



MEDIA RELEASE

26 Feb 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MHCA WELCOMES MENTAL HEALTH FOCUS IN DROUGHT PACKAGE

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) today welcomed the Abbott Government's new drought assistance package, praising the focus on increased mental health services in regional Australia.

"Part of the challenge of ensuring we have a productive and connected regional sector is providing a working and accessible mental health system," MHCA Chair Jennifer Westacott said today.

"Our properties and farms not only provide a source of living for many Australians and a vital cog in our economy, they also provide a stable environment, a sense of purpose, and a community for people living in the bush.

"Over time, the effect of a drought can break down these community connections, increase unemployment, and leave families feeling stressed, disconnected and depressed.

"This can trigger mental illness, exacerbate pre-existing conditions and, in extreme cases, lead to avoidable and tragic suicide. One of the major impediments to improving the mental health of regional and remote Australians is access to services.

"We welcome this specific commitment to mental health from the Abbott Government. This injection of \$10.7 million to increase the delivery of social support services in drought-affected areas is certainly a good start."

MHCA is the peak non-government body representing the mental health sector in Australia. Our vision is for Australia to have the best mental health system in the world.

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