

Media Release 6 June 2024

## Crazy Socks 4 Docs Day



Medical mental health awareness day, Crazysocks4docs, raises awareness and promotes action about mental health in healthcare workers, and help remove the stigma associated with it.

Rural Doctors are doing their bit by banding together to support confidential GP consults for their colleagues through the GPs4RuralDocs program.

Funded by the Rural Doctors Foundation, GPs4RuralDocs combines face-to-face visits and telehealth consultations by the same GP. The pilot service is currently being delivered by a fly-in GP to the remote communities of Charleville, Quilpie, and Cunnamulla, with an expansion into Stanthorpe, St George and Goondiwindi already underway.

Rural Doctors Foundation Chair, Amanda Roser, said the program aims to fill a huge gap in the healthcare needs of doctors working in rural and remote Australia.

“Rural GPs find it really hard to access confidential health care within their communities,” Ms Roser said.

“If you think about it, if you work in the only GP practice in town, then all of your options for consultations will be with your friends and colleagues. Particularly in the area of mental health, this can significantly impact a doctor’s willingness to seek care.

“We surveyed more than 120 rural and remote health practitioners and 42% said they needed to travel out of town for independent and confidential healthcare, an 20% travelled more than 800 km for this care.”

“Our GPs4RuralDocs program by rural doctors for rural doctors and works to provide access to consultations by independent GPs from other areas to rural and remote health practitioners.

“We hope that this will help to not only preserve the physical wellbeing of our rural docs, but importantly their mental wellbeing as well,” Ms Roser said.

“CrazySocks4Docs Day is a chance for everyone to show their support for the mental wellbeing of doctors, by wearing their craziest socks. Of course, we would also love people to show their support by getting involved with the Rural Doctors Foundation and help raise funds so we can expand this program into more rural and remote areas.”

Rural Doctors Foundation acknowledges the ongoing dedication of rural doctors, their colleagues, family and community members to provide caring, committed health care in Rural Australia. The Foundation supports and encourages their ability to connect with each other to overcome adversity, focusing on better health outcomes for generations of Rural Australians.

We acknowledge and extend our sincere respect and appreciation to the Turrbal People – the traditional Owners of the land on which our office is located. We also acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we implement our programs. We acknowledge their connections to land, sea and community. We pay respect to their ancient and continuing cultures, and to their Elders, past and present.

President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), Dr RT Lewandowski, said that a program like GPs4RuralDocs was a welcome initiative for rural doctors.

“So many rural doctors work in challenging conditions with huge physical, emotional and mental pressures on them.

“The smaller your community, and the more remote, the higher this burden is and also the harder it is to seek health care for yourself.

“This program has been designed and shaped by experts in doctors’ health, with guidance from doctors serving in rural communities at every stage, and it is wonderful to see such a well thought out initiative really working to improve health outcomes for rural doctors themselves.

“We look forward to seeing the results of the pilot program which is being delivered by GPs experienced and trained in caring for health practitioners and in mental health, as well as with an understanding of rural practice.

“Hopefully we will see further towns added to the GPs4RuralDocs service and get better and more accessible health care delivered out to our hard-working rural doctors, particularly in more remote areas.

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### **Photos**

Dr RT Lewandowski

Amanda Roser

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### **Available for interview**

Rural Doctors Foundation Chair, Amanda Roser

Rural Doctors Foundation CEO, Fran Avon

RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski

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