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New Health Alliance Formed Helping Flood Devastated Northwest Queenslanders

Health agencies join forces to meet surge in demand for access to care

A landmark alliance of key health agencies has been formed to ensure residents of flood-ravaged Northwest Queensland get the support they need to deal with an expected surge in health challenges due to loss of property and livelihoods.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section) (RFDS) has joined the regions Primary Health Networks and Queensland Health to form the **Western Queensland Flood Alliance Response (WQFAR)**.

The Alliance brings together peak Commonwealth and State Government agencies and non-government organisations health providers targeting the needs of those in communities hardest hit by the unprecedented disaster.

“This Alliance is a great example of how collaboration in times of need shows what can be achieved in a short space of time,” said RFDS CEO, Meredith Staib.

“We have a deep connection to rural and remote Queensland through our 90 years in health care delivery to the bush and we need to ensure that support to these affected communities is well coordinated, agile and fit for purpose,” she said.

Since the flood crisis began, the Alliance has met daily to co-ordinate its response across communities that are still coming to grips with the flood’s financial and psychological impacts.

“When you have to act quickly and decisively, the imaginary borders we draw on the land that can separate health organisations no longer apply,” WQPHN CEO Stuart Gordon said.

“Like these relentless floodwaters that have smashed Townsville and have now swallowed up land, livestock and livelihoods out west, we know that mental distress is just as indiscriminate in who it knocks down.”

“Our job is to pick people back up in a hurry and keep them upright, with the message that you’re not alone and we have teams of support services ready to deliver the right care, customised to your needs,” he said.

To meet the expect surge in demand for mental health support, the Alliance has this week launched a unique support service called “NQ Connect”, a free phone and online service providing a single point of access to different local mental health support services across rural and remote Queensland.

“NQ Connect is a good example of where teamwork in a crisis like this can have tangible, life-changing benefits for those most at risk during this initial shock phase and beyond,” NQPHN CEO John Gregg said.



Northern Queensland Primary Health Network acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

“It’s important to remember that when the floodwaters have subsided and the media spotlight dims, there will still be a critical requirement for the Alliance to provide sustained support and care for families who need help on the ground, financially, culturally and spiritually.”

“That’s why the pathways to care we’re establishing and bolstering during this initial phase are being implemented in a way that is sustainable into the long term, so we’re not leaving residents stranded in the months and years to come,” Mr Gregg said.

The Alliance says one of the keys to delivering sustainable, appropriate health care is building relationships with established, local community networks.

“It is important to acknowledge the hard work of Local Mayors and their staff, along with Queensland Government agencies, local community organisations, support agencies and community people working to assist families affected on the front line,” Stuart Gordon said.

“This speaks volumes of the spirit of Queenslanders when faced with adversity, reflected in the dedicated health professionals in the thick of it who’ll be called on daily over the coming weeks and months ahead to help build hope and resilience, against a backdrop of grief and hardship for many residents.”

NQ Connect - 1300 059 625, www.nqconnect.com.au

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