

DO YOU KNOW QPR?

Every day eight Australians die by suicide. Chances are you're in a position to help. Make sure you know what to do.

Question. Persuade. Refer.

QPR is designed to provide everyday people with three simple steps to help save a life from suicide. Country SA PHN is rolling out free access to the training after a survey which found that 68% of country South Australians wanted additional training and upskilling opportunities in suicide prevention.

If you or someone you know is in need of support, Lifeline is available 24/7 on 13 11 14

Free QPR online training – do it today

Take part in this invaluable and free training course – you never know, it may help you to save a life one day. Through three simple steps, you can help others: Question. Persuade. Refer.

- Key components covered in the training include:**
- Common myths and misconceptions about suicide
 - The warning signs of suicide
 - How to ask the suicide question
 - How to persuade someone to stay alive
 - How to get help for someone in crisis



Only takes 60 minutes



Free



Licenses remain active for 3 years



Certificate of completion



Over 2.5m people trained worldwide

To undertake the free QPR online training, please visit countryaphn.com.au

Login code: CSA



2019 Calendar

A YEAR OF MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING AWARENESS



Acknowledgements

Our deepest appreciation goes to the twelve local people who generously shared their personal stories to support the mental health and wellbeing in our regional communities.

Together we hope that these stories create honest conversations and resonate through regional communities. They highlight the importance and positive impact of reaching out for support and are powerful stories of hope and recovery strategies for good mental health.

Special thanks go to Rob Lang for his superb photography and the local Suicide Prevention Networks. In particular, SOS Yorkes Network, Empowering Lower Eyre Network, Lincoln Alive Network and Mentally Fit EP. Plus, a special mention to the community members in the Yorke and Eyre Peninsulas who collaborated with us, as they felt the promotion of mental health and wellbeing is in everybody's interest and reducing stigma and prejudice might encourage people to seek help.

The collaborative project was a Lived Experience initiative of Sallie Jones, Country SA PHN and the National Enterprise for Rural Community Wellbeing - University of South Australia, led by A/Professor Lia Bryant with stories written by Dr Bridget Garnham.

Regional mental health supports

Local free mental health supports for you to talk through your concerns and worries are below. A referral from your GP may be needed for some services. Make sure you ask your GP for a double appointment, so you have the time to talk through your concerns.

Country and Outback Health

- Support after a suicide attempt
- Support, counselling and psychological therapies

08 8621 3800 www.cobh.com.au

West Coast Youth & Community Support

- Family and youth counselling
- Homeless services
- Drug and alcohol counselling

08 8683 0072 www.wccys.com.au

Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service

- Social and emotional wellbeing support
- Holistic assessments and care planning

08 8683 0162 www.plahs.org.au

Centacare Catholic Country SA

- Financial counselling
- Personal, relationship and family counselling
- Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Service

08 8683 0477 www.cccsa.org.au

Mentally Fit EP

- Community awareness and education through events, workshops and forums
- Wellbeing workshops

08 8683 0072
www.mentallyfitep.wixsite.com/mentally-fit-ep

Community suicide prevention and wellbeing groups

Lincoln Alive (Port Lincoln)
spn.portlincoln@gmail.com

Cleve & Districts Mental Health & Wellbeing Group
jessicakateq@hotmail.com

Cowell Wellbeing & Mental Health Group
cowellwellbeingandmentalhealthgroup@hotmail.com

Empowering Lower Eyre (Cummins)
empoweringlowereyre@outlook.com

Kimba Mental Health & Wellbeing Group
admin@lienerteng.com.au

Lock Health Advisory Committee
jdalsiviour@gmail.com

Thrive Streaky Bay
zestholistichealing@outlook.com

Need to talk to someone?

Regional Access provides free professional counselling for regional South Australia.

How does it work?

Regional Access is a free telephone and online counselling service for people who are feeling the pressures and stresses of everyday life. The service is open to anyone who lives or works in regional, rural or remote South Australia.

You can call **1300 032 186** or visit **saregionalaccess.org.au** to speak to a counsellor. The service is available 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week.

What to expect

Professionally trained counsellors will listen, support, and help you to develop strategies to manage what is causing you to feel worried or stressed. Each session is tailored to your own needs and will focus on what's going on with you.

You can also book up to three 30-minute sessions with the same counsellor.

