

YIRRA KOORL

looking forward

SPECIAL COVID-19 RECOVERY ISSUE, JUNE 2020

We sincerely hope you are keeping safe and well in these unprecedented times.

It has been a challenging time for many of us in the Wheatbelt, as we have experienced the uncertainty and impacts of COVID-19.

I have been collaborating with many professional peers throughout the Wheatbelt on projects and initiatives to increase individual and community safety during this time. We have also provided support and information to professionals and community members within the Wheatbelt.

As we transition into the COVID-19 recovery phase, we will see the impacts of self-isolation, loneliness and disconnection on our mental health and wellbeing. This could also apply to our families, friends, colleagues, clients and the broader communities we work and live in.

This special edition of Yirra Koorl focuses on ways to maintain good mental health during these uncertain times, information on ways to remain positive and connected, and new research, services, training opportunities and supports.

*Jo Drayton - Holyoake WCADS
Suicide Prevention Coordinator*

WHAT COULD 'NORMAL' LIFE BE LIKE AFTER COVID-19?



As state governments make cautious moves towards easing restrictions, it's time to start thinking about life beyond lockdown.

Even though many of us have been looking forward to getting back to normalcy, Professor Vijaya Manicavasagar of the Black Dog Institute cautions that re-entry into the real world might not be all smooth sailing.

Adjusting to the new normal

We can expect to see lots of changes... from a favourite café that didn't survive the lockdown to greeting between friends that's a nod or a wave, rather than a hug.

Practical activities like driving a car or catching a train may feel strange. For many of us, old habits – a drink at the pub, a dinner party with friends and family – might be tinged with concern about whether it's really wise to socialise in close contact with others.

But for others, the changes might be deeper. The unexpected nature of the pandemic and its sudden and intrusive arrival in our lives will leave some of questioning whether the world is still a safe place.

Financial and economic challenges

For those who have lost income or jobs, there are practical concerns to grapple with – finding work, meeting financial commitments, applying for Centrelink benefits, negotiating with landlords and banks to manage rent, mortgages and credit card payments.

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SPECIAL COVID-19

RECOVERY ISSUE



Contd from pg 1...

With predictions of up to 1.4 million job losses by the end of 2020, financial stress will be front and centre of many people's lives for the foreseeable future and could have a significant impact on their mental health.

"A lot of things that people are going to be worrying about – their future, their career, their training. There are some very practical pressures that are going to drive some of this anxiety – it's not all just about reintegrating into society," says Professor Manicavasagar.

Easing back into life after lockdown

The good news is that research tells us that shared experiences of stress can bring communities together in ways we may not have experienced prior to COVID-19. Here are some tips for easing back:

- **Take it slowly.** Simple things like doing the grocery shopping, driving a car, or spending time with friends might feel strange as you move back into your post-lockdown life. Take note of how you feel and consider speaking to your GP if feelings of anxiety persist or worsen.
- **Rebuild your relationships.** It's been a while since you've physically seen your friends and family members – and remember, they've changed as much as you have. Spend some time together processing the experience, rebuilding bonds and supporting one another as you move into the next phase of your relationship.
- **Look for opportunities.** The Federal Government is offering heavily subsidised undergraduate and

postgraduate certificate courses for people who have been financially displaced by COVID-19. If you are looking to enhance your current skillset or to retrain in a new field, a new qualification could help you move forward.

- **Seek help early.** Everyone reacts differently to change. Feelings of anxiety, disturbed sleep, changes to appetite, irritability and bouts of crying are all signs you may need some extra support. Speak to your GP or refer to mental health advice and resources in this issue.
- **Reflect on your experience.** Rather than focusing on going back to your old life, think about whether the lockdown experience could help you make positive changes going forward. You may want to work less, exercise more, or spend more time with family and friends. Make a list of new habits you would like to embrace and start implementing them one by one.
- **Remember the advice.** Wash your hands regularly, keep a safe distance from others and keep up with the rules as they change so you know what you can and cannot do. Remember these rules have been very effective at keeping the infection rate low in Australia.

Article courtesy Black Dog Institute

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/

CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM HOLYOAKE WCADS

During COVID-19, the Holyoake Wheatbelt Community Alcohol and Drug Service (WCADS) is committed to supporting the Wheatbelt community.

While our offices are closed, we are providing support via phone and video counselling to those impacted, directly or indirectly, by alcohol and/or other drugs. This is to ensure the safety of the community and staff during social distancing restrictions.

Our 'After Hours' support service also continues for those unable to attend appointments during business hours. Phone or video counselling is available on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings.

Face-to-face support will recommence in the near future when it is safe to do so. Contact details on page 18 of this issue.

7 tips for dealing with change

The pandemic has resulted in lots of change which can be stressful or scary to deal with. It can be frustrating to deal with constant changes - you get used to one thing, and the situation could change again.

Here are 7 tips that could help you deal with change:

1. Think things through and ask, "What's the worst that can happen?"

We are often scared of change because we are afraid of the unknown. A good way to deal with the unknown is to think things through carefully. Imagine all the different possible outcomes, and then decide what would be your best and worst-case scenarios. Write them down, if it helps. Another good strategy is to think about the last time you faced a big change and got through it okay. Sometimes it's not as bad as it seems at first and may just take a little time to get used to.

2. Ask yourself how much you can control

When a big change occurs, it is important to figure out how much control you really have. Understanding your role and how much you can change can help put things in perspective.



3. Accept and reframe

If the unwanted change is beyond your control, try taking a reflective approach. Accepting that there are things beyond your control, and choosing to be comfortable with that fact, is likely to bring greater peace of mind than waging an unwinnable war. View change as an opportunity to learn and grow, rather than as a setback.

