers 27 council areas.

NewAccess is available to anyone feeling stressed, anxious, isolated or struggling to deal with difficult work or personal life challenges – getting on top of challenges like these can prevent conditions such as depression.

The program is funded by the Federal Government via the Western NSW PHN.

NewAccess pairs people with a mental health coach trained in Low Intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Over six free sessions, coaches give people the skills they need to get on top of the issues causing their distress.

NewAccess coaches come from a range of backgrounds including agriculture, farming, Indigenous and youth mental health services.

Coaches will develop individual recovery plans for each person, empowering them to manage their own mental health especially if those issues arise again.

The program is available in person, by phone and via Skype and Facetime, making it easier for people living in rural areas to access quality support without long delays.

A doctor's referral is not required but general practitioners can refer patients to NewAccess.

Media Contact:

Cheryl Balfour 0434 356 775 / (03) 9818 9253

cheryl.balfour@beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said: “Access to mental health services is a crucial issue in rural and remote areas, especially amid relentless drought conditions that have placed enormous pressure on local families and communities.

“We know country people are resilient, but no one is immune to the kind of stress that comes with life changing events like this drought.

“NewAccess was designed to make it easier for people to get mental health support; it’s free, accessible from home, confidential and it gives people practical ways to regain control of their mental health.”

Marathon Health Acting CEO Garry Burton said: Marathon Health is very pleased to work with Beyond Blue and the Western NSW PHN to deliver NewAccess in Western NSW.

“Considering the struggles in this region, due to the drought and tough economic situation, it’s a timely service that aims to give control back to the people doing it tough. We aim to empower individuals with the skills to help them get through it.”

To register or to find out more about NewAccess Western NSW

- Call (02) 6333 2838
- Go to www.marathonhealth.com.au/newaccess

Media contact:

Emily Roberts, Media and Communications Officer, Marathon Health, 0428 924 523