REGIONAL ACCESS

Call 1300 032 186 or visit saregionalaccess.org.au



“Once you start talking about it, it does start to make you feel better fairly quickly.”

Todd’s Story

Born and bred in Maitland, fifth-generation farmer Todd was never in any doubt that his future lay in farming. Like many raised on the Yorke Peninsula, Todd did chores on the family property during his schooling in Maitland and then left for boarding school. After a stint with a Mt Isa cattle station and a few months in New South Wales, Todd returned to work his family property alongside his parents Greg and Sue, with the awareness that ‘being the fifth generation is a pretty special thing to have’.

“Farmer mental health is probably something that is not talked about a lot and the statistics are not very good. I’ve only probably been aware of that for the last few years, like how many people do die by suicide. But it really hits home when you know someone who suicided or have farming mates going through tough times.”

Todd also knows first-hand the impact financial pressure can have on your mental health. Whilst fairly reliable rainfall means his is not a story of drought, fluctuating crop prices and environmental events like frost, which can ruin a crop season, are also part of the mental health landscape for farmers. During those times, Todd is aware that farmers can tend to withdraw.

“Feeling stressed and down in the dumps means you don’t want to be around anyone, and you go out of your way to avoid interaction with other people, which is not the ideal thing to be doing.”

When he realised he wasn’t going so well, Todd rang a few mates to let them know and have a chat. But it was his wife Rachel who knew of a local counsellor and suggested he make an appointment.

“She was really good to have a chat to. Once you start talking about it, it does start to make you feel better fairly quickly. So it’s a matter of making sure that you do listen to people if they are saying you might need some help.”

Todd is also an advocate for ‘catching up with mates and playing sport like cricket for the social side of it, which is a good way to take time out and relieve the pressure a bit’.

January

REGIONAL ACCESS 24/7 support 1300 032 186

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1New Year's Day	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26Australia Day
27	28Australia Day Public Holiday	29	30	31		



“If one person has trouble then the people close to them are also affected.”



Annabelle’s Story

“Growing up in a farming family, you certainly see where mental health is a big challenge when there are difficult years. It’s one, about the money but, two, about the effort of growing nice big crops, producing nice big sheep and if it doesn’t rain none of that makes you feel very good. It was very tense. Mum was affected because dad was affected, it was a snowball effect. If one person has trouble then the people close to them are also affected. But it wasn’t talked about.

“I think now, people are more willing to admit it to themselves. It’s not any different than breaking your leg or getting a cold, it’s something that people get that they can’t help. But, in rural areas there is not much support so if you want to get help you need to go to a fair bit of effort to get it.”

Even for a telephone service with a psychologist, Annabelle found there was a significant waiting time.

“I think when you are coming to realise you need help, sometimes sending someone a message through the internet is less confrontational. Over the phone works well for telling your story. But in the future, face-to-face would be better. For some people, going to see someone face-to-face is a bit overwhelming and so the phone is not a bad thing for the first step.”

It was with her mum’s support that Annabelle realised that what she was going through and how she was feeling wasn’t ‘normal’ and that she needed a bit more help rather than trying to manage by herself. Together they went to see a doctor.

“Living in the country is so isolated. It’s very easy to isolate yourself even more. As opposed to if you live in the city where you have to go out of your house, off your property, to do things and be around people. Here, I don’t have to leave the house really. You can lock yourself in pretty easily, without people noticing. I think it is important to have a hobby outside of farming. I know when you are struggling, you tend to stop doing the things that you love. I have horses. When I was at my lowest I barely even patted my horses. That interest was lost, unintentionally. Just the things I enjoyed doing, I didn’t enjoy anymore. Then I realised how much I missed them, and how much that was weighing on my mind as well. I just had this hole. Now, if I am starting to deteriorate a bit, I deliberately go out and see my horses and that helps me feel better.”

February

REGIONAL ACCESS
24/7 support 1300 032 186

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Ben is passionate about the difference taking care of your body has for mental fitness.

Ben's Story

Ben is proud to be a Fat Farmer. A founder and driving force behind the expanding social and fitness movement 'Fat Farmers', Ben is passionate about the difference taking care of your body has for mental fitness. Given the demands of running a farming enterprise, Ben is aware that he rarely 'clocks off' and has learnt from experience that burnout has to be proactively managed. Now he finds that 'physical activity helps keep your head in the zone' as well as providing the strength and energy he needs to get through busy days.

