

NEWS RELEASE

2010 Australian of the Year supports Help a Mate

A new online program aimed at helping rural Australians deal with mental health issues will be launched this week.

Called 'Help a Mate' the program has been created by Incitec Pivot Fertilisers in conjunction with Brisbane psychologist Dr Chris Day. The program features an online tool kit hosted on the recently launched Farmer Community website. The program has already received support from 2010 Australian of the Year and mental health ambassador Professor Patrick McGorry.

Professor McGorry said that he has been aware for a long time of the need for ongoing and easily accessible mental health support for rural Australians following a visit to flood affected farmers in Queensland in January.

"People in rural and remote communities not only have the same level, if not more issues with mental health than the rest of Australia but they also have much less access to services and someone to talk to about professional help," he said.

Professor McGorry said that taking the first steps to seek help, be it the person themselves or a family member is vital in treating mental health issues.

"The whole early intervention idea that we have in other parts of health care, whether it is cancer or heart disease, we want to see that in the mental health field as well," he said.

"Therefore we need to make it easier for people to get information to seek help."

The Help a Mate program is designed to not only encourage people to seek help themselves but also to provide family and friends access to tools to help when they can see that someone close to them is suffering.

The tool kit includes checklists, videos and a question and answer forum. Dr Day, a clinical psychologist, executive coach, author and public speaker on psychological issues has provided her expertise in defining the resources. The forum will be a unique way that a person can anonymously communicate with a trained psychologist.

The program has received support from a number of Australians farmers who have bravely shared their story in the hope that it will assist others. These personal accounts are available as part of the online resources.

Incitec Pivot Fertilisers Area Sales Manager Noel Trevaskis, himself an ambassador for men's health has also shared his story of his own battle.