

MEDIA RELEASE



Friday, 2 December 2016

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FESTIVE SEASON

Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) Coordinators are urging communities to think about ways to manage and cope with challenges during the busy festive season.

Christmas is a happy time for most people, but it can also be a difficult period. People can experience stress due to conflict, feelings of isolation, grief and missing loved ones which can sometime lead to substance abuse and mental health issues.

People from rural communities may face additional issues such as financial hardship, uncertain weather, market forecasts and other unexpected adverse situations.

RAMHP Coordinator Darcy Budden said there are some practical tips for looking after your own mental health and wellbeing which can help you cope with the challenges that Christmas may bring, including:

- Staying connected with family and friends
- Doing volunteer work with a charity
- Getting involved in social activities such as a community Christmas function
- Being mindful of your diet and getting enough sleep and exercise
- Being careful of excessive alcohol intake and avoiding other substances
- Trying mindfulness exercises and relaxation techniques.

“The festive season can also be a busy time for celebrations and it is important to consider your own safety such as how you intend to get to and from a destination and deciding who the designated driver is,” Mr Budden said.

“Connections are also important and reaching out to those who may be alone can make a big difference.”

“We also need to be mindful of alcohol and other substances and the impact it can have on people’s judgement. Alcohol is a depressant drug which affects coordination, concentration, judgement skills and slows response times.”

Remember to seek help for any mental health or drug and alcohol concern over this period. Although many services will be closed over the holiday period, support from trained staff is available through the Mental Health Line, Drug & Alcohol Helpline and local hospitals.

An online forum on *Coping with Christmas* will be held on Friday 9 December at 12 noon, coordinated by the RAMHP and The Land. The forum will include a panel of mental health experts who will answer questions and facilitate discussions. To participate in the online forum, go to www.theland.com.au.

If you have any concerns about yourself or a loved one, please contact the **Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 (free call for landlines)** or **Drug & Alcohol Helpline on 1300 887 000**.

For more information, visit ramhp.com.au or email ramhp@newcastle.edu.au

