

NEWS RELEASE

Rural Australians urged to 'Help a Mate' to combat mental illness

Brisbane Psychologist Dr Chris Day is helping to take mental health support to rural and regional Australians.

Dr Day is part of a new mental health program designed to help rural and regional communities identify the signs of mental illness and arm them with the tools to help.

Called 'Help a Mate' the program is being launched in October by Incitec Pivot Fertilisers in conjunction with Dr Day. The program will be 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.

Dr Day said the program arose from a growing awareness that many people in the country are stressed and struggling and are unaware how to deal with it.

"Many are not aware of what the problem is and they are largely left to fend for themselves with friends unaware of their turmoil and distress," Dr Day said.

"They know that there is something wrong but they don't know what to do about it."

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.

"Someone who is struggling is more likely to be helped if their friends or family take an interest or show support," Dr Day said.

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," Dr Day said.

The materials also include videos from farmers and Incitec Pivot Fertilisers staff that have been courageous enough to tell their personal story in the hope that it might help others.