

MEDIA RELEASE

16 FEBRUARY 2018

Free mental health service for Roma, south-western Queenslanders

A free mental health program developed by *beyondblue* is available now for residents of Roma and those living in the south-western regions of Queensland.

The program – NewAccess – will launch in Roma on February 22 and is available to locals over 18 years who feel stressed, anxious or are struggling with work or personal life challenges.

NewAccess is funded by the Federal Government via the Western Queensland Primary Health Network (PHN) and delivered by Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Qld Ltd.

NewAccess is a unique support program that removes roadblocks, such as cost, remoteness and stigma, which often prevent people from reaching out for support.

It is a mental health coaching program that pairs people with a trained coach. Over six free sessions, coaches work with people to help them understand, and get on top of, the issues triggering their distress.

NewAccess coaches are trained in Low Intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and develop individual recovery plans for each person, empowering them and giving them skills to manage their own mental health.

People can attend private coaching sessions in person or by phone, which ensures confidentiality and convenience – there is no need to drive long distances for appointments.

While a general practitioner can refer patients to NewAccess, a doctor's referral is not required.

NewAccess is not a crisis service. It is an early intervention program designed to support people early and prevent potential crises down the track.

***beyondblue* CEO Georgie Harman** said NewAccess was a unique and inclusive program available to every community in Western Queensland, regardless of where people live or their financial status.

“Access to mental health services is a crucial issue in rural and remote areas. It's unacceptable that some people can't access support just because they live in regional or remote areas,” Ms Harman said.

“One of the best things about NewAccess is that it's private, free and it's convenient, which means it appeals to people who might otherwise be reluctant to reach out for help, such as men.”

Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Qld Ltd CEO Derek Tuffield said: “Our organisation has been extremely excited to be part of the NewAccess early intervention program and to work closely with *beyondblue* and the Western Queensland PHN.

“Our staff located in Roma and Charleville are trained and ready to assist clients in Western Queensland who feel stressed, anxious or are struggling with work or personal life challenges,” Mr Tuffield said.

NewAccess will also launch in Mount Isa (February 26) and Longreach (February 28) to ensure rural and regional communities across Western Queensland have access to quality mental health support.

The Western Queensland Primary Health Network covers some of the most remote country in Australia. It covers more than half the state yet has the smallest population of all PHN regions and is the most sparsely populated with just one person per 13 square kilometres.

In the 2013-14 year almost 700 people in Western Queensland were admitted to hospital for mental health related issues. Another 147 people were hospitalised after intentional self-harm incidents.

Western Queensland PHN CEO Stuart Gordon said the PHN was excited to collaborate with *beyondblue* to bring this new, low-intensity service to communities in Roma and surrounds.

“The availability of low intensive community based services will enhance the efficacy of our existing mental health network and provide a new opportunity for local clients to engage and become better informed about mental health as well as managing the early risks of the people around them,” Mr Gordon said.

“I applaud the commitment of Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Qld Ltd for its dedication to *beyondblue* and the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Institute to bring this program into our region.

“NewAccess coaches are drawing on clients’ instinctive capacity for individual resilience and the program integrates well with Western Queensland PHN’s stepped care approach.”

To register or to find out more about NewAccess Roma

- [1300 991 443](tel:1300991443)
- lifelinedarlingdowns.org.au
- beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess

Roma launch details

- Thursday, February 22 – Roma Cultural Centre, 57 Bungil St.
10.30am-12pm
- **Media is welcome to attend the launch**

NewAccess will be launched in Mount Isa on February 26 and Longreach on February 28.

For more information or to organise media interviews please contact the *beyondblue* media team.

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