The Fat Farmer initiative draws local farmers together for regular sessions at the gym as well as supporting local and special events such as the City to Bay. Ben is clear that these activities are not only about improving fitness and physical wellbeing but also build social connectivity and community support. Fat Farmers is helping build a new culture of rural community wellbeing that includes people of a 'certain age seeking a life after sport' or are starting to experience health conditions like heart disease or diabetes that benefit from regular physical activity. It's also a culture that draws away from a traditional rural emphasis on socialising at the pub because 'it's taking a bit of that focus rural communities had on alcohol and losing that'.

For Ben, mental fitness is also about knowing when to go and 'have a chat to someone – your wife, partner, mates – whoever helps you feel good'. And also, making time in busy schedules to do the things that help you feel good – like exercise – which also helps with maintaining energy levels and resilience. Whether the motivation is increasing health and fitness, socialising with other farmers and getting some time off the farm property or decreasing the effects of stress, Ben is emphatic that exercising two or three times a week 'can really change your life'.



March

REGIONAL ACCESS 24/7 support 1300 032 186

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“Because sometimes that’s all it takes, a fresh look.”

Beth’s Story

Fourth-generation farmer and mother to 10-year-old Danielle and eight-year-old Caleb, Beth hadn’t intended on getting into farming. As a sole parent, she had ‘moved over to KI to be with family’. Of farming she says, ‘I shifted away, I was never coming back, I was never marrying a farmer, I was having none of it. But I don’t think I could have found a better lifestyle and job’. Beth’s decision to move back to her family farm was because ‘it was cheap rent. And then it was, ‘oh, while we are here, why don’t we run a few sheep. And next year, why don’t we put some crop in’.

Beth’s experiences of poor mental health began with the birth of her son.

“I have a 10-year-old daughter. But I found it a lot harder with my son because I had the expectation that everything would be easier, because I wasn’t a single parent. I was married and everything was just going to fit. And it was far from that. So I think looking back – and a friend said to me at the time, ‘these are the signs of postnatal depression and I see that in you’. And I said ‘nah’. But looking back I’d go ‘yeah’.

“He was a bad sleeper so that added to it. I didn’t want to parent, I couldn’t parent. I spent a lot of time in bed, crying, not coping. And it was a lot different from my daughter when really I was by myself. I knew something was different. And they do the health checks and you know the answers that they want to hear. And it’s easy to avoid. I stopped seeing the nurse because, well I don’t have to. I don’t want to talk about it. It’s quite easy with a newborn not to go out, not to do things. And so we moved out here when my son was one, and it’s easy to hideout and not socialise. I withdrew a lot. I didn’t want to leave the house - that was my security. Here I can control everything.”

Beth credits her husband for recognising ‘those days when I don’t cope’ and saying ‘I need you to come do this with me’. She feels it’s ‘a way of getting me out the house and changing the situation. Because sometimes that’s all it takes, a fresh look’.

“It’s also recognising what my first signs are. So I know that I will start being a perfectionist and start trying to control everything. So if I catch myself doing that I go, ‘you need to take a step back’. I’ve taken a lot of pressure off myself saying I don’t have to be perfect. And that’s ok. Feeling comfortable in my own skin.

“Mental health is an ongoing thing that we all have. It is like a farm or garden. It needs constant work to get rid of the weeds, to fertilize it and get it growing. Because if you do nothing, nothing is going to grow. It’s ok to talk to people. You don’t have to do it by yourself. It’s hard to do it by yourself. I am doing a lot better now than I was two years ago.”



April

REGIONAL ACCESS
24/7 support 1300 032 186

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21	22 Easter Monday	23	24	25 Anzac Day	26	27
28	29	30				





Angus' Story

Looking back, Angus has weathered tough times. From an old sheep farming family raised on a station on the red soils around Broken Hill, he was a child when the guts dropped out of the wool market and during the monstrous drought of 1982. Tragedy struck in 1988 when Angus was seven and his father was killed in a farming accident, leaving his mother Glennis widowed with three small boys. His mum took over the property in 1993 and they did it tough on very little money while Angus was in boarding school. After a stint as a jackaroo, his mum was looking to shift on and the pressure was on to go back home and look after the place. Angus managed his family property as well as working off-farm contract mustering to supplement income. After continuous tough seasons and low commodity prices, Angus and his wife Karen secured a management role on a large station within the district and the decision to sell the family property was made. The result still weighs heavily on his mind as his goal of achieving security for his growing family failed some 18 months later.