4. Celebrate the positives

Even though it can be a tough ask, focusing on the positives can really help you manage change. While the positive aspects of a situation might not be obvious to begin with, it is worth seeking them out - no matter how small they might be.

5. Take action

If the unwanted change is within your control, take an active approach to dealing with it. Try some problem-solving techniques, or set some goals to address any challenges proactively. Focusing on the problem at hand, developing a plan of action, and asking for advice are useful active strategies.

6. Manage your stress

Improving your ability to handle stress will go a long way to helping you deal with change. Try practising mindfulness or meditation, or engaging in other relaxation techniques.

7. Seek support

It is perfectly normal to feel overwhelmed if the change you are facing is really big, or there's too much change happening all at once. This is when it might be best to seek support. Consider asking family or friends for help or emotional support. A phone or video call or online chats can help you feel connected to your loved ones.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, please seek professional help. This special issue of Yirra Koorl includes details of a range of services.

#InThisTogether

Tips for your mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19



If you need to talk, these free support lines are here to listen 24/7:

Lifeline 13 11 14 | Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636 | Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

National Coronavirus Helpline 1800 020 080 or headtohealth.gov.au



Here are some practical tips to stay connected and mentally well during this challenging time:

- **Seek support.** It's OK not to feel OK. Everyone is being challenged in some way by COVID-19. Each of us will need support in different ways and learn strategies to better cope with anxiety and uncertainty. Services are available to help everyone.
- **Follow the facts.** Pause the scrolling. Large amounts of negative news can make us feel nervous and anxious. Take a break from it from time to time and only follow trusted sources of information.
- **Talk, don't just type.** Staying connected emotionally and socially is really important. Hearing familiar voices and seeing familiar faces will help in tackling isolation and difficult feelings. Use your phones and computers to hear and see each other, and be heard.
- **Routine helps.** Create a new daily routine. For many, COVID-19 has changed the daily routine. Set a new one and incorporate good aspects such as sleeping, exercising and healthy eating. Block out some hours to stay offline and lock in time to connect with loved ones.
- **Take a break.** Take regular breaks from work, news, phone calls and family demands. In order to reduce anxiety and stress, our minds need rest and time to reset. Some apps can help with controlling and slowing breathing and calming the mind.
- **Helpers need help too.** Our essential workforce is under incredible pressure and they need to seek support for their mental health when they are not coping. Let's remember to understand, support and acknowledge them for the work they are doing.
- **Reach out to those who may not have connections.** Some people may live alone and may not have family or friends near them. We can cast our nets wide and get creative about building connected communities.
- **Stay connected.** Get creative in the ways you connect. It is important to stay socially and emotionally connected even while physically distancing. Make a daily commitment to connect with family, families, and your communities and be creative. There are people who can support you, so reach out and ask for help from people you know or from a support service.
- **Get sweaty.** Exercise is great for your mental health. Even the smallest amount of exercise is good for physical and mental health. If you can, go for a walk, run or ride outdoors or search YouTube for free exercise routines.
- **Check-in and be kind to yourself.** Some of us may be supporting others during this time. Don't forget that this is challenging, and you need to take care of yourself too. Learn and practice new coping skills and monitor how you are feeling and seek support if required.
- **Let children know it is OK to be worried, and talk it out.** Work with your children to establish new routines for the whole family. Help them to stay connected with their friends, and reserve special times in the day for fun activities. Please seek support for you or your children if you need to.
- **Financial stress is real.** Talk about it. Financial stress can have an impact on your mental health and wellbeing. Take action to help you feel more in control by talking to an expert, and seek help for your finances.
- **Play your part.** It is important to remember that each of us can make a difference. Each day we make decisions about safeguarding and protecting our family, friends and community. We can find ways to give our healthcare workers an extra buffer of protection. Remember, we are in this together and everyone has a part to play.

For more details please go to:

www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/InThisTogether

Supporting our mental health during COVID-19

MANAGING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH ONLINE DURING COVID-19 - EMHPRAC

COVID-19 has brought rapid changes to our daily life, together with uncertainty and dramatic news headlines. Some people may be feeling overwhelmed, worried or depressed at the moment.

There are a myriad of ways to get help on a phone, computer or tablet. These include crisis and counselling services, and mental health treatments that have been converted into web programs or apps. Most of these programs and services are free and are available over extended hours and importantly are not just for people with a mental health diagnoses - they are for anyone who is experiencing distress.

eMHprac have created a comprehensive list of online support available. To access this list please visit: www.emhprac.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Factsheet-3.pdf

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN

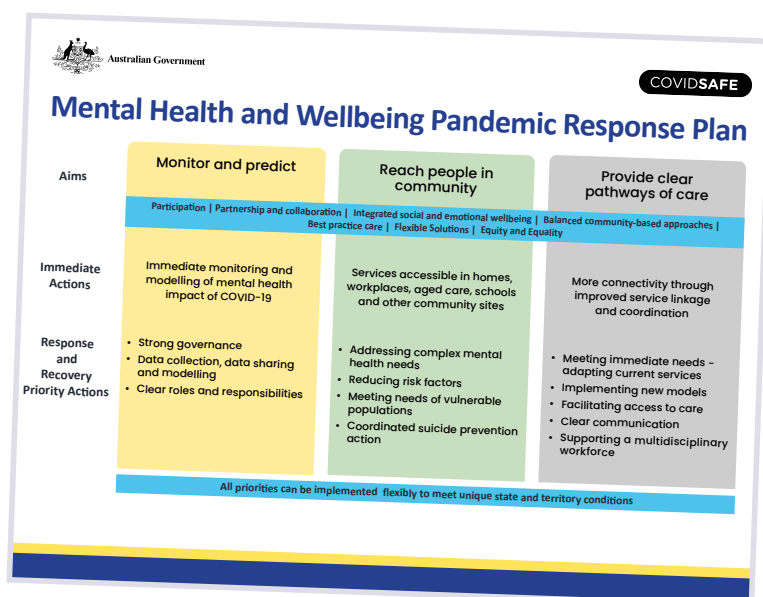
The National Mental Health Commission welcomed the National Cabinet's commitment to support and respond to the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan with an additional \$48.1 million investment.

