

SA Mental Health Commission Media Release



Government of South Australia
SA Mental Health Commission

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SA Mental Health Commissioner to visit Eyre Peninsula

Country people are the “ultimate experts” when it comes to strengthening the mental health and wellbeing of their local community and what’s needed in their communities, says SA Mental Health Commissioner Chris Burns.

“Time and again I have seen how, in the face of limited services, country people come together as a community and support each other,” he said.

“They find local solutions which work for them and often these solutions are outside the traditional clinical models of care.”

Commissioner Burns and his team are visiting Port Lincoln, Ceduna and Cummins this week to listen to the views of locals including people with lived experience of mental health issues, and encourage the sharing of programs and ideas that are working well in rural and regional areas.

Representatives from 13 local organisations will meet the Commissioner and his team, including Centacare, Country and Outback Health; Port Lincoln Hospital; Lincoln Alive! Suicide Prevention Network; Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service and Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service.

The Commissioner was invited to the Eyre Peninsula by Smoky Bay resident Hans von Ohle, Mentally Fit EP and West Coast Youth and Community Support (WCYCS).

Mr von Ohle has expressed concern about recent suicides in the region and the availability of counselling services.

Commissioner Burns said that, while the Commission is not in charge of clinical services, its great strength is bringing people, communities and organisations of all types together to look at shared solutions to the complexities faced by people and regions.

“Together, we can see what local solutions are working, what helps to break down stigma, provides support and builds local connections – rather than waiting for the crisis to happen,” he said.

“During the visit, we will facilitate communities connecting with each other and working out how they can develop their own model for support and tailored programs, and share the experiences of communities which have done this successfully, including Mentally Fit EP.

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“Sometimes, the most difficult challenge facing communities is knowing where to start but I sincerely believe that inherent in every community is the knowledge to solve their own problems. They are the ultimate experts, rather than having solutions bestowed on them.”

During the visit this Wednesday and Thursday (Oct 30-31), Commissioner Burns and his team will meet:

- Community members and people with lived experience of mental health issues
- Mentally Fit EP, Port Lincoln
- Cummins community members
- Port Lincoln Hospital
- West Coast Youth and Community Support (WCYCS), Port Lincoln,
- Country PHN Regional Manager
- Lincoln Alive Suicide Prevention Network, Port Lincoln
- Country and Outback Health (COBH)
- Centacare, Port Lincoln and Ceduna
- Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service (PLAHS)
- Smoky Bay resident Hans van Ohle and the Far West Suicide Prevention Network
- Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service
- Tullawon Health Service – Yalata and Oak Valley and the
- Aboriginal Drug & Alcohol Service, Ceduna

For more information, contact Communications Adviser Joan Atkinson on 0422 916 496.