

## TheMHS Media Awards

Let's Talk: Rural Mental Health Podcast Series (Episodes 1-5)

URL to podcast series: <https://www.crrmh.com.au/get-help-now/self-help-resources/podcasts/>

Let's Talk: Rural Mental Health Podcast was launched on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

The purpose of the podcasts was to help disseminate mentally healthy messages in an accessible format to people living in rural and remote communities across Australia. The podcast topics focused on issues that specifically impact rural communities; and help to build healthy and resilient people and communities. Each of the podcasts tell stories of real people and their journey of hope and recovery.

The topics covered looked at particular issues from a rural and remote perspective, and include:

- Talking to your General Practitioner (GP)
- Disasters, Trauma & Mental Health
- Mentally Healthy Workplaces
- Transitioning back to the land
- Rural Suicide Prevention
- Mental Health Peer Workers *[not included in award submission]*

The series was developed by Rural Adversity Mental Health Project (RAMHP) in partnership with radio producer and presenter Kia Handley (currently with the ABC Statewide Drive program). RAMHP identifies individuals and communities at risk of mental ill health, and links them to appropriate support and information. The program works with communities who are experiencing adversity due to environmental factors such as drought, fires, floods etc. as well as economic and social changes and isolation.

Our main way of disseminating the podcasts was through

- ABC Statewide Drive during mental health month
- Social Media launch campaign with other mental health organisations
- Creating a section to host podcasts of Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) and RAMHP websites
- Link to podcasts included in The Glove Box Guide to Mental Health 2017
- Where appropriate we link stories on social media to podcasts

**The content of the story is sufficiently complete and balanced to impart a broad understanding of the issues.**

The RAMHP team identified that it was important to develop a communications tool that could engage rural communities we work with. We thought about reach not only in terms of format ie easy listening at a time that suits the listener but also topics that would engage and be relevant to a rural audience.

Being able to provide information to the community in an accessible format is an important step to breaking down barriers to accessing help, and reducing the stigma around mental health. We know from research that people living outside metropolitan areas are at greater risk of mental health problems and suicide.

In every state, the rate of suicide among those who live outside capital cities is higher than for those that live within greater capital cities. Over five years the rate of suicide has gradually risen in rural areas, but has remained relatively stable in capital cities.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, finding a way to reach out to these communities is a key priority, and we continue to strive to learn new ways of engaging with rural communities. One example is at the Royal Easter Show 2017. The Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH), who manage RAMHP, hosted “Working together to prevent rural suicide”. This event brought key leaders in mental health and suicide prevention together to discuss the issue of suicide prevention and what needed to be done to address it.

Director at Everymind, (formally Hunter Institute of Mental Health) Jaelea Skehan, identified a five point plan to foster communication, including harnessing opportunities among rural media, targeted messaging, relating lived experiences matched to the needs of audience, strong protocols to manage the impact of suicide and giving community leaders the right tools and support.

We were able to take this learning and include it in the development of the podcast series. Let’s Talk: Rural Mental Health utilises a number of these principles, by

- linking with state-wide radio, rural media and hosting episodes on a widely used accessible platform
- identifying what factors impact the mental health of people living in rural areas and targeting messages to this audience (not just farmers)
- Garnering a number of perspectives on each topic.

### Evidence that the story has been well researched and is factually accurate

The project team chose to have three perspectives on a topic in each episode, to help provide a broad balanced viewpoint. Given this we sought rural and remote contributors who had either:

- lived experience of mental health problems
- personal experience working on the frontline eg. Health professional; and/ or
- expert industry knowledge either from a peak body or research background to talk about the broader picture, and direction.

This series was developed in consultation with our distributed rural workforce - our Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) Coordinators. The Coordinators, who are based around rural and remote NSW, were asked to identify specific issues that impact the mental health of those living in rural and remote NSW. Each RAMHP

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2017), 3303\_0 Causes of Death, Australia, 2016.

Coordinator lives and works in their local community, and have an in-depth knowledge of what their communities need to improve mental health and wellbeing.

We also worked with the RAMHP Coordinators to identify suitable talent from within their communities and appropriate partner organisations to be interviewed as part of the podcast series. A number of safeguards were put in place to support those sharing their story such as; explaining how the podcasts would be used, where the podcasts could be accessed and where they could get support if they experienced distress. As a team, we are mindful when working with people sharing their lived experience that they are mentally doing well, and that sharing their experience is not going to cause them distress.

### Guidelines for reporting of mental health matters are taken into account

CRRMH is committed to improving mental health and wellbeing in rural and remote communities. As an organisation, we work closely with Everymind and our communications team leaders sit on the *Mindframe* Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Communication Managers roundtable.

All the work that is produced by CRRMH and RAMHP, including this podcast series, is done so adhering to the *Mindframe* guidelines.

### The overall style and journalistic character of the entry are engaging for the target audience.

To achieve a high quality product, we were fortunate to be able to work in partnership with radio presenter and producer Kia Handley, who also has a keen interest in mental health and wellbeing. Kia currently works with ABC Radio for the Statewide Drive program and is well known for her relaxed interview style, as well as her ability to make her interviewees feel comfortable. Having lived and worked in rural and remote NSW, Kia is well aware of the issues experienced by rural people and the contributors in the podcasts. Working with such a credible journalist enabled us to create podcasts which were authentic, resonated with our audience, and effectively communicated our mental health message.