Current data indicates that there are higher levels of reported anxiety and psychological distress in the general population, and that some people with severe, complex and chronic mental illness have disconnected from services. There is also strong evidence that there are risks of increasing mental ill health, including new presentations of mental distress and illness, increased substance use and increased risk of suicide in the longer term.

Australians, including those in the mental health sector, have responded quickly to this crisis with a range of measures such as:

- Expansion of digital services
- Telehealth delivery of mental health services
- Innovative community based models of care
- More agile coordination between primary and acute care
- Expanded engagement with people with lived experience
- Recognition of the importance of social and associated needs for the homeless

It is important to use this disruptive period in mental health services as an opportunity to address the challenges created by the pandemic. The National Mental Health Commission has stated that "The Pandemic Response Plan is the strongest coordinated mental health response that Australia has ever had to recognising the intersection of mental health, suicide prevention and domestic and family violence."



Supporting our mental health during COVID-19

Additional \$20 million for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Research

The Australian Government is providing more than \$20 million additional funding for research to improve mental health care and reduce suicide rates in Australia.

Almost half of Australians will experience a mental illness in their lifetimes and as we battle COVID-19, it is more important than ever to prioritise mental health.

Call for rapid research on the mental health impacts of COVID-19

The disruption to normal life caused by the pandemic and the lockdown has had profound impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of many Australians.

The Government is providing \$3 million for a new grants round under the \$125 million MRFF Million Minds Mission, for rapid research to improve the national mental health system response to the impacts of the pandemic.

This funding is for new research that will help better position our mental health system to be more effective in supporting Australians to manage their mental health and wellbeing, during and following the pandemic.

Applications for grants of up to \$1 million will open on 1 June, with the research projects expected to deliver results within 12 to 18 months.

These grants may support work consolidating data systems, and help design and deliver new treatments, services, and policies. The research is expected to also be relevant in future times of hardship, such as natural disasters.

These research projects and the grant opportunity complement the Government's broader efforts around mental health and suicide prevention, including the recently announced National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan.

Since 30th January, the Government has provided an additional approximately \$500 million for mental health

services and support, including \$64 million for suicide prevention, \$74 million for preventative mental health services, \$48 million to support the pandemic response plan.

It also includes a significant proportion of the \$669 million telehealth package to support MBS-subsidised treatments provided by GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals.

\$10.3 million for suicide prevention research

The Government is also investing \$10.3 million to support three research projects to help reduce the rate of suicide in Australia.

In 2018, suicide was responsible for 12.1 deaths per 100,000 people in Australia, with 3,048 suicides recorded in that year.

Through the Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission, the Government is investing in projects to better understand suicide and provide the right services, in the right place, at the right time. The three successful projects to receive grants through the Mission are:

- University of Melbourne (Professor Jane Pirkis): \$5.6 million to research the prevention of suicide in boys and men. Men account for 75% of all suicides. This research will trial 5 interventions designed to encourage men to seek help. It will also trial 2 interventions designed to ensure that if men and boys seek help from telephone crisis support workers and psychologists, these providers can offer services that meet their needs.
- University of New South Wales (Scientia Professor Helen Christensen AO): \$3.7 million for the Under the Radar Project. As many as 60% of those who die by suicide are not in care; many will only use the internet. This project will investigate the use of the internet as the first point of contact and develop a collaborative, consumer-led, comprehensive care model using digital, peer support and face-to-face services.
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute (Associate Professor Rebecca Giallo): \$951,000 to research suicide prevention among men in early fatherhood. One of

Supporting our mental health during COVID-19

the highest rates of suicide among men coincides with becoming fathers and raising young children. This project will develop effective interventions to improve men's mental health during early fatherhood.

\$6.75 million to improve treatment using pharmacogenomics

Pharmacogenomics looks at how genetics can affect a person's response to certain drugs. The Government is investing \$6.725 million to support research on the use of pharmacogenomics in providing more effective treatment options for Australians requiring medication for mental health challenges.

While psychological strategies are usually the first-line in treatment of mental illness, medications can be an important part of a treatment plan, with almost 10% of Australians now regularly taking antidepressants.

However, a significant number of people do not respond positively to their first prescription, causing delays in improvements to their symptoms and sometimes exacerbating anxiety.

Studies suggest that antidepressant treatment response is significantly influenced by each person's specific genetic profile, and delays in improvement of symptoms can potentially be reduced through predictive pharmacogenomics testing.

This \$6.75 million in funding, under the Medical Research Future Fund's Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research initiative, will allow 4 leading researchers to investigate how pharmacogenomics can be used to tailor mental health prescriptions to the needs of each individual and improve health outcomes. The successful recipients are:

- Professor Jon Emery (University of Melbourne): \$1.39 million to investigate the effects of using pharmacogenomics to prescribe antidepressants on depression outcomes in patients with major depressive disorder in primary care.