Angus says, "it was very, very dry that year, it was bad. In September, we had huge dust storms, were so bad we were just working around the clock to keep sheep and cattle alive which was virtually impossible, trying to truck stock out, that was hard, just a nightmare. Also, Karen learned at a doctor's appointment in Adelaide our third pregnancy had failed. We drove home that night, in separate cars, 500kms in the dark, during a dust storm.

"In that time, I think I probably had been struggling a little bit. I went to see a doctor and I must have called the men's helpline or at least that's what Karen tells me, I have no recollection of that. Must have just been thinking 'what is this?' and going downhill. Anyway, I had a good chat to a very understanding GP down here and she said, you know you have been through a lot, I think you are very resilient."

Then things at work turned sour and the family left the Broken Hill district and finished up near Maitland on Karen's family farm 'because we needed a house'.

"Then when I got down here, I had been used to working six-seven days a week, and I didn't have a job. How am I going to support my family? And probably, mentally, in terms of depression, it played on my mind heavier than anything else."

A jack-of-all-trades with a bit of go about him, Angus found a few different jobs to support his family but found himself wondering 'how the hell did I go from managing near on a million acres to this?'

Now working for a cropping enterprise, Angus is pretty happy with where he is at. But from time to time when life gets a bit overwhelming with not enough time to do everything, Angus finds he can start going down. Angus believes much of his resilient spirit comes from his mother, but that resilience doesn't mean that there weren't times when Angus had the fleeting thought that maybe it would just be easier to finish the whole lot. To others experiencing depression, he has this advice:

"What you are going through is real. And it's not that uncommon. Do not be too proud to go and find someone to give you the help you need. It can change your whole outlook. And when you feel better, things get better."

May

REGIONAL ACCESS
24/7 support 1300 032 186

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Mary-anne’s Story

Newly-weds Mary-anne and Scott began trying to have the big family they had always dreamed of...

"I started having miscarriage after miscarriage and it was just so traumatic. I was crook all the time. I had been such a busy outdoors girl – I tried my hand at breaking and training horses, was a Jillaroo, worked in vineyards and then a Roustabout. I eventually fell pregnant with Klancy, our daughter. I was in and out of hospital with high blood pressure just never feeling right. Over the Christmas period close to Klancy’s arrival, I was going in and out of hospital, saying that something wasn’t right! I could barely breathe and my body was sluggish. Unfortunately, something was wrong and the baby did not survive. The night I gave birth to our beautiful stillborn baby girl, there was a huge thunder storm. We felt like God was crying for us and with us. It felt like a long time that I was in this deep dark hole of grief, wondering if it would ever be possible to ‘breathe’ or be happy again."

It was Easter time when Mary-anne’s father said it was time to come out of that dark hole of grief and choose joy again and have hope in her life, if not for her, perhaps for everyone around her.

"It was the best thing he ever said, even though I couldn’t believe he would dare say such a thing after I had just lost a child to death. We got home from our Easter away and found out I was pregnant with Missy. There was that little bit of hope. Sometimes, you just need a ray of hope and someone close to you that says, it’s going to be ok. And our beautiful Missy survived."

Mary-anne and Scott are now blessed with four children. The trauma Mary-anne experienced over many years with complicated pregnancies was accompanied by severe anxiety.

"At night time I would be having panic attacks and my heart would be racing. I felt like I was going to die. I would hope that it would just pass. And eventually it did. Having people in your life who believe in you is often what it takes to get through. People who cheer you on."

Mary-Anne is deeply grateful for the support of her husband and her parents helping her through those hardest seasons of her life. She is now a firm advocate for the power of heathy living to heal and nurture wellbeing. She is hands-on with the work of the farm and finds satisfaction and joy in her homesteading and growing their own meat and vegetables. Their farmgate business is an expression of her belief in holistic health and care for the land, the animals and providing clean produce for other families.

"Even though the pain, grief and heartache is still part of my life, I am determined to live my life to the full and live it well."

June

REGIONAL ACCESS 
24/7 support 1300 032 186

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9	10 <small>Queen's Birthday</small>	11	12	13	14	15
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Now Jamie's toolbox for mental wellbeing includes weekly massage and repeated attempts at mindfulness and relaxation.

