

NCFH flood recovery response to build farm spirit

National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) will support the mental health of Victorian farming families affected by recent flooding, as part of its dedicated flood recovery response.

Farmers whose property, infrastructure, livestock or crops were lost or damaged in the flood or extreme weather conditions will receive tailored mental health support through the delivery of initiatives, including:

- A supportive online community through the **#BuildingFarmSpirit** social media campaign
- Free access to online psychology support, delivered by farmer health trained psychologists
- Support for community events providing social connection and mental health promotion opportunities for farmers, farm workers, farm families and farming communities
- Distribution of mental health resources and support information
- Practical training to support trusted advisors working with farmers experiencing challenging times

The social media campaign, #BuildingFarmSpirit, will encourage Victorian farmers and farming families affected by flood to share stories of how they are maintaining their wellbeing during this challenging time, fostering shared understanding and online social connection.

NCFH flood recovery response project officer, Sally Cunningham, said the social media campaign was a “welcoming space” for farmers to share stories about navigating challenging times.

“While our farming communities often have limited formal resources to effectively manage challenges, there are many human stories to be told that express emotion, raise awareness, reduce stigma, start conversations, develop empathy and provide inspiration to take positive action,” Ms Cunningham said.

A legacy piece will be compiled at the end of the campaign, to create a permanent record of the ways our resilient farmers and farming communities were able to support their mental health during this time, and to remind us all that we can get through this together.

From early 2023, NCFH will also provide free access to online mental health support through its Farmer Online Assist Program, giving farmers access to up to three free sessions with a trained registered psychologist.

Access to these free sessions will be supported by on the ground local services including Rural Aid and Rural Financial Counselling Services.

“This ensures that flood affected farmers, farm workers and farming families receive mental health support and information that is timely, tailored to their needs and available in a format that they are comfortable with,” Ms Cunningham said.

Also part of its flood recovery response, NCFH is looking to support and partner with local agriculture industry groups, community organisations and individuals wanting to boost farmers’ mental health and wellbeing, through community events or programs providing social connection and mental health promotion.

“If you have an idea that promotes social connection and wellbeing for farmers, please register your interest or chat with us about how we can partner with you,” Ms Cunningham said.

The flood recovery response project will call on the Centre's demonstrated expertise and existing services, ensuring the support offered is available to farmers immediately.

"The NCFH is a trusted leader in improving the health wellbeing and safety of farm men, women and families in farming communities," Ms Cunningham said.

Located in an agricultural community and closely linked with a wide range of stakeholders across Victoria, the Centre is well placed to lead the farming-focussed Victorian flood response.

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For more information about the National Centre for Farmer Health Flood Response or to access a list of support resources, visit www.farmerhealth.org.au/buildingfarmspirit or contact Project Officer, Sally Cunningham on (03) 5551 8533 or email: sally.cunningham@wdhs.net

For more information about National Centre for Farmer Health visit www.farmerhealth.org.au

For media and communications enquiries please contact WDHS Marketing Communications Coordinator, Annabelle Macgugan on (03) 5551 8582 or email: amacgugan@wdhs.net