- Professor Sarah Medland (The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research): \$1.37 million to examine how to improve the performance of pharmacogenomics in Australia.
- Associate Professor Janice Fullerton (Neuroscience Research Australia): \$1 million to investigate the pharmacogenomic signatures of bipolar disorder for improving treatment outcomes.
- Doctor Kathy Wu (St Vincent's Hospital Sydney): \$2.95 million to conduct trial of genotype-guided versus standard psychotropic therapy in moderately-to-severely depressed patients.

These new research grants will help more effective treatment of those who might need medication with options that are best suited to them. It will also ensure the provision of the best possible mental health care for all Australians, now and in the future.

Through record investments in mental health services and support (estimated to be \$5.2 billion this year alone), the Australian Government continues to demonstrate its firm commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians



Supporting our mental health during COVID-19

Additional \$6 million for Online and Phone Support Services

This funding will be provided urgently to offer online and phone counselling for people experiencing drug and alcohol issues. This will address additional demand caused by isolation and social distancing measures during the pandemic. The funding covers:

- \$2 million to the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to deliver an information and awareness campaign to make Australians aware of the support that is available, and to develop resources specific to the isolation context. <https://adf.org.au/>
- \$1.5 million to Turning Point to scale up treatment episodes provided by Counselling Online, and enable better integration of the service with primary care providers. www.turningpoint.org.au/treatment/clients/phone-online-services
- \$1.5 million to Hello Sunday Morning's Daybreak Program - a treatment and early intervention mobile app that provides online support to individuals seeking assistance in reducing their alcohol consumption. The service helps Australians reduce risky drinking habits by simultaneously addressing the psychological and relationship issues that can sometimes drive drinking in the first place. www.hellosundaymorning.org/daybreak/
- \$0.4 million to SMART Recovery to support adaptation of their service delivery model to an online format. <https://smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au/>
- \$0.6 million to the Matilda Centre to support enhancements to Cracks in the Ice and Positive Choices portals, to target Australians impacted by isolation. Cracks in the Ice provides information about crystal methamphetamine (ice) for community organisations. Positive Choices is an online portal to help school communities access accurate up-to-date drug education resources and prevention programs. www.sydney.edu.au/matilda-centre/
- In addition, the National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (NOFASD) Australia will deliver a COVID-19 Alcohol and Pregnancy campaign addressing

increased alcohol consumption leading to unplanned alcohol-exposed (FASD) pregnancies during the pandemic. The campaign will be implemented largely via social media and target women impacted by the restrictions, particularly social isolation and quarantine.

www.nofasd.org.au/

For further information please visit www.gregghunt.com.au/additional-6-million-to-support-drug-and-alcohol-services-during-covid-19/

WA Mental Health Commission COVID-19 Campaigns and Community Toolkits

The WA Mental Health Commission has released two COVID-19 campaigns: Think! Mental Health, and an updated Alcohol. Think Again campaign. The Community Toolkits include the following downloadable resources:

- TV commercials
- Radio commercials
- Posters and fact sheets
- Email signature images
- Social media posts
- Website content and tools
- Useful contacts
- COVID-19 referral guides
- Culturally secure resources
- Resource order forms

The Think! Mental Health Campaign will run state-wide until the end of July, and the Alcohol. Think Again campaign will run state-wide until the end of August 2020.

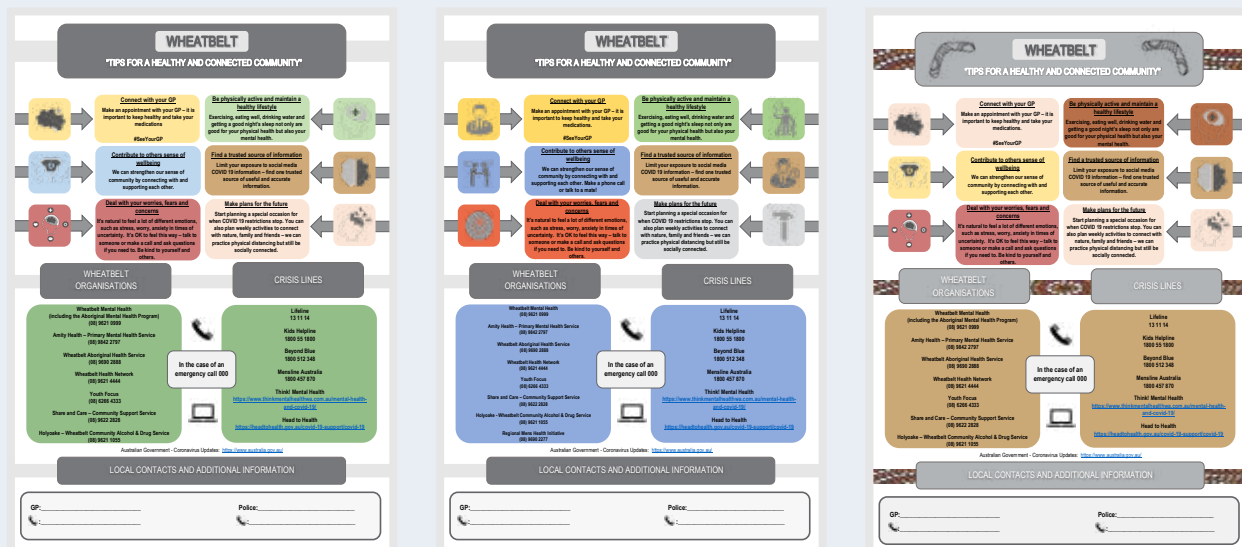
Think Mental Health Community Toolkit: www.thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au/media/1232/200230_tmh_cv19_communitykit_final.pdf

Alcohol. Think Again Community Toolkit: https://alcoholthinkagain.com.au/Portals/0/200430_ata_cv19_commkit_FINAL.pdf

If you would like more information or support on how these resources can be used, disseminated or promoted in your community, workplace or group, please contact Jo Drayton JDrayton@holyoake.org.au

Supporting our mental health during COVID-19

Tip Sheets from the Wheatbelt Mental Health Managers Forum



A subcommittee of the Wheatbelt Mental Health Managers Forum created 3 Wheatbelt Tip Sheets on how to stay connected and well during COVID-19. The information includes Wheatbelt place based services, crisis lines and useful websites.

