

Thursday 8 September 2016

ACTOR JOHN WOOD TO VISIT REGION WITH MENTAL HEALTH MESSAGES

Acclaimed actor John Wood will tour 13 towns in Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) from 14 to 28 October for a theatre production titled *Carpe Diem* about how men deal with mental health issues.

Supported by local actor Chris Pidd, *Carpe Diem* is a contemporary portrayal of Australian males dealing with issues of health, grief, loss and depression.

The free community event is presented by the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) and MLHD in partnership with playwright Megan Rigoni of Centre Stage Scripts.

The production will visit Henty, Holbrook, Gundagai, Berrigan, Corowa, Lockhart, Temora, Junee, Boorowa, Ganmain, West Wyalong, Lake Cargelligo and Coleambally.

Set in a fictional town in inland Australia, *Carpe Diem* portrays the friendship of Nev, a hard-working farmer, and John his stock agent friend. Both have been impacted by the long-running drought and are each suffering their own personal crisis.

Carpe Diem stresses the importance of mateship and professional care in times of crises. It is a comedy that delivers the mental health messages in a way that is entertaining, immediate and highly relevant.

Written by Megan Rigoni, the play was inspired by the experiences of people she knew.

Leading actor John Wood, who has partnered with Ms Rigoni on two previous productions, said: "It's a very Australian thing (not just male, necessarily) to feel that it's none of our business and that someone knows what they're doing. But men need to ask the questions and not ignore their apparent depression or inner pain."

Chris Pidd, actor and general manager at Lifeline Albury, said: "This compelling story will help break down the stigma of seeking support early when life gets tough. The play depicts so beautifully how two mates can help each other in times of need."

Rural Adversity Mental Health Coordinators Helen Sheather and Marilyn Limbrick are excited to be working in partnership with each community to ensure the event is accessible, relevant and inclusive reaching the widest possible audience.

The tour is funded by Riverina Bluebell, RAMHP, Department of Primary Industries and multiple funding partners in each of the communities.

"Many local organisations are working hard to ensure this event is free so everyone has an opportunity to come together and participate in this fun and engaging evening," Ms Sheather said. "There will be an opportunity for the community to meet with the actors and hear their own personal stories which brings a unique quality to the event."

If you, or someone you know may be experiencing mental illness call the MLHD AccessLine on 1800 800 944 to arrange local support.

Media note: Lead actor John Wood is available for interviews by contacting Public Affairs on 6933 9181.

For further information please contact:

Helen Sheather: (RAMHP) for general information about the tour & events in Henty, Holbrook, Gundagai, Berrigan, Corowa and Lockhart on mobile 0438 694 192.

Marilyn Limbrick: (RAMHP) for information about Riverina Bluebell & events in Temora, Junee, Boorowa, Ganmain, West Wyalong, Lake Cargelligo and Coleambally on mobile 0428 249 719.

Megan Rigoni: (Centre Stage Scripts) for information about the play and the cast on mobile 0409 274 170.

Murrumbidgee Local Health District Media

Tel 02 6933 9181 A/Hours 0412 324 122 Fax 02 6933 9188 Email Sally.Druitt@gsahs.health.nsw.gov.au

healthdirect AUSTRALIA – providing expert health advice 24 hours a day to NSW residents – Tel. 1800 022 222