As producer of ABC's Statewide Drive program, Kia was keen to use the episodes during Mental Health Month in October. In recent market research, Statewide Drive found in regional hubs such as Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Griffith, Wagga, Port Macquarie and Orange reached over 36,000 people daily. This research had not taken into account some larger areas like Parkes, Bathurst, Young, Lismore, Tamworth etc, so we predict that the reach is much higher.

Through our partnership with Kia Handley and the subsequent inclusion on the ABC's Statewide Drive program, we were able to reach a much wider rural audience than we could have done without this partnership. Kia is also a trusted and well respected journalist, who has an in-depth knowledge of the *Mindframe* guidelines, an important consideration when communicating sensitive topics such as mental health and suicide prevention.

As well as promoting the podcast series through the ABC, we were able to facilitate a joint campaign with the mental health peak organisations such as Everymind,

Suicide Prevention Australia, and Way Ahead on 13th November, with coordinated social media posts and tiles. This helped to promote a united voice on rural mental health.

As of April 2018 (6 months since we launched the series) we have had over 1830 listens to the podcasts. This demonstrates the value we achieved through focusing on authenticity, relevant topics and establishing valuable partnerships.

### **Endorsements**

"Let's talk is a great podcast that brings awareness to mental health issues in rural areas. I think it is excellent that different experts and people with experience in each topic are included to ensure that accurate information is shared as well as how people perceived it when they experienced it.

Another major plus for let's talk is that it also prompts action by providing tips on how to look after your mental health, how to support others as well as how to seek professional help. I highly recommend that people take the time to listen to the let's talk podcasts."

- Caitlin Vayro, Farmer Well-Being and Research

The podcasts were a great resource that we tapped into during mental health month. Resources such as these are very accessible for people living in rural areas. The information and the shared first hand experiences given in the podcasts were very informative and inspiring.

- Annie McLoughlin on behalf of Warranggal committee

A note from the Journalist – Kia Handley

**Why I took this on:** It's a rare moment when I speak to someone and they haven't been touched in some way by mental health. Since going through my own battles and those of my family and friends I know the power of hearing someone tell their mental health journey with their own voice, in their own words and that's why this podcast was such an important project for me to take on.

**Why it's an important topic:** We like to think the stigma around mental health is breaking down, and in some ways that's true. But there are still a lot of people who keep their experiences, their troubles secret especially in regional Australia and that needs to change. The more we talk about it, the more open we are about all our experiences the easier it makes the journey for someone else.

**Telling these stories:** It was an absolute privilege to be asked by the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health to speak too all the incredible people who featured in this podcast. Through the process of recording our chats there was laughter, nerves, tears and relief (mostly when I said I had asked everything I needed). It shows the power of storytelling. And to use that power to talk about mental health is something really special.

## About the Let's Talk Logo

We wanted the podcast to have its own logo, but still be identifiable under the RAMHP brand. We were also keen that would be eye-catching amongst the other podcast logos.

The logo design which we chose represents the diversity of areas that fall under the 'Rural' banner, often only associated with livestock and crop farming; but in fact a much wider term. Below is a description of our logo rationale



Further detail about each podcast episode is provided below:

### **1. Talking to your General Practitioner**

In this episode we talk about why your General Practitioner (GP) can be the most important person if you're struggling with your mental health. While the stigma around mental health is improving, wanting to be resilient in times of distress can stop us all reaching out for help.

### **2. Disasters, Trauma and Your Mental Health**

In this episode we focus on what happens to our mental health when we experience emergencies and disasters. Disasters can strike at any time. From car accidents to natural disasters we can find our mental health pushed and tested in many ways. In this episode we share tips about keeping yourself and those around you mentally well during tough times.

### **3. Mentally Healthy Workplaces**

In this episode we focus on mentally healthy workplaces. We spend so much of our lives at work and no matter whether you're a farmer, teacher, nurse, firefighter or office worker, we can all find ourselves in stressful environments. So how do we create mentally healthy workplaces and why is this important? We explore this issue in episode three.

### **4. Transitioning Back to the Land**

Life can take us in so many different directions but what happens when you make the decision to transition to life back on the land? Whether it's your first time or you're returning to the family farm it can be a huge challenge for our mental health. If services and support are limited, how can you ensure that you and your family's needs are taken care of? We explore this issue in episode four.

### **5. Rural Suicide Prevention**

If you are living in rural and regional Australia, you are at a higher risk of suicide than your friends and family living in the city. You have less access to services and mental health care and the stigma around suicide is still significant. So how can we save more lives? In this episode we take a look at this issue and hear from some of the speakers at a forum the Centre facilitated earlier in the year at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

### **6. Peer Work [not included in award submission]**

People with lived experiences of mental health are being trained to support others at their lowest moments. They're called peer workers and the popularity of this position in workplaces is growing. So what is it and how can you get involved? We explore this issue in episode six.