These Tip Sheets have been distributed to Shires, Community Resource Centers and Networks throughout the

Wheatbelt. If you would like a copy of the Tip Sheets, please email Jordyn.Drayton@holyoake.org.au

Acknowledgement of Committee: Jo Drayton, Tendai Makanyanga, Karen Hansen, Linda Sharman, Terry Melrose, Richard Lewandowski, Matthew Steffel, Sandra Buttersfield and Ricky Pickett. Special thanks to Jordyn Drayton for administrative support and creating the Tip Sheets.

Australians' Drug Use: Adapting to Pandemic Threats (ADAPT) Study

The study aims to explore the short and long-term impact of COVID-19 on Australians who use illicit drugs.

This is one of the first studies globally to talk with people who use illicit drugs about the changes they are experiencing in relation to their drug use, harms, and other challenges and positives they may be experiencing.

The survey covers the following topics:

- General demographics
- COVID-19 experiences (e.g. testing, diagnosis)
- Licit and illicit drug use and behaviours
- Current drug market trends
- Mental and physical health
- Access to treatment and support services
- Harm reduction behaviours

If you would like to participate in the study, you will need to:

- Be aged 18 years or older
- Have used any of the following illicit drugs at least monthly in 2019:
 - cannabis, MDMA, methamphetamine, cocaine, LSD, ketamine, GHB, or heroin
 - prescription opioids and benzodiazepines which were not prescribed or which were prescribed but not taken in as directed
- Have been residing in Australia since March 2020

You will need to provide your email address and mobile number if you wish to take part in the follow-up surveys. This will not be required if you choose to participate only in the initial online survey. For further information please go to: www.adaptstudy.org.au/

SUPPORT SERVICES & RESOURCES

New Beyond Blue service to support Australia's Mental Health through COVID-19

Beyond Blue has introduced a Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service to support all Australians to manage the impact of the COVID-19.

The pandemic has caused significant impacts for Australians, with mental health recognised as a priority during this period.

Beyond Blue Chair The Hon Julia Gillard AC said "We anticipate growing demand for mental health support as this pandemic develops, both from people who are already managing mental health issues and those who have never struggled before."

The digital site has been developed by Beyond Blue, Medibank Health Solutions and Accenture. This free service delivers clear, evidence-based information, advice and support to address the mental health and wellbeing challenges created by the pandemic.

The range of support services include online wellbeing tips, self-help tools, phone counselling from trained mental health professionals, and peer to peer support.

You can also access information about coping with loneliness and self-isolation, managing your mental health if you have the virus, ways to deal with job loss and financial worries, supporting family and friends, coping as a healthcare worker, and support for essential service workers and small businesses.

For more details please go to: coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au



New position – Wheatbelt Postvention Coordinator



This new position has been funded as a pilot/trial by the WA Mental Health Commission. It is auspiced by the WA Country Health Service, and has utilised the expertise of Tendai Makanyanga (Clinical Nurse Specialist and Chair of the Northam

Postvention Committee) to undertake this role.

The Wheatbelt Postvention Coordinator will be responsible for:

- Coordinating postvention responses across services
- Liaising with bereaved families to gain next of kin consent, whilst advising of the immediate, short, and long-term support/assistance available to them.
- Referring those bereaved by suicide into the Suicide Bereavement Service (Share & Care) and other support services

The Northam Postvention Committee recognises that postvention is prevention. Suicide prevention efforts should include a comprehensive postvention component that reduces risk and promotes healing for the immediate family and reaches out into the community to support the broader group of loss survivors including friends, community groups, co-workers and workplaces, first responders, service providers, clubs and others exposed to the loss.

The Wheatbelt Postvention Coordinator has the capacity to assess risks and provide advice of evidence informed postvention initiatives into a community.

To find out more about how the Wheatbelt Postvention Coordinator or the Northam Postvention Committee can support the bereaved or communities affected by suicide, please contact Tendai Makanyanga

Tendai.Makanyanga@health.wa.gov.au

Mental Health Support expanded for Wheatbelt Youth



Young people in WA's Wheatbelt will have access to a greater suite of mental health support, with two new services to help the region's most vulnerable youth.

Youth Focus, in partnership with Avon Community Services, has started the Wheatbelt Youth Severe Service. It offers free counselling for disengaged young people at risk of chronic anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges.

The service is funded by the WA Primary Health Alliance and is available in Narrogin and Moora. Regular face-to-face counselling sessions have transitioned to online and phone platforms and been expanded across the region to provide support during the COVID-19 crisis.

In addition, Youth Focus will open a new Headspace service in Northam, which will be run by satellite from the parent centre in Midland three days a week. From mid-2020, the service will host three core streams, including mental health, drug and alcohol, and vocational support.

WAPHA has pledged \$400,000 in capital for the new Headspace centre at 98 Fitzgerald Street, Northam, as well as funding for \$385,000 a year for two years.