Jamie's Story

In Jamie's farm office mental health is on the table – literally, in the form of a resource book for good mental health. It would be fool hardy of course to judge a book by its cover, and so too perhaps Jamie. Presenting as every inch the corporate farmer, Jamie is also fundamentally a family-man, whose ethos now is to ensure family farm values remain central to his enterprise. Sitting at Jamie's kitchen table, you get the sense that his is an extended 'family', enmeshed in the business of farming and his relationships with those in his employ and their families.

A fifth-generation Scottish immigrant and son of a 'frustrated geologist and reluctant farmer', Jamie is a 'born farmer' but with a passion for business economics. When his father floated the idea of leasing the farm, Jamie said 'no way' and took up the reins at 16. Running the farm with the help of a manager whilst still studying, by the time he was 21 he had been given the books by his father with one piece of salient advice, 'don't let my cheque bounce!'

Jamie studied Applied Finance and Investment and his interest in business took him beyond the farm gate. He went off for a stint at a merchant bank and then into the gruelling and isolating terrain of agri-politics where he was 'turned into quite a different person, quite ruthless and brutal. I would come home from Canberra, still dressed in full battle gear. That took quite a while to reform from'. This meant there were some 'harsh times' and strain on relationships, that lead to Jamie's realisation that 'I was gonna have to change and what was actually important to me, I was pushing away. That was tough'.

Now Jamie's toolbox for mental wellbeing includes weekly massage and repeated attempts at mindfulness and relaxation. His passion for gardening also provides an activity he finds calming.

"Once when I was in a bad mood I went and planted something... hence, I now have an established two-acre garden."

However, what is most important to Jamie's wellbeing is maintaining his connection with his wife and kids, taking care of his extended family and ensuring the wellbeing of those around him.

July

REGIONAL ACCESS 24/7 support 1300 032 186

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For Jane being outside on the property is a source of wellbeing.



Jane’s Story

Jane grew up in a farming family during a time when it was uncommon for daughters to take up farming for themselves. After obtaining a university education in accounting and economics, she travelled extensively overseas. Jane then, came home to farm in the late 80s with the support of her father to become a fourth-generation farmer. A Nuffield Farming Scholarship recipient, Jane’s sharp intellect, passion for the pursuit of new knowledge and international perspectives have helped define the path she has forged in agriculture, as well as her identity as a female farmer, over the course of 30 years.

Jane’s drive and determination are undoubtedly among her strengths, but these qualities also meant that she consistently worked very hard for long periods of time managing the farm. During this time she struggled to cope with social isolation on top of her fatigue. It was only after she leased her farm to take leave and travelled for six weeks that Jane realised how exhausted she had become. Whilst Jane considers that she wasn’t ‘depressed’, she did experience heightened anxiety which impacted on her sleep as she worried about the consequences of decisions she was responsible for making. Jane recognises that there is ‘probably a silent side to depression and anxiety amongst women in farming that is rarely looked at or talked about. Talking about the darker side of anxiety and depression is not easy – even for women. Women often just cope and go around picking up the pieces (like socks!) and this is not particularly healthy’.

Jane now finds the question of how to manage herself into retirement conflicting with her lifelong determination to prove herself as a farmer and her own perception that leaving farming amounts to failure. Jane’s partner, Emma, an agricultural writer, recognises that ‘as an industry, we don’t award farmers a gold watch when they retire - they die in the paddock’.

For Jane, being outside on the property is a source of wellbeing.

“I don’t think I have ever felt that sense of isolation when I am outdoors working on the farm because I love being outside. When you step out the door in the morning and the birds are singing and it’s crisp and the air is fresh - it helps you feel better.”

Jane also advocates taking care of yourself by getting enough sleep, eating good fresh food, keeping fit and taking a break from the farm since this also helps maintain a healthy mental state.

August

REGIONAL ACCESS
24/7 support 1300 032 186

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Neville's Story

Now retired to sea-views over Lincoln, Neville reflects:

"To me there is an element of hereditary in it. Some of my immediate family, including a grandparent, have had mental health issues. It used to be called 'nerves'.

