

CWA of NSW Awareness Week 1 - 8 September 2019



Media Release

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CWA starting a Sconversation about women's mental health

'Start a Sconversation' - that's what the Country Women's Association of NSW (CWA of NSW) is asking communities across NSW to do during its annual Awareness Week starting on Sunday, September 1.

The CWA's Awareness Week runs from September 1 to September 8, with this year's theme focusing on women's mental health awareness and support services in regional, rural and remote communities, and how all of us can help make a difference when it comes to maintaining robust mental health in ourselves and in those around us.

With ongoing drought continuing to be a major challenge in many parts of the state - presenting enormous mental health implications in rural and regional areas – the CWA of NSW feels there's an urgent need to shine a spotlight on the issue.

CWA of NSW State President Stephanie Stanhope said one of the organisation's main messages this Awareness Week is the importance of a support network and regular catch-ups - or a 'Sconversation' - with friends.

"The CWA of NSW has long been a supportive social network for women so the power of a Sconversation – boil the jug, sit down and enjoy a cuppa and a chat – is well known. It's the chance to talk about how you're feeling in a safe and supportive environment, and ask for assistance should you need it. For those who are listening it's an opportunity to offer support and some advice if you think it's required," she said.

Women on the land particularly, Stephanie said, were often required to wear many different hats, and during the ongoing drought, may also be supporting a partner under enormous pressures, while also nurturing children suffering the mental health impacts of drought.

"These kinds of pressures will take a toll on anyone, and we all owe it to ourselves to be aware of family or friends who may be struggling, and also take notice of our own mental health and reach out if we need to. Just talking about a problem with people we trust can often make the world of difference, or be the first step in finding more professional support services," she said.

"Maintaining strong mental health – and seeking support services – is challenging enough in country communities. The 'tyranny of distance' is very real. It impacts on the number of support services and access to them, the opportunities for socialising and relaxation activities, and can mean geographical isolation for those outside regional communities.

"The drought is just another factor they're dealing with at present, and we want to ensure people are aware the drought hasn't finished – or even eased. For many regions things are worsening and health practitioners are warning the mental health implications are enormous."

The Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) is a major project of the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH), and a supporter of this year's Awareness Week campaign. RAMHP has 19 Coordinators based across regional, rural and remote NSW who inform, educate and connect individuals, communities and workplaces with appropriate mental health services and programs.

RAMHP Program Manager Tessa Caton said it was a great initiative from the CWA of NSW to draw attention to mental health issues in rural and regional NSW, and particularly around women, with statistics showing women experience some mental health conditions at higher rates than men. One in six women in Australia will suffer from depression and one in three women will experience anxiety during their lifetime.

"I hope Sconversations inspires and encourages women across NSW to strike up a conversation about mental health with their family, friends and colleagues. We also want to make sure people are aware of what to look out for, how to support someone who is struggling and how and where to seek help," said Ms Caton.

The CWA of NSW has also produced a handy reference card for branch members to distribute during Awareness Week, with the organisation's famous scones recipe on one side, and important support information from RAMHP on the other.

"We hope our information card is one way for people to feel more comfortable about talking to people who may be struggling and gently offer some details around where they can find support," Stephanie said.

"So, please, take the time to Start a Sconversation with your friends, and make it a regular catch-up in your diary. Too many people are still suffering in silence, and that's something we can all start doing something about."

More information on the assistance RAMHP offers can be found at <http://www.ramhp.com.au/>

Ends

For further information or to arrange an interview with Stephanie Stanhope, CWA of NSW CEO Danica Leys or Awareness Week partners contact:

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