Last financial year, Youth Focus supported a record number of young people aged between 12 and 25 in WA, providing free counselling and assessment services to 4,559 young people and school and community education to another 6,800.

Youth Focus has provided counselling and support to young people across WA for the past 26 years. Services include suicide prevention education in schools and the community, as well as web counselling to regional and remote parts of the state. For more information, contact Youth Focus on 6266 4333.

Free Support from HelpingMinds

HelpingMinds is providing free emotional support services to anyone in WA who feels overwhelmed by COVID-19 or their personal circumstances.

Phone 1800 811 747 to access 3 x free phone or video counselling sessions with a mental health professional, without the need for a GP referral.

Calls can be made between 8.30am - 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, and appointments for phone and video counselling are available between 7am and 7pm.

HelpingMinds <https://helpingminds.org.au/covid-19/>

New e-mental health app for frontline healthcare workers

The Essential Network (TEN) will connect health professionals and practitioners with critical mental health and wellbeing services to better cope with the stress of the pandemic.

Developed by the Black Dog Institute as part of a \$3 million mental health support program for frontline health workers, the TEN mobile app connects and provides fast, easy, anytime access to evidence-based tools, resources, programs and specialists.

Developed by health professionals for health professionals, it is a one stop resource and help centre, providing self-assessment, self-management and treatment for stress, anxiety and symptoms of depression. At the core is an online clinic screening tool designed to recommend relevant resources and online tools based on report outcomes.

The app will also streamline the online referral process for telehealth consultations with specialist clinicians.

More details at: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/ten/

Free Mental Wellness App

My Wellbeing Mate is a free gateway app that connects people to reliable mental wellness resources in WA and around Australia. It includes links to helplines, websites, guides, self-checks, apps, videos and more. It also features many COVID-19 resources. More details at: <https://holyoake.org.au/my-wellbeing-mate-app/>

SUPPORT SERVICES & RESOURCES

New support line for senior Australians

This new support line is available to address the mental health of senior Australians, their families and carers impacted by the pandemic.

It has been established by the Federal Government in conjunction with the Council on the Ageing Australia, National Seniors Australia, the Older Persons Advocacy Network and Dementia Australia. The phone line will be staffed with advisers who can offer practical help and advice.

The support line will operate Monday to Friday, except public holidays, from 8.30am to 6pm. Call 1800 171 866

Swinburne's Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults

This is a confidential counselling and support service for older adults living in residential and community settings. You can also receive this service if you are a family member, friend or staff and would like support in caring for a resident. This service is delivered by psychology, counselling and social work students through Swinburne.

This telehealth service, delivered via phone and video calls, aims to provide valuable support for this group of people as they navigate through the COVID-19 situation. It is a valuable additional program, especially in areas where such support services are limited. More details at: www.swinburne.edu.au/lss/psychology/pc/older-adults/telehealth-counselling.html

New Mental Health Website for Rural Men

You Got This Mate is a new initiative of the Centre for Rural & Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) and the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP). This website aims to help rural men reach their best possible mental health.

Rural men often can be unsure about how and when to take action when it comes to their mental health. To help with this issue, RAMHP consulted with rural men to develop the new, national website which provides useful tips on how men can take action and connects them and those who support them to the best possible care in their local area. The website provides:

- Evidence-based, action-focused tips and information about seeking professional help, and about helping others
- Commonly asked questions and answers
- Lived experience videos of men telling their stories of tough times and how they keep well today
- Interactive self-help quiz which tracks progress and provides information and tips for specific situations
- Links to online help and telephone services

For more information visit www.yougotthismate.com.au



New Health Professional Support Program

A new partnership between Smiling Mind and the Australian Federal Government will allow 20,000 Australian healthcare professionals to access a dedicated mental health program. This program, now available in Smiling Mind's popular app, is tailored to help healthcare workers manage their mental health during COVID-19.

With a focus on proactive and preventative support, the content covers topics such as stress management, sleep, resilience, thinking clearly, and decision making under pressure.

Smiling Mind is a non-for-profit web and app-based meditation program developed by psychologists and educators. It has seen unprecedented growth across its digital resources over recent months. April was the organization largest month on record with over 181,200 downloads – an increase of 165% on April 2019 downloads.

Healthcare professionals can access all free content within the Health Professional Support Program by downloading the Smiling Mind app (available on iOS and Android) and navigate to Healthcare Worker under All Programs.

More details at: www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app

eFriend Virtual Peer Support

This free service connects anyone in need over the age of 18 years to a community of trained, specialist eFriend Peers via video or audio call. These Peer Support Workers are trained in:

- Intentional Peer Support
- ASIST (Suicide Prevention)
- Trauma Informed Care
- Befriending
- Open Dialogue
- Safe Storytelling

The peer support is offered across many situations including isolation, chronic physical, psychosocial or behavioural health conditions, grief, unemployment, those on a NDIS plan, trauma and limited mobility.

More details at: <https://efriend.org.au/>

Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service (DACAS)

The Mental Health Commission has launched this new service to provide specialist Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) advice to health professionals across the WA health care system.

This service is available to all health professionals in WA including GPs, public and private hospital emergency physicians and other health professionals. Support is provided by experienced addiction specialists to assist in the management of individuals with AOD issues in the community, including:

- Clinical advice on AOD patient management within a general practice or hospital setting
- Management of withdrawal syndromes and intoxication
- Appropriate substance detoxification advice
- Management of medical, pain and psychiatric complications associated with AOD use
- Drug interaction information relating to substance abuse
- Community treatment referral guidance

The service will operate via phone between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday, via 08 6553 0520. More details at: www.mhc.wa.gov.au/DACAS

ReachOut Classroom Resources

ReachOut has released classroom resources to support Year 11 and Year 12 students who are uncertain about their future.

