

MEDIA RELEASE

FLOOD RECOVERY SUMMIT RETURNS TO NORTH WEST QLD HONOURING 2019 COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE SUPPORT

“It’s still something that’s discussed, it’s still something that crops up every now and again, we still see people breaking down, we’re still taking them through that journey.”

Dr Leonie Fromberg - Cloncurry GP

Building the strength and capacity of rural and remote communities to cope with disasters will be a focus of a Summit to be held in North West Queensland, as the region continues to endure the ongoing drought and the long term impacts of last year’s devastating flood event.

The **North West Flood Recovery and Resilience Summit** in Julia Creek (30/11/20) will examine the level of coordination and collaboration of primary mental health care and allied support services in the region, in readiness for future disasters.

“One of the key themes that emerged from the last Summit, and from the work that’s been done since, is the recognition of the value of local relationships and local networks to help inform how best to configure mental health services on the ground,” Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) CEO Stuart Gordon said.

“So whilst the Summit will provide an opportunity one year on to look back, we also need to take the opportunity to consider our preparedness, and examine ways to strengthen those relationships and formalise the networks, so that they can be activated quickly and efficiently when similar events occur in the future.”

The Summit will consider how mental health services can integrate with pre-existing, broader disaster management plans, so that mental health support services can be mobilised quickly and collaboratively, driven by locals already on the ground in the affected regions.

“We need to learn from what we have all experienced to guide our preparedness, our mental health response in times of disaster, and what additional supports need to remain in place to help recovery and build capacity after the event,” Mr Gordon said.

The Summit is being jointly organised by the Western Alliance for Mental Health (WAMH), comprising the North Queensland and Western Queensland Primary Health Networks, the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section).

“After a significant event like this it takes a long time to rebuild. To think that it happens in 12 months is not the case,” RFDS (Queensland Section) CEO Meredith Staib said.

“That’s why these summits are very important so that we can work out from a response perspective what went well, what didn’t work so well and how we can go forward.”

The Summit will be staged on the eve of the North West’s next wet season, where hopes are high for decent rainfall to give much-needed hope and confidence to the local economy.

Julia Creek grazier Mark Bryant lost 70% of his livestock in the February 2019 flood, an economic blow that’s been compounded by a poor wet season in 2020.

“We’ve been very disappointed with the response we got from the wet season in January, February and March of this year when we only had one rain event, which wasn’t enough to get the country to respond to any degree,” Mr Bryant said.

“So actually, what we’ve ended up with this season is less grass than we had after the flood event, which is quite concerning as we’re running with only 20% of our normal stock levels.”

Shane Stone, the National Coordinator-General Drought and North Queensland Flood, has travelled extensively across the flood zone where communities that are well-connected have made significant progress in recovering from the disaster.

“Our guiding principle is local led, locally understood and locally implemented, and we’ve developed a long-term recovery strategy which the region’s own people believe is the best way forward for a stronger, more prosperous future,” Mr Stone said.

“The Australian Government recently earmarked \$58 million to kick-start the strategy’s implementation and we’ll be using the upcoming Summit as one of the ways we’ll work in tandem with local health networks, councils and other stakeholders to prioritise work in strategic areas of need, including the mental health of communities.”

INVITED DELEGATES ONLY- North West Flood Recovery and Resilience Summit, 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday, November 30th, Julia Creek Civic Centre, 29 Burke Street, Julia Creek, North West Qld.

EDITED VIDEO PACKAGE & VIDEO NEW RELEASE AVAILABLE [\[CLICK HERE FOR DROPBOX LINK\]](#)

For picture and interview opportunities:

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