

## **MH4Ag: Co-designing a peer-supported approach to improve mental health in rural farming communities**

### **Participant Information Form**

Compared to the general Australian population, rural farming communities face a complex range of factors which can impact their mental wellbeing. While farmers are generous at providing help to others, they are often reluctant to ask for help themselves. Living in rural areas, access to support (for personal and professional challenges) is limited and where support is available, providers may have poor understanding of the realities of life and work in the farming environment. To help address these issues 'Steering Straight: My plan to keep on track' has been developed in collaboration with members of the farming community to be used in everyday life. The plan aims to help farmers develop a personalised and practical 'action plan' to help them to focus on what TO DO in a challenging situation, rather than what NOT TO DO.

### **HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED**

#### Testing of Steering Straight: My Plan to Keep on Track

In this project, farmers and farming community members will be involved in an evaluation of the Steering Straight plan. This will involve:

- Completing your own Steering Straight plan,
- Providing a copy of your completed Steering Straight plan to the NCFH,
- Receiving a weekly text message reminder to support you to reflect on and use your Steering Straight plan,
- Completing a 6 week follow-up survey (online or phone).

Involvement in this project is not designed to cause significant psychological or emotional stress, but you may be reflecting upon events in your life that may be challenging. If you feel that taking part will cause you distress, you may consider not participating in this research. You will have the opportunity to make contact with the researchers via phone, email or the Farmer Health website should you have any questions during your participation in this project. You will also have the opportunity to request a written referral to a support provider (local where available and appropriate).

**COMPLIANCE WITH COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS:** This project has been designed to comply with COVID-19 restrictions and will not require any face-to-face contact.

**LIKELY BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS:** There may be some benefits of participating in the project such as increasing your understanding of factors that impact your health and wellbeing, and making changes to your personal behaviours to improve your health and wellbeing.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY:** All comments and responses made during the project will be de-identified and remain confidential. Any information you share via your Steering Straight plan and/or your follow-up survey will be coded. While the information you share may be included in reports to funders or in scientific publications, this will be general in nature and will never identify individuals.

**PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY:** Your involvement in the project is voluntary and we respect your right to withdraw at any time. You may discontinue your participation at any time and do not need to provide any

explanation. Should you withdraw your participation, information provided to the project team will be excluded from analysis (e.g. follow-up survey data).

**STORAGE OF INFORMATION:** Any information you choose to share in this project will be securely stored. Hard copies of any information will be kept in a locked cabinet in the research office. Electronic data will be kept on a password-protected computer. Only the research team will have access to the information. All of the information collected in this research will be kept at the National Centre for Farmer Health for a minimum of five years after successful completion of this research as is required by the National Health and Medical Research Council. After this, relevant computer files will be deleted and hard copy materials will be destroyed or shredded.

**RESEARCH PROCESS:** The de-identified aggregated results of the research will be presented at conferences, published in peer-reviewed academic journals and distributed through the Farmer Health website.

**ETHICS:** This research has been approved by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC Approval No. 2020-232. Valid to xxxx).

**CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS:** Should you have any questions about taking part in this study, please contact Dr Alison Kennedy on (03) 5551 8533, email [a.kennedy@deakin.edu.au](mailto:a.kennedy@deakin.edu.au) or contact any of the other members of the research team:

Dr Susan Brumby: (03) 5551 8533 or email: [susan.brumby@deakin.edu.au](mailto:susan.brumby@deakin.edu.au)

Dr Kate Gunn: 0417 852 537 or email: [kate.gunn@unisa.edu.au](mailto:kate.gunn@unisa.edu.au)

Dr Richard Gray: 0428 125 818 or email: [r.gray@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:r.gray@latrobe.edu.au)

Dr Ellie Brown: 0487 786 465 or email: [ellie.brown@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:ellie.brown@unimelb.edu.au)

Dr Martin Jones: (08) 8302 6067 or email: [martin.jones@unisa.edu.au](mailto:martin.jones@unisa.edu.au)

[Dr Vincent Versace: 0427 624 810 or email: vincent.versace@deakin.edu.au](mailto:vincent.versace@deakin.edu.au)

[Dr Joanna Macdonald: \(03\) 5551 8533 or email: joanna.macdonald@wdhs.net](mailto:joanna.macdonald@wdhs.net)

**COMPLAINTS:** If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Research Integrity, Ethics and Biosafety, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; [research-ethics@deakin.edu.au](mailto:research-ethics@deakin.edu.au).

Please quote project number 2020-232.

If, after reading this Participant Information Sheet or sharing your experiences through any stage of this study, you feel distressed, we urge you to contact your GP for support and/or local referral. You can also access online psychology support services from psychologists trained in farmer health via <https://www.farmerhealth.org.au/access-a-psychologist-online>. You can also request a written referral from a member of the project team to assist you to access a support provider (local provider where available and appropriate).

If you are at risk of harming yourself or others, please phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Emergency Services on 000.