Students who are worried about the current uncertainty can access this resource in class to examine the emotions they are feeling and to identify coping strategies that will best support these emotions.

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Identify the emotions they are currently feeling
- Explain coping strategies they can use to support their needs

To access this resource please visit <https://schools.au.reachout.com/covid-19/how-to-handle-fear-for-the-future>

SUPPORT SERVICES & RESOURCES

R U OK? updated Mateship Manual

R U OK?, in collaboration with Professor Nicholas Procter and the team at UniSA's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Research Group, has released an updated Mateship Manual. This free manual is designed to provide guidance on how to support someone affected by a natural disaster or emergency, and why it is important to reach out to family, friends and colleagues to ask: "Are you okay?"

Depending on what people are already dealing with in their lives, the emotional impact of an event can be difficult for people to cope with in the short and longer term. Some people may not experience distress until long after an event.

The Mateship Manual combines lived experience and trauma lessons with research and clinical expertise to provide guidance on how to have tough conversations if someone is struggling. By asking and listening, you can help those you care about feel more supported and connected. You can be the one to make that difference if you follow some simple steps.

- Trust the signs - if someone in your world is isolating themselves physically in times when communities are gathering together, don't ignore it. Remember warning signs will be different for everyone.
- Ask R U OK? - when you have a conversation, it can be helpful to let them know what changes you have noticed.
- Listen - sometimes listening can be all that's needed. Giving someone a chance to vent and acknowledge that things are tough right now can make all the difference.
- Encourage action - helping them find professional support is important and can be a relief for someone when they have a lot on their mind.
- Check in - it is important to follow up in a few days to see how the person is doing. If they're struggling, follow up with them sooner.

In challenging times such as these it is even more important that we all promote a sense of community, and reach out to our friends, family and colleagues.

Learn more about R U OK? www.ruok.org.au/

Download a free electronic copy of the manual: www.ruok.org.au/natural-disaster-and-emergency-mateship-manual

Connection Cards: www.ruok.org.au/connection-cards



New mental health resource for small business and sole traders

The COVID-19 section of My Business Health walks small business owners and sole traders through the practical steps to keep their business afloat and also links with resources from Beyond Blue, which has taken a lead role in providing mental health assistance throughout this pandemic.

My Business Health: <https://www.asbfeo.gov.au/my-business-health/categories/covid-19>



Communicating about Suicide and Mental Health Webinar – Injury Matters June 2, 2020



www.eventbrite.com.au/e/communicating-about-suicide-and-mental-health-webinar-tickets-105324596704?aff=erelexpmlt

Public Health in Western Australia: Grant making in the COVID-19 context – PHAA WA Branch June 5, 2020



www.eventbrite.com.au/e/public-health-in-western-australia-grant-making-in-the-covid-19-context-tickets-105621037366

Responding Together: Managing Wellbeing in Times of Change and Uncertainty – BE YOU June 10 & 11, 2020

<https://kapara.rdbk.com.au/landers/31c5f8.html>

Mens Health Connected Online Summit – Australian Mens Health Forum June 1-30, 2020



www.amhf.org.au/men_s_health_connected_online_summit_for_month_of_june

Heads Up Webinars – Beyond Blue



www.headsup.org.au/training-and-resources/webinars

Black Dog Institute

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-services/webinars/



VIRTUAL TRAINING/ WEBINARS & CONFERENCES

This Way Up Online Courses



This Way Up is an online initiative of the Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression, UNSW at St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney. The online courses cover the following topics:

- Mild Depression and Anxiety
- Mindfulness-Based CBT for Depression and Anxiety
- Generalised Anxiety Disorder
- Depression
- Panic Disorders
- Social Anxiety
- Health Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Pregnancy Course – MUMentum
- Postnatal Course – MUMentum
- Coping with Stress
- Introduction to Mindfulness
- Managing Insomnia
- Student Wellbeing (university students)

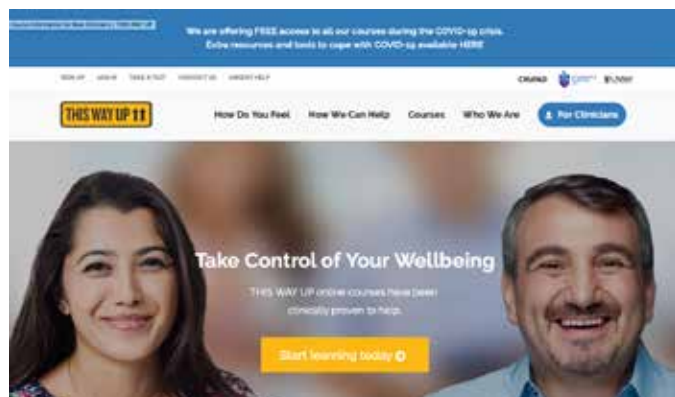
The courses include:

- Illustrated lesson slides which use recovery stories to teach practical skills to tackle symptoms
- Downloadable pdf summaries with action plans and coping strategies to practice following each lesson
- Additional resources to help improve sleep, boost motivation, communicate better and so more
- Questionnaires to help track progress and wellbeing throughout the course

For further information or to register for a course, go to:

<https://thiswayup.org.au/>

This Way Up portal for Clinicians: <https://thiswayup.org.au/for-clinicians/>



Mental Health & Wellbeing of Young People Seminar

The content of this seminar is now available online. It includes information from leading experts and is especially relevant in times like this when mental health education is so important. The benefits include:

- Over 10 hours of authoritative, evidence-based youth wellbeing content. Most new content will be made available on demand, with some limited release presentations for time-sensitive issues.
- Learn and revise at your own pace, prioritising the content that is most relevant to you.
- Access from work, home or anywhere else with a stable internet connection.
- Presentations can be counted towards continuing professional development with certificates provided on completion.