"The first time I can think about was about 25 years ago. I employed someone who was very difficult to work with. I'd had some marriage problems and didn't realise how much that was affecting me. The stress, I think, tipped me over the edge. I became emotional and irrational. A lot of people thought I was moody and serious. I was dedicated to farming – I was flat out trying to empire build. I was also doing a lot in the community, I was on the hospital board and ran footy, table tennis clubs etc. So, this is farmers. I think there are stresses there that the average nine-five worker, for want of a better word, doesn't think about because even though you might live in a really dependable area, you owe millions of dollars, you buy machinery and it's worth a lot of dollars. There's that constant worry - have we had enough rain, is it going to rain? Are we going to get a frost? – All those things are in your mind all the time without you actually knowing about it, because it's your life.

"The real crunch came when my marriage broke up and that's when I became, well, suicidal. By that time I had become a city councillor. Every day I was travelling 200 kilometres for meetings. A song came on the radio that meant a lot to me – I can see clearly now. And I thought, there's got to be more than killing yourself. I was really upset so I stopped and I looked up who I could ring. I'd heard about Centacare. So, I rang them up and they said they were busy and they couldn't get me in until next week. I said, that's no good to me. It's got to be right now. I told them where I was at in my mind and they said you had better come in. So, I did go in and talk to someone and they suggested I go and see a doctor, which I did. He put me on to a psychiatrist up at the hospital.

"Fortunately for me, Vicki came on the scene probably about this stage and the two of us went out to lunch. And we just talked and talked and talked. She saved my life. The other thing was my circle of friends and my farming mates. One of those in particular had been through this and he recognised it. And he used to just call in on the two-way radio. He seemed to be able to pick up the 'vibes' and he'd come and see me and say, 'you're not going too good mate'. And we'd have a coffee, or the other thing we did a lot of was what we'd call 'bushies'. And he'd often just call me up on the radio and say 'there's smoke down the back road and I can smell sausages!' So, we'd go down there and there'd be three or four farmers and we would sit around, having a bushie and talking – not necessarily about mental health – just chewing the fat about farming and solving the world's problems!"

September

**REGIONAL
ACCESS**
24/7 support 1300 032 186

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“I recognise the crucial significance of social events at a time when farmers are in the midst of a poor harvest.”

Jasmin's Story

“The winds this year have been the big thing - we've had dust storm, after dust storm, after dust storm. And had paddocks drifting left, right and centre. Completely covered roads. On those really bad days, you can't see. The visibility is zero.”

Her role as drought and wellbeing coordinator for Cowell has Jasmin personally checking in with all the farmers on their properties to ensure that 'nobody drops below the line' and that every farmer knows the services and supports that are available to them. 'One guy was in the middle of shearing and so I rocked up at smoko time, sat on the wool bales with him and spoke to him there'. A powerhouse of activity, amongst other things, Jasmin is supporting farmers to access the Farm Household Allowance, helping coordinate hay drops, applying for grants to bring in agricultural services and personally using their water tanker 'to cart for lots of farms' and fill tanks for households and stock water supplies.

Jasmin also recognises the crucial significance of social events at a time when farmers are in the midst of a poor harvest and is collaborating with Eyre Peninsula community groups to organise wellbeing initiatives such as golf, barefoot bowls, beach cricket and a whole-of-community fun day.

Part of the farming community that her Council role has her supporting, Jasmin is aware she needs to care for her own mental health.

“We had a workshop, there was 10 of us farming ladies and it was a workshop for preparing for dry times. One of the first things I said was 'I hope I don't cry' and then I just burst into tears. Which, I felt better afterwards, but I also felt like it helped others to be ok with tears for the day.

“My garden is my saving grace at the moment, we don't have much water but my husband put a tank up on top of the hill and he fills it up with our water tanker so it gravity feeds down so my garden's my safe place. Everything else is brown but my garden is green. The other night the kids were in bed, the sun was going down and I went for a walk through the garden, pulled some weeds, watered a bit and went back inside and my husband was like 'do you feel better now?' and I was like 'yeah, I actually do' I think it's good now I have realised that that is what I need to de-stress.

“I also teach dance to our local town and next-door town two-days-a-week to kids from two-years-old to adults. I have been doing this for 11 years and it's a great way to step off the farm and be energetic and creative in another way – listen to music and help the kids enjoy dance and give them the chance to perform on stage.”



October

REGIONAL ACCESS 24/7 support 1300 032 186

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“Seek help, there’s help out there in the community.”

Pip’s Story

“I think the shock of it. It was a horrendous, hot and windy day and you knew there was a fire. And the next minute the fire was on you. That’s what happened. I still can’t fathom that. I was near the start of the fire in a truck and I still can’t fathom what the people in front of the fire went through.”

