

COVID-19

RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

Media release

Monday 18 May 2020

Rural doctors welcome Government support for mental health

Rural peak bodies have welcomed the additional \$48.1 million in funding for mental health supports announced by the Federal Government following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) are encouraged by the recognition that the ongoing mental health of many rural Australians will be impacted by the effects of the virus and the economic shutdown.

Dr Adam Coltzau, Clinical Lead of the COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response, said that rural doctors are at the forefront of treating people's mental well-being in rural areas where specialist services are often unavailable.



"There are going to be so many ongoing impacts of COVID-19, that go well beyond the immediate concerns," Dr Coltzau said.

"There are people suffering now, finding that the physical distance measures are impacting on their social connections.

"This can have a real and damaging impact on relationships, families, and friends that can cause long-term issues.

"This is something that people have never experienced before, and people are coping with it in different ways – some better than others. It's important to seek help if you are finding it hard, either with a friend, family member or doctor."

"But a real worry continues to be the long-term economic impact of the containment measures," Dr Coltzau said.

"There are going to be people who can't afford to pay their bills. Who may lose their house. Who may have already lost their job or their business.

"This is going to be a very long recovery process and we expect to see more presentations for anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions as time goes by.

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“We know that in communities that suffer a natural disaster, the physical improvement of their environment helps a lot... seeing houses rebuilt, trees growing, this all has a positive impact on a community’s outlook.

“A health crisis like this is a lot less visible and so we will not have this mechanism to encourage people and as the longer-term impacts emerge, they will be more difficult to deal with.

“We thank the National Cabinet for recognising what will be ongoing issues, and providing funding for early and effective action to prevent suicide and self-harm, working with vulnerable groups in the community, such as older Australians, carers and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as an investment in making sure people are connected to care in support of their mental health.”

Find more information on how to protect yourself, your family and community from COVID-19 at www.health.gov.au.

A high resolution photo of Dr Adam Coltzau is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/712>

A high resolution photo of ACRRM President, Dr Ewen McPhee, is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/968>

A high resolution photo of RDAA President, Dr John Hall, is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/687>

Available for interview:

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