

Media statement

8 March 2016

ROMA, EMERALD PILOT ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

A 'real time' mental health support program to be trialled in two regional Queensland towns could overcome key obstacles to recovery, according to the Queensland Mental Health Commissioner.

Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said a \$50,000 grant to Grow Queensland would deliver online technologies to create a peer-led support network to boost mental health and wellbeing services in Roma and Emerald.

Funding for the six-month pilot has been provided through the Queensland Mental Health Commission's *Stronger Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Grants Program*.

"Grow's peer-led, mutual help program is known to work," Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said. "Independent studies during the past 25 years have shown it has helped people to full recovery, re-integrating into the wider community.

"Traditionally that program has been delivered through meetings, face-to-face. That's proved a stumbling block in smaller rural areas where a fear of being identified and talked about stops some people from accessing services in town.

"The only other option involves travelling long distances to another town and that can be impractical."

Grow CEO Clare Guilfoyle said "E-Grow" – the real-time digitally delivered version of the program - was a test case, pushing the use of technology to another level beyond phone counselling, online training and text-based chat rooms or forums.

"In our search of existing e-mental health programs, we could not find any that enable real time voice discussion in a group setting to enable peer led mutual support with participants to share their challenges and progress of recovery and build community," Ms Guilfoyle said.

Ms Guilfoyle said the pilot could lead to a roll-out of E-Grow throughout Queensland and nationally.

Grow Queensland currently operates around 26 groups in the state's south-east and coastal regional towns.

For further information on Grow Queensland's E-Grow Rural Queensland Pilot contact (07) 3397 7629.

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