



Greg Aplin MP
Member for Albury

MEDIA RELEASE

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DROUGHT RELIEF: 'FARM GATE' COUNSELLORS TO BOOST MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Farming communities facing pressure in the wake of severe drought conditions will have access to 20 new 'farm gate' counsellors and frontline mental health workers as part of a \$6.3 million commitment from the NSW Government.

Member for Albury, Greg Aplin today announced that more people in drought-affected areas of the Murrumbidgee region will now have access to additional mental health supports thanks to an injection of funding by the State Government.

"Every day reports of grief and loss from within farming communities grow in the wake of severe and ongoing drought conditions," Mr Aplin said.

"It is often difficult to seek help when living in remote and rural area, and this new funding will link people struggling with their mental health into services appropriate to their needs."

The district was successful in receiving more than \$700,000 over two years to fund three Farm Gate Support Clinicians in Murrumbidgee as part of the NSW Government's Emergency Drought Relief Package.

These clinicians, who are sensitive to the local needs of the farming communities, will bring a 'farm gate and kitchen table' conversation approach to engaging with those whose mental health is at risk due to drought conditions.

The work of these clinicians will build on the other mental health supports announced by the Government to help build stronger, healthier, interconnected and resilient communities.

The new mental health positions, which build on the existing Rural Adversity Mental Health Program, will be based in the Western, Hunter New England, Murrumbidgee, Nepean Blue Mountains, South Western Sydney and Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health Districts.

Minister for Mental Health, Tanya Davies said the funding over the next two years will ensure individuals, families and businesses have access to 44,000 hours of crucial mental health support close to home.

"People with lived experience of life on the land will lend a hand at events to start those conversations that might not otherwise be had. This is about reducing stigma, providing hope and support, and most importantly recovery," Mrs Davies said.

This funding commitment is on top of \$4 million already being provided to regional NGO's to support communities facing natural disaster and drought. The NSW Liberals and Nationals Government's total commitment to drought is more than \$1 billion.

For crisis support please phone Lifeline on 13 11 14. For more information on mental health services in your community contact the NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511, or visit www.crrmh.com.au for rural mental health information.

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