More details at: www.generationnext.com.au/product/the-mental-health-wellbeing-of-young-people-online/



Tips to keep your drinking low-risk.

With the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, it is a stressful time for many people with many aspects of our daily lives changing rapidly. Some of us may turn to alcohol for short-term stress relief or because of boredom, but rather than helping us cope, alcohol can make us feel more stressed and anxious.

Alcohol can also weaken our immune system, making it more difficult to fight off viruses and infection, and increase our risk of developing alcohol-caused disease, like cancer and stroke.

To stay healthy and well, it's important that if you're going to drink, to do so at low-risk levels.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol (2009) recommend for healthy men and women to:

- drink no more than two standard drinks on any day to reduce the lifetime risk of harm.
- drink no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion to reduce the risk of injury.

The following tips can help you keep your drinking in check during this stressful time.

Set yourself a drinks limit, count how many you've had and stop when you've reached it.

Set yourself a drinks limit that is consistent with advice from the NHMRC and stop once you've reached it. You'll find you can do without that extra drink after all and your body will thank you for it the next day.

Have a few alcohol-free days each week.

Creating the habit of having a few alcohol-free days each week will help you stay healthy. Not only will reducing how regularly you drink reduce your risk of alcohol-caused disease, you'll also see immediate physical and mental benefits such as better sleep, more energy, better mood and decreased anxiety, not to mention the cost savings.

Use the Alcohol.Think Again [‘drinking levels and your risk’](#) online tool to see the benefit of reducing how many times a week you drink.

Swap to low or no alcohol alternatives.

Low and no alcohol products are a good alternative for people who want to reduce their drinking – they have the same or similar taste, but contain less alcohol. There are an ever increasing range of low and no alcohol products available at many retailers.

Limit how much alcohol you keep in the house.

If it's not there, you can't drink it! It's like chocolate! Easy access is the ultimate enabler, and if all it takes is opening the fridge then you're potentially on a slippery slope to be tempted.

If you're not ready to make your house a drink-free zone, just avoid stocking up on alcohol at the next trip to the bottle shop. Research tells us the more alcohol we buy, the more likely we are to drink it sooner than we had intended. So while you might have good intentions to stock up for two weeks, you might find yourself coming up empty sooner rather than later.

Keep attractive non-alcoholic options at home.

In addition to the range of non-alcoholic beer, wine and spirit options available, keeping your house stocked with teas, sparkling water, kombucha and other non-alcoholic drinks will also help. Substituting alcoholic drinks with tasty non-alcoholic drinks is a good alternative for people choosing to reduce their intake.

Delay that first drink.

The earlier you start drinking, the longer a drinking session can become. If you choose to drink, find a milestone in your day that isn't until later in the evening such as dinner or after you exercise to have a drink. The later you start drinking, the less alcohol you are likely to consume.

Make every second drink a non-alcoholic drink.

Drink non-alcoholic drinks, such as water, soda, kombucha or soft drinks, as spacers between your alcoholic drinks. Try to drink these at the same pace as you do alcohol.

Slow down your drinking.

Drink slowly rather than gulping or sculling to control the rate of drinking. You can enjoy your drink just as much, if not more, if you drink slowly.

Drink only with dinner.

With food in your stomach you are likely to drink more slowly and the alcohol is absorbed into your bloodstream at a slower rate. Drinking only with dinner or a meal will limit the period of time for you to be drinking, likely reducing how much you drink overall.

Find ways to change your routine.

If your regular routine includes relaxing with a drink, change it up by going outside to get some fresh air and exercise. Play with your pet or your child, or do some gardening. If pouring a glass of wine while cooking dinner is your go-to, wait until dinner is ready to have a drink.

For more information, head to alcoholthinkagain.com.au

YIRRA KOORL

looking forward

support services

Emergency: 000

Rural Link: 1800 552 002

Mental Health Emergency Response Line: 1300 555 788

Suicide Call Back Service:
1300 659 467

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Lifeline Text Service: 0477 13 11 14
(6pm - 10pm EST)

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800

Headspace (9am - 1am EST):
1800 650 890

Samaritans Crisis Line: 135 247

The Salvation Army: 1300 363 622

Crisis Care (Child Protection & Family Support): 1800 199 008

Reachout: www.reachout.com

Mensline: 1300 789 978

Grief Line (midday - 3am EST):
1300 845 745

Alcohol & Drug Support Line:
1800 198 024 or 9442 5000

Parent and Family Drug Support Line:
1800 653 203 or 9442 5050

Narrogin & Upper Great Southern Domestic Violence Helpline:
1800 007 570

Wheatbelt Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800 353 122

Women's Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800 007 339

Men's Domestic Violence Helpline:
1800 000 599

1800 RESPECT: 1800 737 732

Elder Abuse Helpline WA:
1300 724 679

Suicide Bereavement Service:
0474 076 849

Sexual Assault Referral Centre:
1800 199 888

HealthDirect: 1800 022 222

WACHS Wheatbelt Mental Health Service: 9621 0999

subscription, queries and submission information



Northam: 9621 1055

Narrogin: 9881 1999

Merredin: 9081 3396

Victoria Park: 9416 4444

Midland: 9274 7055

Freecall: 1800 447 172

YIRRA KOORL SUBSCRIPTION

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and send us names and contact details.