Philip, better known as Pip, was on the frontline of community recovery after the devastating ‘Black Tuesday’ Eyre Peninsula bushfire in 2005. ‘I did a lot of helping neighbours. A group of us got together and we had our particular farmers to see to make sure they knew where to get help from. I saw people who had lost family members and neighbours who had lost virtually everything. Personally, I guess it affected me, I just took it on myself to work madly for a year to repair my damage which was much less than others.

“Losing all your sheep, trying to bury a thousand sheep and getting a group of people out to shoot them. That was a horrendous time. It was the next day. A group of us went from farm-to-farm, and after a week it was pretty ordinary, I tell you. It was bloody horrible. And the stress part of it for me was all the people coming out to help who were getting upset, I had to try and console them.”

Pip’s capacity to provide care at the end of life was profoundly extended through his experience of caring for his mother as she was dying from cancer. The experience has left lasting memories that Pip ‘still has trouble with’.

“Mainly the thoughts of – we had some really bad times. I have trouble with some of the bad times we had. I had trouble with not knowing what to do but knowing that hospital wasn’t the right place for her. I took her out of hospital and was giving her 24/7 help. But I didn’t have the help when I really needed it – like weekends. I could ring up during the week but there was no one on weekends – and that seemed to be when everything happened.”

Now semi-retired from farming, Pip has the freedom to pursue his love of travelling and doing ‘volunteer work wherever I can’.

So for farmers struggling with poor mental health, Pip is emphatic in his message:

“Seek help, there’s help out there in the community. And talk to someone. Neighbours checking in to say g’day and ask how ya going? Besides the amazing amount of manual labour support available after the fire, we had plenty of mental health support available which was set up by various organisations and well-advertised at the time for people to find help. One group of retired farmers took it upon themselves to visit as many fire-affected people as they could – just for a chat, which was awesome. As time went on this help was needed less but some people were impacted more than others mentally and places like Lifeline and Beyond Blue were of particular help. It is important to know that your GP is always ready to help you and your family and friends are great to go to for help and a chat.”



November

REGIONAL ACCESS 24/7 support 1300 032 186

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“You have got to have your support network around you.”

Emma’s Story

Emma is proud to be a shepherd. She loves her girls. Surrounded by boys at home in her grandparent’s house, Emma is a wife and mother to two sons. After time spent living in Darwin and Malaysia, they returned to the family property which is her home. “It just feels right here and the boys have to grow up on a farm.”

She keeps the spirit and legacy of her grandfather alive by maintaining a line of Dorset girls ‘no matter what happens’. “Probably the worst time for me was, we didn’t have the weeds sprayed out. And the potato weed was terrible. It wasn’t sprayed out early enough. And I lost probably 50 girls because of the toxicity. I used to drive down there every day to go and check them. And I would stop before the crest of the hill, pull over and just breathe. Try and be brave. Go over the crest of the hill, and I could just see them. Just broke my heart.”

Her previous life as a surveyor, and the first female surveyor to go through university in 18 years, means Emma feels well-equipped to operate in a male dominated industry. With her husband now working in cropping and her sons, the ‘little shepherds’, Emma’s family farm feels complete. But farming family life is busy.

“My day starts at 8.30am after I get home from taking the kids to the bus and it finishes at five-past-three when I jump in the car to get them again. And it’s hard when you look out there and there is so much to be done. And you just can’t. There’s no such thing as weekends. I struggle with finding that balance between looking after the family and everything else, wearing different hats all the time.”

With a family legacy of contributing to the community through the health care sector, Emma has found her calling as a volunteer on the committee for SOS Yorkes, her local Suicide Prevention Network.

“I joined up for the depression, the mental health side of things and that’s where my passion is. And I’ve learnt from what I have been through caring for someone. I didn’t understand what depression was. I didn’t know. It’s isolating, it’s withdrawal, it’s fear, it’s a lot of anger and a lot of misunderstanding. And it frightens me now when I look back, I just thought it was me. And then I reached out to a good friend and was put on to a friend who helped her through a hard time with depression. And I just used to do phone calls until I realised I probably needed to talk to someone.

“When I get low, like really stressed, like with the loss of those girls, I just talk. You have got to reach out. You have got to have your support network around you. And you have just got to be kind to yourself.”



December

REGIONAL ACCESS 24/7 support 1300 032 186

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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29	30	31				

